

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WALTON LEIGH SCHOOL**

Walton-on-Thames

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125468

Headteacher: Ms L Curtis

Reporting inspector: Mr G Watson  
1996

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000

Inspection number: 188798

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Queen's Road Walton-on-Thames Surrey
Postcode:	KT12 5AB
Telephone number:	01932 223243
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Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs G Golding (acting chair)
Date of previous inspection:	24 <sup>th</sup> June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr G Watson	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages Music Physical education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Key issues for action
Ms J Bedawi	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Partnership with parents and carers
Mr T Hill	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology Art Special educational needs	Teaching and learning Pupils' welfare, health and safety
Ms L Evans	Team inspector	English Geography History English as an additional language	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mr W G Davies	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Religious education Equal opportunities	Leadership and management

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Walton Leigh is a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties aged between 11 and 19. A significant number of them also have additional profound and multiple learning difficulties. Others have additional behavioural learning difficulties and some have autistic associated complex needs. There are currently 61 pupils on roll, 37 boys and 24 girls, and eleven pupils speak English as an additional language. Almost half the school's population are students in the post-16 department. This is an unusually high proportion and explains why the proportion of pupils and students who are entitled to free school meals, 46.2 per cent, is higher than average for schools of this type. The pupils come from a wide area of north-eastern Surrey and all have statements of special educational need.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Walton Leigh is a very good school with many significant strengths. The quality of leadership and management is very good and the school is particularly effective in making sure that its aims and values are woven into its everyday work. The quality of teaching is very good and is founded upon the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school. The curriculum is highly relevant to the pupils' and students' needs, and is underpinned by an extremely effective programme of personal, social and health education. Parents make a very significant contribution to the school's very effective procedures for assessing pupils' gains in learning and monitoring their personal progress. As a result, pupils and students, irrespective of their individual learning difficulties, make very good progress towards meeting their individual targets and behave in ways that reflect their development as mature, responsible young adults.

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

- Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- The quality of teaching is very good, particularly in the post-16 department.
- Pupils' levels of achievement in English, information technology, religious education, music and personal, social and health education are very good.
- Students' levels of achievement in their vocational core skills are very good.
- The programme for personal, social and health education is excellent.
- There is an extremely strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- There are very effective procedures for assessing pupils' and students' levels of achievement and monitoring their personal development.
- The systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching are excellent.
- The way in which the aims and values of the school are woven into its everyday work is extremely effective.

#### **What could be improved**

- Opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning through cross-curricular links are often overlooked.
- Registers are not marked to take account of current regulations.
- The approach to monitoring fire procedures is too casual.

*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 a very good response to the findings of the last inspection. Schemes of work, linked to curricular policies, are now in place for all subjects of the National Curriculum except a modern foreign language. Provision in these subjects has been enhanced, notably in English, mathematics, religious education, art, design and technology, geography, history and, in particular, information and communication technology. The school has developed clear, coherent procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress against targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). The quality of teaching has improved significantly, notably with regard to the teaching of communication skills, and levels of resources are now good. As a result of all these factors, the pupils' and students' levels of achievement have also improved and they now make very good gains in learning. Other minor issues embedded within the body of the report have been addressed. In addition, the headteacher and governing body have strengthened the very good management structures within the school, provision for the pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been enhanced, and the pupils and students now display very good attitudes, behaviour and personal 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 16	by age 19	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
Reading	B	B	good	B
Writing	B	A	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

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

The school sets targets for individual pupils and students in English, particularly communication, the application of number and personal, social and health education. Pupils' and students' progress towards these targets is very good as are their levels of achievement in religious education, information and communication technology and music. Pupils make good gains in learning in all other areas of the curriculum, and students make very good progress in their vocational core skills.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work and Post-16 students have excellent attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good both in lessons and at other times; Post-16 students often behave in an exemplary fashion when out in the wider community.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are excellent; pupils and students develop into mature, responsible young adults.
Attendance	Good.

Relationships throughout the school are excellent and promote very positive attitudes to learning. Younger pupils, including those with additional behavioural difficulties, respond positively to teachers' clear expectations and excellent role models, and learn to behave well. As they move up through the school, they build on this foundation so that by the time they are in the Post-16 department, their behaviour is very good and often excellent, notably when using community facilities alongside members of the public. Attendance is good and little time is wasted by pupils and students in settling down to work.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	very good	very good

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

Teaching was good or better in 89 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 56 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The very good teaching is spread across the school at all key stages and with pupils at all levels of special educational need. It is notably strong in the Post-16 department and also in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, religious education, personal, social and health education, music and physical education. The main strengths within teaching are: the teachers' understanding of individual pupils and their learning difficulties; the management of pupils which, coupled with the exceptionally high quality of relationships, results in pupils wanting to learn and do their best; the teaching of basic skills, particularly those of communication, which effectively enables pupils to participate; and the very effective use of time, support staff and resources, which ensures that pupils' interest and concentration are maintained.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	All pupils and students have access to an appropriate, broad range of learning experiences within which is embedded excellent provision for their personal, social and health education. It is highly relevant to their needs although some opportunities to reinforce the pupils' learning and build upon their previous experience are overlooked.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school provides a language-rich environment that actively promotes the communication skills of all pupils and students, including those for whom English is an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for the pupils' and students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good, with the contribution from music and religious education being particularly strong. Provision for their social development is excellent and students are prepared very well for the next stage of their lives.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for assessing pupils' and students' levels of achievement, and monitoring their personal progress, are very good. Procedures for monitoring academic progress are good. Procedures for ensuring their care and welfare are satisfactory, although routines for the emergency evacuation of the school require urgent attention. Procedures for marking registers and monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents and carers	Communication and collaboration with parents and carers, particularly with regard to their involvement in setting their children's individual learning targets, are very good.

The curriculum has good breadth, is adequately balanced and is highly relevant to the needs of all the pupils and students. It is underpinned by an excellent programme for personal, social and health education, together with a very good range of planned opportunities to promote the pupils' and students' communication skills and their spiritual, moral and cultural development. However, opportunities for pupils to build on their previous learning in some subjects across the curriculum are not always identified clearly. The school has developed very effective procedures for assessing gains in learning and monitoring personal development against targets set in individual education plans, and parents are involved in the process to very good effect. Procedures for monitoring progress across the whole curriculum are not as effective due to the relative lack of clarity in curricular planning. The marking of registers does not meet statutory requirements and insufficient attention has been given to procedures for the emergency evacuation of the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher provides very strong leadership and is very effectively supported by the senior management team. The school's aims and values are thoroughly understood, endorsed by all concerned and are woven into the everyday life of the school extremely effectively.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. It is fully involved and committed to meeting the needs of the pupils and students. Statutory requirements in respect of the annual report to parents, registration and the teaching of a modern language are not fully met and the approach to monitoring fire procedures is too casual.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching are excellent; procedures for monitoring pupils' progress against their individual targets are very good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; the school provides very good value for money.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Staffing is very good; resources and accommodation are good, although the school site presents specific difficulties with regard to access and to emergency evacuation procedures.

The quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher provides very strong and efficient leadership. She shares a clear vision of entirely appropriate educational aims and values with the senior management team which is thoroughly understood by all staff and the governing body, appreciated by parents and reflected in all areas of the school's work. Procedures and systems are clear, comprehensive and, almost without exception, implemented very effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The support and encouragement of staff that enable their children to make very good progress, particularly with regard to their self-confidence, independence and personal and social development.</li> <li>The staff's understanding of their children's individual and often complex learning difficulties.</li> <li>The approachability of the headteacher and staff.</li> <li>The way in which the school encourages parents to express their views and become involved in their children's education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of homework for pupils; some parents believed there was too little, others that it was irrelevant for their children.</li> <li>The extension of after-school activities.</li> <li>The levels of staffing (one comment).</li> <li>Concerns about the presence of a mobile-phone mast in the school grounds (one comment).</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully endorses the positive comments made by parents. The inspection found the provision of homework to be satisfactory for pupils, and good for Post-16 students. Given the logistics of after-school transport, the school makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities. The school is very well staffed and very effective in providing cover when staff are absent. The school has pursued concerns about the mobile-phone mast, and has received assurance from the appropriate authorities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Pupils' standards of attainment are well below national expectations. However, all the pupils have severe learning difficulties as identified on their statements of special educational need. Furthermore, some pupils have additional profound and complex needs, whilst others have additional communication difficulties. Comparison with national norms is, therefore, inappropriate and judgements regarding pupils' achievements reflect what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to targets identified on their individual education plans.
2. Pupils' and students' levels of achievement are consistently good and often very good throughout the school. This represents a significant improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection, and is directly related to improvements in teaching, particularly in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their charges, the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and the way in which excellent relationships between all concerned ensure that the management of pupils' and students' behaviour is highly effective. The improvement is also related to the development of a broader, extremely relevant curriculum, and to improvements in the quality of pupils' and students' individual education plans. Parents are pleased with the gains in learning made by their children, and recognise an improvement in progress over time since the last inspection.
3. These levels of achievement apply to all pupils and students, irrespective of their gender, the complexity of their individual learning difficulties or their ethnic or social background. This is a direct reflection of the school's extremely strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
4. In English, particularly in the key areas of speaking, listening and communication skills, pupils achieve very well at both key stages. Their levels of achievement in personal and social education, religious education, information and communication technology and music are also very good, and they make good gains in learning in all other areas of the curriculum. The levels of achievement of students in the Post-16 department are very good, notably in respect of the vocational core skills of communication, application of number, information technology and working with others. Students' gains in learning in personal and social education, religious education and sporting and leisure pursuits are also particularly noteworthy.
5. The school sets suitably challenging targets for individual pupils and students and reviews these each term. Pupils and students throughout the school make very good progress towards achieving the targets identified in their individual education plans, particularly in areas of communication, number, personal and social development and, for the relevant pupils, behaviour. The school is starting to collect data that allows it to evaluate trends over time and is beginning to set appropriate targets for whole-school improvement.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to school and to learning. The behaviour of younger pupils is good. As they move up the school, behaviour continually improves, so that by Post-16, students' behaviour is very good and increasingly excellent. Pupils' and students' personal development is very good and the quality of relationships throughout the school is excellent. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy school. Parents have very positive views about their children's behaviour, attitudes and personal progress at Walton Leigh, and there has been good overall improvement since the last report, most notably in the quality of relationships.
7. All pupils and students know that they are expected to learn and participate as much as they can. They enjoy their lessons and are happily involved in other school activities. They work hard and show very considerable determination, effort and perseverance in meeting the targets in their individual education plans. For example, Post-16 students with profound difficulties made great effort in a physical education lesson to participate in muscle strengthening exercises and younger pupils thought carefully when building bridges with construction toys and testing the strength of different materials in a design and technology lesson. Pupils and students often work well together and are co-operative and supportive of each other, as seen in an off-site physical education lesson when one student showed the rest of the group how to hop on the spot and then developed this into hopping in a complete circle. Autistic pupils learn through very effective use of visual symbols, being gently reminded and encouraged when they lose their concentration. Pupils and students are justifiably proud of the work that they do and often talk about it. They appreciate the praise of their teachers. The encouragement of independence is a strong feature of learning and develops very well as pupils move up the school. In the Further Education Unit students are able to undertake many tasks very sensibly, perhaps making tea or coffee for the group, videoing or photographing learning activities and planning and completing their course-work for vocational qualifications. Students enjoy the opportunities and rise to the challenges offered to them.
8. The behaviour of younger pupils is good, improving as they move up the school and become increasingly aware of the behaviour and actions expected of them. A small minority of younger pupils do not always behave as well as they could but the behaviour management strategies used by staff and the very good example set by other pupils and students have a very positive effect and help them to improve. Pupils behave sensibly when moving around the school; they are polite and helpful to each other and to visitors, for example holding a door open or pushing a wheelchair. The students' behaviour is always very good and often excellent. When out and about in the community, it is very difficult to distinguish them from other teenagers without special needs. An excellent example of their behaviour, independence and maturity was observed as they purchased and ate refreshments at the community leisure centre cafe.
9. The quality of all relationships is excellent. All staff have an impressive commitment to ensuring that each pupil or student is able to achieve their academic and personal goals. Parents and carers deeply appreciate this and are often amazed by their children's achievements and progress. There is a relaxed yet professional relationship between pupils and their teachers so that learning is celebrated and pupils can take pride in their capabilities at whatever level. There is a very strong mutual respect with staff and pupils wanting to do their best for each other. Often a lot of gentle humour is present in lessons and this contributes to the very positive learning ethos embedded

in the school. Pupils and students, including those with more complex needs, develop firm friendships. For example, a pupil with profound difficulties smiles at seeing a friend, and autistic pupils start to tolerate others around them. Pupils and students mix together well in lessons and at play and often talk about their friends. The majority of pupils are extremely tolerant and understanding of others' difficulties. The few ethnic minority pupils are happy and valued as equal members of their school community. There is excellent social and racial harmony and the school has had no cause to exclude any pupil.

10. Pupils' and students' personal and social development are very significant strengths of the school and are appropriately given very high priority by staff. Pupils arrive at Walton Leigh from many different schools with different experiences of education and life. Much care is taken to gain and raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem where it is low, and to instil a sense of pride in their own work and celebrate the contributions that they make not only in school, but also in the wider community, and a prominent display board in the entrance hall publicly recognises their achievements. As pupils get older, they make the most of an extensive number of opportunities to involve them in the life of the community, and they recognise their increasing maturity. Students use community sports facilities such as the leisure centre and a nearby public swimming pool; they go shopping and learn about public transport, and the oldest students undertake work experience very successfully. Pupils throughout the school, including those with profound difficulties, participate in residential trips and some students have been skiing in Austria with pupils from other special schools in the area.
11. Pupils and students develop their initiative, responsibility and decision-making very well. Younger pupils help to keep their classrooms tidy and enjoy doing small errands for their teachers, often willingly volunteering to help. They recognise that they are responsible for their actions. Students and older pupils participate in school council meetings and make very useful suggestions, for instance, identifying the need for high netting behind the goal to prevent footballs going on to railway land. Students run a thriving mini-enterprise business, selling sandwiches to the staff. They organise much of their own work and learning very effectively in the context of their highly relevant vocational courses.
12. Attendance is good when compared to the national averages related to similar schools. However, attendance has declined since the last inspection and there is now more authorised absence in the school. Pupils and students clearly enjoy learning and waste little time in settling down to work. Any lateness is almost entirely due to buses being delayed in traffic, and the majority of pupils arrive on time.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

13. The quality of teaching is very good overall, particularly in the Post-16 unit, where one half of all pupils and students are taught. Since the last inspection, the number of lessons where teaching and learning are good or better has increased from 51 per cent to 89 per cent. In 56 per cent of lessons, teaching is very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning was observed during the inspection. The very good teaching is spread across the school, at all key stages and with pupils at all levels of special educational need. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection and reflects a number of other improvements made in the areas of management and curriculum. The very good systems and use of monitoring and assessment also play an important role in the improved quality of teaching and learning. The commitment and care with which teachers undertake their professional

responsibilities, along with the very good work of support staff, are strengths within teaching and are recognised by parents. Teaching is a strength of the school.

14. In classes where there is a large proportion of pupils or students with additional and complex learning needs, learning is a slow process that reflects their very special needs. Nonetheless, teachers' knowledge and understanding of those needs, along with the excellent management demonstrated in the large majority of lessons, ensures that they receive the same high quality of teaching and the same quality of learning opportunities as all other pupils and students.
15. Teaching is very good overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics, information technology, personal, social and health education and religious education. It is also very good in music and physical education, and is good in all other subjects. There is a very close match between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning. The teaching of communication skills is woven into every lesson and is a key factor in the good and often very good progress that pupils and students make since it enables them to understand the context of the lesson. Teachers use signs, symbols, objects of reference, speech (some of which is amplified for those with hearing impairments) and pictures to enhance the communication skills of pupils and students. In most lessons, teachers and support staff use effective questioning techniques which reinforce the speaking and listening, tracking and signing skills of pupils and students. Information and communication technology is used to good effect and is beginning to make a significant impact in most subject areas. Most teachers and support staff have had training and are gaining in confidence in the use of computers. The communications, focusing, tracking and fine motor skills of those with additional and complex special needs are promoted very well by the very good teaching in the sensory curriculum area, and also by the contribution made by other professionals such as music therapists.
16. The very good and often excellent relationships between teaching staff and pupils and students motivate them to a high level of intellectual, physical and creative effort in their lessons. This helps to ensure that their interest is well sustained through the lessons and that they make good or very good progress over time. Here the excellent knowledge and understanding which teachers demonstrate, ensures that students accelerate their progress towards independence and become more confident about their future.
17. The quality of support staff is high. Assistants often manage individual or small group lessons successfully, under the clear guidance given in teachers' comprehensive plans. They are confident in their understanding of the individual needs of pupils and are an important factor in the good progress made by the pupils and students they support. In full lessons, support staff work well in the teaching team and make a significant contribution to all lessons.
18. Expectations of what pupils and students will learn are generally high. Very little time is lost in the well paced and well-organised lessons and resources are used to very good effect. The literacy and numeracy lessons are broken down into manageable units, which are well planned to reflect the differing abilities of pupils. Simple day-to-day assessment is used to good effect to inform subsequent lesson planning. On occasion, opportunities are missed for pupils and students to develop self-assessment skills, which in turn means that they are not always clear as to what gains they have made in their learning. Homework, where appropriate, is used satisfactorily with the result that pupils and students consolidate their learning, and parents have an overview of what their children are doing when at school.

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

19. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in providing all pupils and students, including those with more complex needs and pupils for whom English is not the home language, with a broad and extremely relevant range of learning experiences delivered through an appropriate range of communication methods. Statutory requirements are met for religious education but National Curriculum requirements are not fully met because of a technical requirement in relation to disapplication of all pupils from modern languages.
20. There is very good emphasis on the core subjects of literacy, numeracy and information technology. The provision for religious education, personal and social education and music is also very good. The provision for the remaining subjects of the curriculum is good, supported by comprehensive schemes of work and an apparent imbalance in time allocation for subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4 is redressed informally within subject medium-term planning. However, cross-curricular learning opportunities are sometimes missed, or occur without being exploited to promote pupils' development of skills in other subjects. The school development plan has appropriately identified the revision and refinement of the curriculum for the next academic year to include discrete key stage groups and also the need to provide vocational education opportunities at Key Stage 4.
21. The whole curriculum is distinctively underpinned by excellent provision for personal, social and health education, and strongly addresses the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and students in planning and practice. The curriculum, which is very relevant for all pupils, becomes highly relevant for Post-16 students who follow a wide range of accredited vocational courses. There is a very good underlying principle of giving pupils first-hand experiences. Opportunities for educational visits, integration with mainstream schools and community involvement are regular and frequent, particularly for Post-16 students, and impact positively on learning, confidence and the standing of the pupils and students of this school within the local and wider community. The personal development of pupils is very well provided for and pupils and more able students are very clear about the distinction between right and wrong. The staff provide exemplary role models and the excellent relationships between pupils and staff permeate all aspects of school life. There is a very good policy and scheme of work for personal, social and health and sex education which is taught both as a discrete subject and in a cross-curricular way. Topics are visited annually to reinforce learning, and the style of delivery and depth of subject coverage are suitably adapted for group and individual needs. Topics such as bereavement, which has touched pupils and students alike within school, are dealt with in a delicate and sensitive way, students dealing positively with their feelings of loss and supporting each other with a sense of respect and kindness. The school is about to be involved in a second series of programmes with the BBC in which students from the Post-16 department show their personal and social skills in a range of situations such as shopping for personal items, being away for the weekend and dining out.



22. There is real equality of learning opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to access the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, in consultation with recognised national schemes. The curriculum learning objectives are the same for all, and everyone accesses these at their individual skills levels, as identified in individual education plans. The methods of communication and styles of delivery are well considered and suitably adapted to ensure all pupils and students have access to high quality learning experiences.
23. Very good provision is made for teaching literacy skills. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of oral communication skills aided by classroom radio amplification, Makaton signs and 'Widget' symbols. Throughout the curriculum, the provision of a language-rich environment offers all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, very good opportunities for developing their communication skills. Additionally, music and speech therapy programmes, together with the 'Special Times' programme for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, including autism, have had a very positive impact on raising standards in communication for this particular group. Students in the Post-16 group gain confidence in group communication and public speaking by preparing for English Speaking Board accreditation in oral examinations.
24. The introduction of lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy, the purchase of reading schemes, development of resources, a new library and the development and use of information and communication technology have improved standards and have emphasised the importance that should be accorded to books and other communication aids. Key vocabulary is identified within each subject area's medium-term planning, and pupils steadily build language skills, remembering for example when on a field visit that they are looking for 'geographical features'! Numeracy has been given increased importance and the school's approach has been effective in improving standards. Pupils have appropriate numeracy targets but on some occasions, cross-curricular opportunities for practising numerical skills in 'real life' situations pass unnoticed. Students build upon their skills in literacy and numeracy through their accredited course-work in the vocational core skills of communication and the application of number.
25. Although pupils' involvement in extra-curricular activities after school is limited because of transport difficulties, there is a good range of activities at lunch-times catering for the different needs of individuals, and Post-16 students are very involved in lively discussions with members of staff, games, dance and football. Pupils have many opportunities to visit museums, galleries and to go into the local community in order to support learning and provide first-hand experiences. For example, in the study of a contrasting environment, pupils identify features from the top of Box Hill and handle objects from that environment. Some students join a local secondary school for orchestra practice after school, whilst others are members of a local performing arts group. Pupils regularly perform with staff in school productions, the most recent being Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. They also take part in local festivals such as Weybridge Music Festival. There are residential opportunities to the Isle of Wight, to Minehead and Wales, and students have joined with a local special schools' consortium for ski holidays.
26. Post-16 students benefit greatly from the close links with the local college and with the careers service. The provision of a range of work experience activities such as Spelthorne Farm Trust, combined with opportunities for developing independence and social skills, promotes excellent progress. Similarly, younger pupils benefit from well-

organised links with a local primary school for integration and reverse integration, and with local secondary schools for a range of activities such as physical education and home economics. Regular visits from a range of professionals such as the sensory-impaired service, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists are very effective in meeting the specific learning difficulties of a range of pupils either directly or by providing guidance for the school staff.

27. The place of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fundamental to the school vision and is clearly identified within each subject area. The provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Excellent provision and attention is paid to the pupils' and students' social development. Pupils' and students' educational experiences are enhanced significantly by the school's provision and the previous high standards have been maintained with good improvement in spiritual development and very good improvement in social development.
28. Pupils and students gather together during the week for whole-school assemblies. These celebrate and share not only a religious experience and pupil achievement, but also focus on the importance of the school as a community. Pupils eagerly volunteer to participate and show great pleasure when chosen. Some impressive impromptu acting was observed on one occasion and was rewarded with spontaneous applause from the audience. On the days when there is no whole-school assembly, pupils and students participate in class assemblies which have a strong spiritual element with music playing and candles lit. They are encouraged to be calm and reflect, for instance, about their friends. Before lunch, there is a short grace. This is often lively, as in the Reggae style rap which was sung and signed with great enthusiasm by staff and pupils alike. The requirements of collective worship are fully met.
29. Very good opportunities to promote the pupils' spiritual development, both planned and incidental, are present in lessons. For example, the peace and reflection generated by lights and music for pupils with profound difficulties provide a calming effect so that one pupil sat quietly for a very considerable time. In a horticulture lesson, a student identified plants in the sensory garden from photographs, cut stems and showed them to a student with profound difficulties who was able to look, touch and smell the plants with evident pleasure. An autistic pupil became absorbed in listening to music. Older students were delighted to receive letters from a classmate in hospital.
30. Assemblies often have moral themes and these are explored and reinforced in many lessons. Staff take every opportunity to use ways that pupils will understand to remind them of appropriate actions and their consequences. Pupils and students clearly know the difference between right and wrong and have a strong sense of fairness. When pupils do forget and sometimes treat others unkindly, they are often very remorseful afterwards and will usually apologise without any prompting from their teacher. Post-16 students instigated a moving discussion about bereavement, talking of a friend with affection and respect. Formal personal and social education lessons allow pupils to discuss moral aspects related to personal relationships with sensitivity.
31. The school's provision for the pupils' social development is excellent and very closely linked to the exemplary relationships within the school community. Pupils respond extremely well to the positive atmosphere that allows them to develop in confidence and self-worth, becoming happy and assured young people. Pupils and students genuinely care for each other, showing very real concern if other pupils are unwell or

feel sad, trying to make them feel better, perhaps with a gentle pat on the back or a quiet word. They delight in sharing the achievements of others. Students look after younger pupils very well, treating them as if they were family. When their own family visit the school, pupils proudly introduce them. Currently there is justifiable pride in their success in the 'Scarecrow Competition', a joint effort by many of the pupils and entered against all types of schools, gaining first prize. The scarecrow, based on 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' is a stunning, colourful creation, full of imagination and the impact that this has had on pupils' belief in their own worth, and the knowledge of what they can achieve and succeed, is considerable. The school provides many opportunities for pupils and students to interact with the local community, for example when shopping or through work experience. This has had a significant impact with pupils realising that they can relate very well to people outside the school and their known environment. Students are prepared very well for the next stage of their lives.

32. Opportunities to enhance the pupils' cultural development pervade the school curriculum. It is a particular strength in music, providing pupils and students with a positive insight into music of different cultures and composers. It enables them to successfully and creatively express their feelings and emotions and provides an additional means of communication. Pupils enjoy performances from different musicians such as African Drummers and perform their own musicals, such as 'South Pacific'. Other subjects and activities also make very effective contributions to pupils' cultural development. They learn about the work of other artists and enjoy pottery. Theatre groups visit the school and a full programme of trips and visits take place throughout the year. Much successful work has taken place within religious education to introduce and engage pupils in multicultural experiences, and assemblies are held to mark celebrations of other faiths such as Judaism and Islam. Places of worship such as the synagogue are visited. Cultural diversity is valued; pupils dress in the costumes of other peoples, they learn about the different foods eaten around the world, and enjoy tasting them.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33. Overall, there has been good improvement in this aspect of the work of the school. All staff are dedicated to providing skilled support and care for every pupil and student in the school. The quality of care and teamwork, together with the knowledge and understanding that staff have of their pupils and students, has a very positive impact on their academic and personal progress. The staff are adept at judging pupils' strengths and weaknesses and support them very effectively in overcoming personal and physical obstacles so that pupils mature into independent young adults.
34. The procedures for assessing pupils' and students' attainment and progress are very good and teachers make very good use of assessment information to guide their planning. There are good procedures for monitoring the academic progress of pupils and students. At the last inspection, the procedures were found to be inconsistent and their development was identified as a key issue in the school's post-Ofsted Action Plan in 1996. Since then, the school has made a very good improvement in its monitoring, assessment, recording and reporting procedures, all of which are now coherently inter-linked through whole-school policy and practice.
35. Individual education plans derive from information in pupils' statements and closely relate to the annual review of those statements. Precise, pertinent targets in communication, number and personal development are set for individual pupils and

these are reviewed termly, with parents actively involved. The revised targets are recorded in teachers' termly planning and lesson planning takes account of them. This flow of assessment information enables the progress of pupils and students in these subjects to be carefully monitored and evaluated against the targets. The school uses a commercial system of baseline assessment that is preparing teachers well for the new National Curriculum orders, and some subjects are already piloting the new government guidelines on pre-Level 1 assessments. Other subjects, for example information and communication technology, have their own baseline assessment and the school is part of a national benchmarking programme. Feeding plans and other targets for those pupils and students with profound and complex special needs are expertly drawn up by the speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. They are also reviewed termly in collaboration with relevant school staff, alongside the wider educational and personal targets of these pupils, and provide a very good support for the development of their social communication skills. However, procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress in other subjects across the wider curriculum, though good in themselves, are less effective. This is due to the lack of clarity that sometimes occurs within curricular planning. In turn, this compromises the school's ability to be clear as to whether pupils have built on their previous learning, or merely revisited topics and activities in a useful, but non-specific way.

36. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' and students' personal progress are very good and reflect the aims of the school very well. In the Post-16 department, these procedures are focused on the students' future lives and, along with careers guidance and advice, these provide very good information from which to plan for the next stage of learning or work. Pupils and students are encouraged to participate in and contribute to their own reviews. Post-16 students develop skills in evaluating their own work as part of their accredited vocational courses, and the information that builds up through the key stages is presented in an attractive record of achievement. The excellent relationships that exist between staff and pupils or students are at the heart of the support for their personal progress. Parents and carers are appreciative of the commitment of all staff to the care and education of their children.
37. The promotion and monitoring of behaviour and personal development is of very high quality. Pupils are made aware of the school's high but realistic expectations of them. The staff are consistent and fair in using the very clear guidance in the behaviour policy and are very successful in providing clear boundaries and support to enable pupils' behaviour to continually improve. The school maintains and regularly updates exceptionally detailed individual records that are linked to targets in individual education plans, and provide information for annual reviews. Staff are quickly aware if there are any changes in pupils' behaviour or attitudes and can refer to their records to find very effective strategies that will help the individual to improve. Because of the excellent relationships, pupils readily accept the guidance and support offered to them and are able to communicate their feelings, even if they do not have well-developed verbal skills.
38. The monitoring of attendance, however, is unsatisfactory. Registers do not meet statutory requirements. Class teachers know which pupils are present but do not complete all pupil marks and many entries are in pencil. Authorised and unauthorised absences are not clearly distinguished. There is a mix of manual and computerised systems which are time-consuming and involve much administrative cross-checking. Information received from bus escorts is mainly verbal. The school has completed some analysis of attendance by religion and year group but this has provided little

insight as to why authorised absence has increased and overall absence has declined. The school now has a newly allocated Educational Welfare Officer after a considerable period with no external support.

39. Daily welfare procedures are sound. Two school nurses job share and are accessible by pager in an emergency. Good quality medication records are kept and the medical room is well equipped. Lunch is well organised and supervised and there is a high level of very effective supervision during pupil breaks. Some staff are trained to drive the school minibus. Pupils' personal hygiene is addressed with respect and sensitivity and some staff have received training from the nurse in medical procedures.
40. The school works hard and successfully to ensure that the respite placements used by many pupils are suited to them. Parents' views are respected and if there are any concerns the school does its best to support parents in securing improvement. Great care is also taken to find the best adult day or residential provision to meet the needs of students about to leave the school and begin their adult lives.
41. Procedures for child protection are sound. The school has a trained designated person and training is provided for all staff. There is a clear child protection policy and local authority guidance is used. There are good relationships with external agencies and with the school nurses.
42. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. A governors' working party was set up last year, focusing on aspects of risk assessment. The staff notify the school keeper of any areas needing attention. Risk assessment data is kept, but not within a cohesive system. Since the last inspection, some improvement has been made to the transport arrival and departure system but long-standing issues related to traffic on the road outside the school remain and require further urgent action. Arrangements for recording practices and some tests for emergency and evacuation procedures are unsatisfactory. The school has not been sufficiently rigorous in seeking external professional advice to satisfactorily resolve these problems, largely associated with the cramped nature of the school site.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. The school enjoys a very good, positive partnership with parents that is founded on excellent relationships and close communication, enhancing the education of pupils and students. There is a very high level of parental satisfaction with the provision made by the school. Since the last inspection, partnership with parents has continued expanding and thriving.
44. Parents hold very positive views about the school, particularly concerning the progress that their children make, and they value and deeply appreciate the hard work and commitment of staff. They find the school very approachable, always ready to listen and concerned to provide help and support. A considerable number of parents feel that homework is not relevant for their children; others that there is insufficient homework set, and a lesser number felt that there are not enough activities outside school for their children. The inspection found the provision of homework to be satisfactory for younger pupils and good for Post-16 students, who have individual homework files. There are limited activities after school because of transport arrangements.

45. There is a strong parents' association that works hard to promote social events throughout the year, culminating in the Summer Fair. It raises considerable funds and attracts the support of many local businesses. A number of parents regularly help in the daily work of the school, for example in the horticulture club or in the weekly library. Others help when pupils go on outings. Parents welcome the opportunity to be involved in the school's work and pupils and students really enjoy their presence. There are regular coffee mornings organised by staff so that parents can meet each other and share any concerns. At the end of the year, the school holds a 'Parents Lunch' to show their appreciation.
46. The quality of information provided to parents is good. There are a few omissions in the annual governors' report but parents receive much useful information from it and the school prospectus. Parents receive a 'Parents File' on first arrival at the school, that they are expected to keep updated. Newsletters are received approximately half-termly. Workshops are held to provide parents with knowledge about, for example, teaching methods used with autistic pupils, or provision for students about to leave Walton Leigh as young adults. Parents receive sheets explaining how to help with learning areas at home, or are provided with, for instance, physiotherapy exercises for their child. About 95 per cent of parents have signed the home-school agreement.
47. Parents make a particularly effective contribution to their children's individual education plans and the very good annual review procedures. Regular meetings are held and parents and carers work very closely with teaching staff to set targets that ensure their children make good progress at school and at home. The level of consultation is impressive and the views of parents are highly valued. Often parents bring much additional information to the notice of the school and this has a most significant impact on children's learning at school and at home.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

48. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher provides very strong and efficient leadership that is directly responsible for consolidating the positive findings of the last inspection and guiding the school on a very effective programme of further development. She shares a clear vision of entirely appropriate educational aims and values with the senior management team which is thoroughly understood by all staff and the governing body, appreciated by parents and woven into the everyday life of the school extremely effectively.
49. Roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined through comprehensive policies and job descriptions that are understood by all concerned. As a result, all staff are able to make effective and valued contributions. The work of the school is founded upon excellent relationships throughout the school and there is an extremely strong commitment to the principle that all pupils and students, irrespective of their individual learning difficulties, should have equal access to appropriate provision.
50. There are extremely effective procedures in place for monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching. These have been crucial in improving provision since the time of the last inspection and are reinforced by very effective systems for induction and appraisal. The clarity and coherence of the school's procedures are demonstrated by the way in which part-time staff dovetail so effectively with their full-time colleagues and also by the way in which supply teachers are able to make such a positive contribution so readily.

51. The governing body is enthusiastic, committed to the school, and it fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors are closely involved in school development planning, their involvement in the process has been instrumental in helping the school to move forward and their attendance at meetings is very good. Individual governors are linked to particular classes, subjects or aspects of the school with the result that, collectively, they are well informed and have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's targets for development are appropriate and governors are diligent in monitoring progress towards them. The quality of financial planning and management is very good. Governors are closely involved through the finance committee, they are careful to ensure that resources are used effectively and all checks and balances are in place.
52. Some statutory regulations, however, are not fully met. The annual report to parents omits any reference to resolutions from the previous annual general meeting, the implementation or amendment of the policy for special educational needs, and information regarding admissions to the school. In addition, formalities regarding the disapplication of pupils from being taught a modern language are not always strictly observed, the marking of registers does not reflect current regulations and the approach to monitoring fire procedures is too casual.
53. The day-to-day administration of the school is very efficient. Procedures are both secure and professional, and the administrative officers continue to make a valuable and very effective contribution to the smooth running of the school. Good use is made of information technology and the school has responded appropriately to the findings of the most recent auditor's report which focused on the refinement of existing sound practice.
54. The combination of full-time and part-time teachers gives the appearance of being over-elaborate but in fact works very well due to the common sense of purpose that pervades the school. The development of the part-time subject specialist role has been effective both in terms of delivering a broader curriculum and in respect of extending subject expertise within the school. Support staff are also very well deployed and the way that some specialise in different aspects of the curriculum, for instance in science, information technology, food technology and swimming, thereby giving very effective support for the teachers concerned, is a particularly positive feature.
55. There is a good range of learning resources across the curriculum and they are used well. Development of resources is closely linked to priorities identified in the school development plan and the school has redressed the shortfalls in some subjects noted at the time of the last inspection. Accommodation is also good and the caretaker and his team do a good job in keeping it clean and well maintained. The school has redressed the majority of shortcomings in accommodation noted previously. There is still no specialist science area but the way in which the curriculum is arranged means that this does not have a particularly detrimental effect on pupils' levels of achievement. The attractive, surrounding grounds are used well to support the curriculum but the compact nature of the school site presents particular difficulties with regard to access and also to evacuation in the event of an emergency.
56. Walton Leigh is a very effective school. It provides very high quality education at a cost per pupil that is average for a school of this type. It therefore provides very good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

The governors, headteacher and staff of the school should:

- Refine and develop the curriculum for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 in order to identify and reinforce cross-curricular learning opportunities and to make sure that all staff are clear as to how pupils will build on their previous learning. This should incorporate and inform the plans that are already in place to deliver vocational educational courses to pupils at Key Stage 4.

(Paragraphs 20, 35, 73, 79, 87, 91, 95, 110)

- Make sure that registers are marked correctly in line with current regulations and that this information is used to monitor pupils' attendance.

(Paragraphs 38, 52)

- As a matter of urgency, consult with the appropriate authorities to ensure that the school can be evacuated in an emergency.

(Paragraphs 42, 52)

When drawing up their action plan, the headteacher and governors should also give consideration to the following minor issues:

- The range of information in the governors' annual report to parents.

(Paragraphs 46, 52)

- Formalities in respect of the disapplication of pupils from a modern language.

(Paragraphs 19, 52, 100)

## **PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS**

57. The provision for students who are Post-16 is very effective and it embodies the aims and values of the school exceptionally well.

58. The levels of achievement of students who are Post-16 are very good. Their development of vocational core skills, particularly those of communication and working with others, is very good and they learn to apply them very effectively in a wide range of activities, age-appropriate situations and vocational educational courses, all of which allow them increasing responsibility and independence. As a team, they apply their number skills when running a mini-enterprise, making and supplying sandwiches to order, and plan and evaluate their work using word processing skills to good effect. Students become familiar with the demands of local further education colleges, and those who are more able successfully cope with the expectations of local employers in such venues as fast food outlets whilst on work-experience programmes. They express themselves gracefully and without any trace of self-consciousness when practising dance exercises in pairs, and work hard to improve their physical skills when using community facilities such as the swimming pool or the leisure centre. They show increasingly mature behaviour, both in school and whilst out in the community,



and also take responsibility for a number of routine tasks around the school, such as relaying bark chippings on the trim-trail, performing these tasks successfully with good grace and often without immediate supervision. Students are keen, willing and attentive; they are also extremely co-operative and relaxed with each other. They thoroughly understand how to express their views in an acceptable manner both within school and in the wider community, as shown by the way in which they responded in an exemplary fashion during their English Speaking Board examination. In all these respects, their social and personal development are exceptionally good.

59. The teaching of students who are Post-16 is never less than satisfactory; in four out of every five lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. This shows a significant improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection, and the quality of teaching is a strength within the department. Teachers understand both the individual needs of the students and the content and structure of the vocational educational courses extremely well. As a result, lessons are very well planned and organised and everyone knows what is expected of them. The quality of relationships is invariably high and all staff, together with external professionals such as further education college instructors, work very effectively as a team. They are supportive of students, encouraging but quietly insistent when dealing with behavioural issues, and extremely successful in establishing an approach that reflects the students' development as young adults. Staff expect the students to be responsible and independent, with the result that they rise to the occasion. In the most successful lessons, a variety of strategies, such as clear, open questioning and signing, are used to very good effect and all staff are skilful at taking students' contributions on board and then actively using them to extend and develop the students' understanding. A particularly good example of this occurred during a lesson on relationships when the teacher used the friendships of students within the group as examples for discussion, sensitively but with good humour. The natural, honest way in which the students responded clearly showed that this sort of approach is embedded within the department and that the students' personal and social development is exceptionally good as a result. Where teaching is less successful, activities tend to become more a matter of routine. Planning is not as clearly related to the development of vocational educational core skills and opportunities are missed for students to plan and assess their own work.
60. The school is using two, accredited, vocational education courses, Towards Independence and Accreditation for Life and Learning, both of which are entirely age-appropriate and highly relevant to the needs of the students. In developing these courses, the school has again responded positively to the findings of the last inspection and a wider range of activities are now planned within the department's curriculum. These build very effectively on students' experience from lower down the school and enable the students to apply their understanding in new and different contexts such as the work experience programmes and further education link courses. There are appropriate plans in place to develop vocational educational opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4 that should ensure that students are even better placed to exploit the opportunities provided for them in the Post-16 department in the near future.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	47	33	12	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	61
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	4.48	School data	0.80

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	1
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	52
Any other minority ethnic group	

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y6 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.9
Average class size	10.16

#### **Education support staff: Y6 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	561

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	741497
Total expenditure	739659
Expenditure per pupil	11930
Balance brought forward from previous year	51148
Balance carried forward to next year	52986

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	61
Number of questionnaires returned	26

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	19	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	42	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	50	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	31	15	0	27
The teaching is good.	69	27	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	35	4	0	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	50	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	54	38	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	65	31	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	27	0	0	15
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	23	15	0	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

61. The school has made a very good response to the findings of the last inspection by implementing very good communication systems, establishing literacy policy and schemes of work and ensuring key vocabulary is planned into every subject of the curriculum.
62. Pupils achieve very well in English, particularly in the crucial skills of communication, including the use of signing, symbols, objects of reference, text and speech. The consistent use of these systems has impacted positively on pupils and students, including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and pupils for whom English is not the home language. There have been good improvements in standards of reading and writing across Post-16 and Key Stages 3 and 4 with the effective introduction of a literacy focus and the 'knock on' effect of higher standards attained by pupils entering the school from feeder schools. Currently, pupils are taught literacy as a discrete subject on two days a week and pupils are split into three ability groups across the two key stages.
63. Pupils develop their communication and listening skills very well and in this respect, the school's provision makes a very significant, positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development. The language of greetings, social and courtesy phrases are emphasised many times in the day and most pupils make choices or state preferences. By the age of 14, the most able pupils are able to respond accurately to three-part instructions and can recall key events from *Oliver Twist* – 'Oliver more'. They listen and match the spoken word to a picture and speak and sign in short utterances, for example in classifying healthy and unhealthy foods as 'good' or 'bad'. Pupils enjoy lessons, work hard, concentrate well and sustain interest. By the age of 16, pupils of higher ability describe briefly the picture on a card and ask questions to obtain information in playing a game. They react spontaneously to a big book story by commenting in shock 'Tiger was shot' and tell the teacher that China is where 'Sammy comes from'. They speculate on the question 'Was Oliver caught'? Pupils of average ability use social words such as 'please' and 'thank you' with a little prompting at times and understand terms such as 'identical to'.
64. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make very good progress particularly when involved in 'Special Time'. Devising and leading their own activity, they learn to indicate their wishes by gesture, vocalising and eye-pointing, when for example, asking for an object from the cupboard. On looking at a book, pupils vocalise in a turn-taking response to the teacher's commentary. Pupils with autistic tendencies join in listening to a big book story which is overwritten with symbols to aid understanding.
65. Students in the Post-16 department acquire excellent communication over time. They converse orally or in sign with voice or speech, with ever-increasing confidence and clarity, discussing for example, their work books, hobbies, food and music preferences and experiences. They express their mixed feelings about going away to college and listen respectfully to each other and the staff. They 'chip in' appropriately to conversation, volunteer information and empathise with each other when a topic of sadness is raised, saying kind words in a sensitive manner. More able students are sociable and always have a friendly greeting for adults despite their shyness.

Relationships are excellent. Students work together co-operatively, listen to each other with care and empathise with the feelings of others.

66. By the age of 14, above average pupils are making at least good and sometimes very good progress in reading skills. They have a small sight vocabulary, use picture cues, identify initial letter sounds and are beginning to recognise consonant clusters such as 'sh' and 'th'. They enjoy reading, using the school library, and like to read at home to parents. With prompting, they remember 'full stop' and 'capital' and understand the reasons for them. Less advanced readers hold the book correctly, recognise some symbols, a few words and initial sounds and enjoy looking at the pictures. They enjoy listening to stories from the big books and like to look at books independently. By the age of 16, pupils of higher ability continue to make good progress. They are reading regularly at home and in school. They state preferences such as 'animal stories'. They read and enjoy the fun of simplified versions of popular books such as 'George's Marvellous Medicine' in words over printed with 'Widget' symbols.
67. Progress in reading skills is overall very good for Post-16 students. The most able are reading fiction, non-fiction and newspaper texts with confidence and a good understanding of the vocabulary. They guess from a context what a word or phrase may mean, and a few use a dictionary. They read and follow recipes, written instructions and key vocabulary for each area of learning. More able pupils show consideration and care for others. They respect their peers unconditionally and have excellent role models from staff. They handle resources such as books and games with care and make very good efforts to write legibly.
68. The achievements of more able pupils in both writing and handwriting skills are good. By the age of 16, they are becoming more confident in forming letters, aware of separating words and use capital and lower case letters correctly. They use computer software to practise spelling three letter words, word processing their work and writing their names. Post-16 students' acquisition of writing skills is excellent. Their writing is purposeful, directed at recording their work and experiences. More able students spell commonly used words correctly and use phonic strategies to help themselves.
69. Teaching in English is very good or better in two thirds of lessons seen, and good in the remainder. This is a very good improvement compared with the last inspection when one in nine lessons were good or better. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of teaching communication within literacy and across the curriculum enable pupils to access learning by the methods that suit each individual. Detailed knowledge and understanding of pupils through ongoing assessment against precise targets fully inform teachers of pupils' skills. Teachers plan lesson content so those pupils learn at their own level of communication and pace. Detailed records of pupils are used well to plan the next lesson so pupils have the necessary reinforcement to enable them to progress. Where teaching is most successful, the lesson is well planned and stimulating, such as a lesson on 'The Tiger'. There is a brisk pace and a succession of short, well-focused learning activities with adults and pupils interacting and communicating well together. An example of very good teaching occurred when students 'built a timetable', facilitating co-operation in communication by careful seating, skilful signing, clear speaking, very good use of resources and the very sensitive handling of all pupils. This resulted in the full and enthusiastic participation by all concerned. Where teaching is less successful, activities are not as carefully adapted for individual pupils, particularly those with complex and sensory learning difficulties, with the result that they are not engaged to the same degree as their more able peers.

70. The implementation of a consistent system of communications and the adapted literacy hour, taught as discrete subjects on two days a week, has been highly successful in helping teachers to be more effective. The way in which the senior management team has been able to support colleagues, both in the classroom and through staff training, has ensured that the teaching is consistently of at least a good standard throughout the school and consistently of a very good standard in the Post-16 department. Pupils have access to a good range of literacy, including poetry, adapted novels, short stories, news and plays. Staff work long and hard to adapt stories such as 'Oliver Twist' and 'George's Marvellous Medicine', and to overprint symbols onto the Oxford Reading Tree reading scheme. The co-ordinator is currently in discussion with the prison service to overwrite in 'Widget' symbols further levels of the reader scheme. Across the school and Post-16 department though, there is no standardised recording of progress in reading skills and experiences, and the more confident students write in print only. The use of information and communication technology is good and pupils' skills are developing well, using opportunities to send E-mail to the headteacher and then going along to her office to see it arrive! The development of a practical and useful school library, with videos and tapes as well as books, has enhanced learning opportunities for pupils and is another positive response to the findings of the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

71. Pupils' and students' achievements and progress in mathematics are good overall. In lessons, their progress and achievements range between satisfactory and very good, reflecting the quality of teaching. Pupils at Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress that quickens as they reach the end of the key stage. Pupils handle a range of coins and can exchange them for a single item. Higher attaining pupils can recognise and match coins up to £1 and over-write the numbers one to five. Pupils with additional and complex special needs can 'read' numbers by touching and vocalising the raised numerals on a clock face. They recognise and can point to appropriate mathematics symbols. At Key Stage 4, those pupils who can verbalise correctly use terms such as 'full', 'nearly full' and 'empty'. They experiment and learn that a perforated container does not hold water and that a funnel enables water to be poured into a narrow necked container. They learn to estimate relative weights and predict which is the heavier of two items. The majority of pupils are able to count to 20, although a few have difficulty recognising individual numbers on a number line. Pupils who have additional and complex special needs concentrate well in focusing on the lesson, eye-pointing or gesturing their response to questions. They can sequence daily events from the timetable symbols; identify the days of the week and are enthusiastic in discussions around subject options on the timetable, reinforcing their sequencing and communication skills. The practical mathematical skills learned in previous key stages are used very effectively by Post-16 students in their accredited vocational course work. At this stage of learning, students are able to shop independently, weighing and pricing selected items, and completing purchases correctly. They learn about 'investment' and 'profit' through the 'mini-enterprises' they set up to raise funds. They learn to use timetables correctly to increase their level of independence as they move towards the next stage of learning or work. In these respects, the subject makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Pupils and students are generally well behaved in lessons and on outside visits. They enjoy lessons and make significant contributions to the well-planned question and answer sessions.
72. The quality of teaching is good overall and frequently very good at Key Stage 4. Lessons are well planned and well paced so that time is not wasted and pupils and

students make good progress. Teachers and support staff work well together and relationships with the pupils and students are excellent. There is good evidence of signing and co-active signing for those with additional and complex special needs and all staff work hard to improve the basic communication skills of pupils and students. Management of group work is very good, enabling pupils and students to move fluently between the planned activities; very good use is made of resources, particularly to support the learning of those with additional and complex special needs. For example, the rhythmic pattern of 'birthday bumps' for a soft toy, encouraged pupils to echo the rhythm by gesturing and vocalising. Teaching staff make effective use of simple mathematical terms to reinforce the special nature of mathematics. Where teaching is less successful, the challenging behaviour of some individual pupils disrupts lessons with the result that other pupils' concentration is disturbed and their learning compromised.

73. The curriculum appropriately emphasises practical skill requirements for the subject although opportunities to reinforce mathematical skills and understanding in the context of other subjects are not always exploited. The department is led very effectively by the subject leader who has organised the curriculum so that the progression of pupils is assured through a programme that builds fluently on their previous learning. A sound baseline assessment is used from which the progress of individual pupils and students is measured and the subject leader monitors the planning and teaching of lessons. The school has successfully adopted the National Numeracy Strategy and is well prepared for the new curriculum in September.
74. The school has made a very good response to the last inspection report. The quality of teaching, the progress of pupils and students and their attitudes towards lessons have all improved considerably.

## **SCIENCE**

75. The school's provision for science is now good. This represents a satisfactory improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection.
76. Pupils, particularly those who are more able, make good gains in learning at both key stages. Pupils are interested in their work and co-operate well. They know the difference between natural and artificial light sources and have a basic understanding of how electricity works. They reinforce their understanding of sound by conducting simple experiments listening to different musical instruments. They record their findings through simple written tasks and tick sheets and, although pupils with more complex needs have difficulty in communicating their ideas through speech or signing, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they make good gains in understanding over time. Pupils in Key Stage 3 can identify where the heart is in the body and appreciate that vigorous exercise makes it beat faster. Pupils at Key Stage 4 consolidate such knowledge well, complete graphs exploring the effects of different exercise and know that exercise is good for their hearts. Students who are Post-16 apply such knowledge effectively in the context of their accredited vocational courses, particularly those that relate to healthy living such as sex education and drugs education. As such, the subject makes a very significant contribution to their personal and social development.
77. Because science is delivered as a discrete subject on one of the two specialist days, there were few opportunities to observe it being taught. Furthermore, the subject leader, who normally takes the science classes, was absent and so the lessons were



taken by a teacher who is not accustomed to teaching science at short notice. However, the quality of the planning, together with the very effective support provided by the assistant who normally works alongside the science classes, helped to ensure that the quality of the provision was not compromised.

78. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, particularly with more able pupils. Lessons are carefully planned with a variety of strategies that both extend the pupils and keep them interested in the work in hand. Staff work very well together as a team, relationships are good and praise and encouragement are used to good effect with the result that pupils gradually become more independent and work out answers on their own. A good range of resources is used well, lessons are brisk and pupils work is clearly marked.
79. There is a comprehensive scheme of work and links with other areas of the curriculum are recognised, although these are not always identified in sufficient detail to make it clear how pupils will reinforce their knowledge and understanding in other areas. It is, however, relevant to the pupils' needs, particularly in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles, and the lack of a specialist science area does not adversely affect the delivery of the curriculum.

## **ART**

80. The achievements and progress of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are good. No lessons of art were seen in the Post-16 unit but work from their lessons at the local further education college suggest that the achievements and progress of students are at least good and sometimes very good. Some very good pottery work was seen and students make good use of their work in selling it to raise funds. At Key Stage 3, pupils have observed changes in clay after firing and glazing. They handle different modelling materials, such as clay, plasticene and papier-mâché. They form clay by rolling, pressing, coiling and squeezing. Pupils experiment with a range of wooden and metal tools to form, join and decorate their clay models and pots. They express preferences about the texture of clay at different stages from forming to glaze firing. Higher attaining pupils are able to form small pots and some work imaginatively to build models and masks. They add details such as hair and beards to create individual masks from the basic pressed form. Pupils with additional and complex special needs are able to experience art materials through the sensory activities and can form simple shapes with some support. Work seen during the inspection shows that good use is made of artists such as Van Gogh and Mondrian to extend pupils' experience of colour. At Key Stage 4, the pupils extend the range of materials they use and create multi-media group compositions from cloth, string, paper and other collage materials. Some very good pictures, based on Van Gogh's 'Sunflower' paintings, are on display, showing good use of sponge and brush to create the texture and colour required. Some individually interesting photo portrait paintings, based on the work of Andy Warhol, show good observational skills. Very good teaching of the marbling technique of colour blending leads to impressive colour studies across the key stages. Excellent examples of cut, folded and curled paper on display show evidence of the teaching of a very good visiting paper sculptor earlier in the year. Group compositions show evidence of the pupils' ability to work well together.
81. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. The specialist teacher is supported by a very good specialist support assistant and they work well together to provide a broad range of creative experiences for pupils. Lessons are well planned to take account of the wide range of special educational needs of pupils, and as a result,

pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They respect each other's work and handle tools and materials safely and sensibly. They are enthusiastic and hard working in lessons, enjoying the multi-sensory experience and the creative challenge of art lessons. They provide a working ethos that is productive and creative and which is enjoyed by the pupils. Most lessons have a clear structure, planned and supported by careful questioning, that enables pupils to learn as they make and to come together to critically compare each other's work.

82. The subject is led well by the specialist teacher who monitors the subject and assesses the progress of pupils very effectively, using her own format to monitor curriculum coverage as well as progress. There are too few secondary sources, such as books and art reproductions, but the physical resources are good. They include adjustable tables and sink for pupils with additional and complex special needs but opportunities to use information and communication technology to reinforce the subject are often missed.
83. The school has made a very good response to the last inspection report. Teaching and learning have shown very good improvement, as has the progress of pupils. There is now a much wider range of three-dimensional work undertaken, some of which is on a relatively large scale, and the subject makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

84. The school's provision for design and technology is now good. This represents a significant improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection.
85. Pupils' levels of achievement are good at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, pupils can chop, mix and stir ingredients with varying degrees of help when making a fruit salad, and can handle a tin-opener. They can copy simple bridges using construction toys and research ideas using information technology. They then experiment with other designs, using a variety of materials to see which one works best. Pupils at Key Stage 4 display greater confidence and independence when tackling similar activities; they can name ingredients found in Asian cooking, such as onions, peppers and ginger, and know that some of them come from India. Pupils with more complex needs access such activities through a sensory approach, and can name utensils and ingredients with the help of signs and symbols. Pupils enjoy the activities and show some understanding of cultural issues when considering different foods from around the world. They learn to think for themselves and come to decisions either as individuals or as members of a team, notably when working alongside pupils from local mainstream schools. In these ways, the subject also makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development, and Post-16 students are able to develop such skills very effectively in the context of their accredited vocational courses and through the mini-enterprise whereby they prepare and sell sandwiches in school.
86. The quality of teaching throughout the school is never less than satisfactory. It is usually good and, on occasion, very good. Teachers know their pupils very well and lessons are carefully planned to take account of their individual difficulties. Well-equipped teaching areas and good quality resources are used to good effect and all staff work very well together as a team. Relationships are extremely positive and behaviour is managed well; staff are very encouraging with the result that pupils become increasingly independent. Where teaching is most successful, as in a Key

Stage 3 lesson on 'Bridges', a wide variety of strategies are used very well to make sure that pupils of all abilities stay on task; teaching is brisk and lively, and on-the-spot photographs record the pupils' achievements. In less successful lessons, questioning is not so focused; for example, evaluation is limited to asking pupils what they liked. The pace of the lesson tails away and opportunities to record pupils' participation and progress, though planned, are not taken up.

87. The school has developed a good scheme of work that reflects the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, which is highly relevant and which provides a good foundation for several vocational modules within the Post-16 curriculum. It also recognises the contribution design and technology can make to other subjects, for example mathematics and science, although these are not explored in detail. The school has invested considerable resources in equipping specialist teaching areas and this has had a positive impact on pupils' levels of achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

88. Pupils' levels of achievement are good in geography at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
89. Pupils are aware of their immediate environment and the orientation of the school and grounds from directed first-hand experiences. Further afield, they identify the main physical and human features which give Box Hill its character. From the top of the hill, the more able pupils identify geographical features such as the river, town, bridge, church and trees. They concentrate hard to identify the features and check them off on their worksheets. They show care and respect in handling objects on a touch bench, such as fossils, skulls of animals and oak twigs, and are astonished to learn that at one time Box Hill was under the sea. Before the visit, they prepare well by looking at photographs of features and learning to use appropriate geographical vocabulary and on return, they have photographs of themselves to remind them of what they did. Pupils with profound and complex learning needs experience the contrasting environment effectively through a sensory approach.
90. The planning of geography is based appropriately on the principle of relevance and first-hand experience. Resources for the present unit of work are of a good standard and are sturdy enough for pupils to handle. Lesson plans are carefully prepared and appropriate learning objectives selected for the pupils concerned. Teachers and learning support staff work very well together to support and encourage pupils. They show excellent understanding of the needs of the pupils so that the lesson, in this case the visit to Box Hill, is an exciting and challenging experience. As a result, pupils enjoy their visits, behave in an exemplary fashion and make good progress in their observations. Worksheets are well prepared using clear picture symbols that the more able pupils in the group clearly understand so that they concentrate well and persevere in their efforts to recognise the features they are looking for in the distance. They worked sensibly alongside each other and show tolerance of less able pupils. In these respects, the subject makes a very significant contribution to their social development.
91. Geography has a low time allocation on the timetable but the quality of learning is good. There are informal cross-curricular opportunities for reinforcement of experiences in geography across the curriculum, particularly in history, but recording of these opportunities has yet to be developed. Key vocabulary is identified in medium- and short-term planning, and information and communication technology is used regularly.

## **HISTORY**

92. Pupils' levels of achievement in history are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Standards of achievement in history are good. Like geography, history has a low time allocation and the fundamental principle of linking into first-hand experiences is the same.
93. Pupils have a good sense of time past, their own experiences and daily routines, and from visits to such places as Hampton Court and the seaside. More able pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 recognise photographs of themselves and their families in the past, and features of pictures of people and issues from the past. They are aware of old and new buildings and sites in the locality. They have first-hand sensory experience from physical contact with the area and artefacts. They listen to stories, music and personal accounts, and play games. They revisit local sites with their parents as part of their homework. Pupils with complex and profound learning difficulties experience repeated sensory experiences to remind them of what they did. For example, following a visit to the seaside where they experienced water and sand, they handle sand and water at school. More able pupils enjoy talking about their experiences, such as a first time ever at the seaside.
94. Teaching in history is well planned from long- and medium-term plans based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study at Key Stages 3 and 4, with careful reference to nationally recognised schemes. The teaching is of a good standard. Teachers draw up detailed daily lesson plans and identify clear learning objectives which they differentiate for different groups. They ensure that pupils have good opportunities to discuss and experience artefacts and supplement language suitably with sign, objects of reference and good quality learning resources. There are very good opportunities planned within lessons for personal, social, moral and cultural development and personal learning objectives from individual education plans are woven into the pupils' work. Relationships are excellent, with the result that pupils behave well in lessons, co-operate well with adults and respond positively to encouragement.
95. Since the last inspection, the subject co-ordinator has devised a good quality policy and scheme of work and the staff have good support for monitoring the teaching and delivery of the subject. This represents a very positive response to the findings of the last inspection. Opportunities for recording and using cross-curricular experiences, particularly with geography, are not formally developed. Planning for literacy is embedded in the identification of key vocabulary and there is planned use of a good range of information and communication technology.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

96. Teaching and learning are consistently very good through all key stages. The progress and achievements of pupils and students are very good, reflecting the very good teaching found in lessons. The good resources for teaching pupils and students over the full range of special educational needs are effectively used to support this very good progress. The school has made an excellent response to the last inspection when the subject was not on the timetable as a discrete subject. The subject is now fully planned and monitored. Staff are trained and working effectively across the subject range, from the use of sensory switches to word processing, E-mail and the Internet. The system of recording and reporting is very good.

97. Pupils at Key Stage 3 who have additional and complex special needs recognise items on the computer screen as they build up in sequence. They use switch pads and buttons, with some support, to move between programs. Those who use the sensory room are aware of cause and effect in using buttons, switches and sound activators to operate the sensory resources, and develop their focusing and tracking skills very effectively. Higher attaining pupils use the Internet to download information about Mosques and learn that a pressure switch operates the 'juicer' they use to make drinks. They are able to type their name and address on the word processing program. At Key Stage 4, pupils with additional and complex special needs use interactive stories to reinforce their tracking skills as well as their listening skills. Pupils use a paint program to support their understanding of line, form and colour. The very good range of programs enables pupils to develop a wide range of communication skills to support their progress in other subject areas. Post-16 students make very good progress in their fine motor skills as they rise to the challenge of manipulating keyboard and mouse to explore programs. Higher attaining students use the computer independently, completing spelling and writing exercises. They recognise upper and lower case letters and are able to use different types of keyboard to operate the computer. The work on domestic equipment such as radios and tape recorders, prepares students effectively for the practical application of information and communication technology in the Post-16 unit. One or two students have sent internal E-mail letters using the newly networked computers.
98. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Teachers and support staff work well as a team and support assistants take tutorial and group sessions without direct supervision from the class teacher very effectively. The preparation and planning for lessons are very good. No time is lost in the planned carousel of activities that enables pupils and students to build on their skills and experience in a programmatic way. Very good relationships between staff and pupils are found in all lessons with the result that pupils and students respond to lessons positively and are keen to develop their skills. Staff are reassuring, positive and challenging with the result that pupils and students are well behaved and patient in lessons, taking turns and using resources appropriately and with care. Very good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are offered to pupils and students which in turn, make a very significant contribution to their personal and social development.
99. The subject leader has a clear sense of direction for information and communication technology. Information and communication technology has a rightful place at the heart of the communication curriculum. He has developed a very good baseline assessment system to start the process of learning from individual knowledge and experience of the subject. He has successfully used the National Grid for Learning fund to set up a networked computer system that is having a major impact on the school curriculum as a whole. The school itself is on the local authority web site and is developing E-mail contacts and a web site of its own. The subject is a priority for developing teaching and learning at the school. Teachers and support assistants are undergoing basic training to bring them to the level required by the new government training initiative for schools.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

100. A modern foreign language is not taught at Walton Leigh. The school has, after appropriate consultation with parents, decided to disapply all pupils from this part of the National Curriculum, a process which takes place at the time of the pupils' first annual review after admission to the school. Statutory requirements are not fully met,

however, since the school does not always observe the formality of amending the pupils' statement of special educational needs to reflect this fact.

## **MUSIC**

101. The provision for music is very good. The subject plays a significant part in the everyday life of the school and endorses the aims of the school particularly well.
102. Pupils throughout the school enjoy music. They are keen to participate in lessons and their levels of achievement are very good. Pupils of all abilities can recognise instruments by the sounds they make, and more able ones know what others, such as 'maraccas' and 'keyboards' are called. They have a good grasp of simple rhythms and join in familiar songs and rhymes with evident pleasure, not only during music lessons but also on other occasions such as whole-school or class assemblies. They play their instruments at the right time, concentrate well and listen to others in the group when it is their turn. Pupils develop and apply their listening and performing skills very effectively and with enthusiasm in a variety of contexts, such as the after-school orchestra, the end of term production of 'South Pacific' or concerts in Guildford Cathedral. In all these various ways, the subject makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal, social and cultural development. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties make a considerable effort to respond to the sound and feel of instruments in music therapy sessions, becoming more alert when the piano is played, and learning that they can make an audible contribution by responding on the drum. They persevere well and gradually establish a very effective musical rapport during these sessions which they then transfer into the ordinary classroom setting. In this respect, the subject makes a highly significant contribution to those pupils' spiritual and social development, and also helps to reinforce and extend the basic skills of communication to very good effect.
103. The quality of teaching in music lessons is good and often very good. Staff work very well together to deliver a good range of musical activities that are carefully planned and executed by the supply teacher who is covering the long-term absence of staff. As a result, all pupils, including those with more complex needs, are actively engaged and the contrast embedded within the activities reinforces pupils' understanding of concepts such as 'loud' and 'quiet', and extends pupils' experience of different moods and styles very effectively. Simple but highly effective resources, such as homemade diagrams that illustrate how songs and orchestral pieces are constructed, are generally used to very good effect, as are a wide range of very good quality instruments and recordings.
104. It would not have been appropriate to observe a music therapy session but scrutiny of video evidence, which is used by staff to provide accurate and informative assessments of pupils' progress over time, shows this aspect of the school's provision to be extremely good. Staff concerned establish excellent relationships with individual pupils, encouraging them to make their own contribution in ways that actively promote the pupils' personal and social development. There is also very good liaison with the subject co-ordinator, the subject teacher and with class teachers. This ensures that pupils' progress in such sessions is recognised and that their skills are applied effectively within the wider classroom setting.
105. The school has consolidated and extended the good provision in music noted at the time of the last inspection. The recruitment of a specialist supply teacher to cover the long-term absence of staff, together with the enthusiasm of the temporary subject

leader, has ensured that this situation has been maintained and that the broad subject curriculum continues to be adapted effectively in the light of the progress made by the pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

106. The provision for physical education is good. The school has consolidated the positive findings from the last inspection; improvements in the quality of teaching are particularly notable.
107. Pupils' and students' levels of achievement are good, and often very good, particularly when developing and applying skills whilst using sports and leisure facilities in the wider community as part of their vocational educational coursework. Their attitudes are very positive, they thoroughly enjoy their lessons, and they respond well to encouragement and prompting, both from school staff and sports instructors. In swimming, younger pupils gradually gain confidence and learn to move through and under the water with increasing fluency so that by the time they are ready to leave school, most more able students have developed an effective, if laboured, front crawl style. This progress is recognised through the award of Swimming Teacher Association water skills and distance certificates. Pupils show increasing independence when getting changed and students behave extremely responsibly alongside members of the public at the local community pool. Pupils with more complex needs gain confidence in the water whilst working in the small, but well equipped, school pool. They often make a considerable physical effort to participate and succeed and develop excellent, trusting relationships with the staff who work with them in the water.
108. In gymnastics, pupils follow the clear demonstrations and instructions provided by staff, and can link simple movements such as jumps and stretching exercises together. They also use equipment such as the balance beam with confidence. Post-16 students develop such skills in the context of paired dance routines in which their movements and actions reflect the music particularly well. More able students express themselves with poise and precision, whilst supporting and encouraging their less able peers to do likewise. They demonstrate their work to their classmates and applaud each other spontaneously at the end of each piece. Pupils and students learn to pass and receive the ball in football and demonstrate excellent sporting attitudes during a casual kick-around at lunchtime. They also apply their physical skills and abilities to very good effect in the context of adventurous activities such as canoeing and skiing, and rise to the challenge of assault courses with determination whilst on residential trips. Pupils and students with more profound and complex learning difficulties also access the subject through such activities as music and movement, and through physiotherapy programmes. They respond very well, develop excellent relationships when working one to one with staff and make good progress towards their individual targets. In all these various ways, the subject makes an extremely positive contribution to the pupils' and students' personal and social development.
109. The quality of teaching in physical education is never less than satisfactory. It is often very good and, on occasion, excellent. All staff are patient and encouraging with pupils and praise is used appropriately and effectively. Relationships are excellent, activities are very well planned and organised and staff understand the students' individual difficulties very well. Teachers give clear, unambiguous demonstrations and provide good role models with regard to health and safety issues. These features

combined particularly well in an excellent dance session with Post-16 students in which the teacher was extremely successful in establishing an atmosphere that actively encouraged everyone to be creative. In less successful lessons, opportunities to reinforce other subjects, such as mathematics, are not fully exploited and opportunities for older pupils and students to record their own progress are underdeveloped. However, support staff are very well deployed and the way in which other professionals, such as physiotherapists, swimming teachers and community dance workers, play their part is an extremely positive feature and one which embodies the aims of the school well.

110. The scheme of work is well balanced. It recognises all six areas of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and the subject has an appropriately high profile in the school. The way in which the scheme of work is organised though, makes it difficult for the school to ensure that pupils do not revisit activities unnecessarily. Opportunities for cross-curricular links with other important areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics and science, although recognised in principle by the school, are not clearly identified in planning. However, the current plans to introduce vocational educational courses at Key Stage 4 should go some considerable way in helping the school to address these minor weaknesses in its provision.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

111. The school has responded very positively to the findings of the last inspection. Provision for religious education is now very good and the subject embodies the aims and values of the school particularly well.
112. Pupils and Post-16 students make very good progress in religious education. They behave sensibly, respond well to questions and take a pride in their work. They treat the moral implications that lie behind parables such as 'The Good Samaritan' and 'The Prodigal Son' seriously during role-play and are able to translate them to relevant, present-day contexts such as going to a football match or participating in a residential trip to the Isle of Wight. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of such issues as 'friendship' and 'caring for others' and in these various ways, their personal, moral and social development is excellent. Pupils and students recall and record events associated with major world religions such as Easter, Eid and Holi, and understand, for example, that the birth of Christ is what gives Christmas its significance for Christians. They listen attentively and respect the ideas inherent in other faiths; in these ways their spiritual and cultural development is very good.
113. Teaching in religious education is never less than very good and is, on occasion, excellent. The teacher understands the subject very well, and is very sensitive to the pupils' often complex needs. Lessons are extremely well planned and resources, such as puppets, are used imaginatively and to excellent effect. Relationships are excellent, support staff play a very effective part and all pupils are actively engaged as a result. The careful use of language means that pupils of all abilities extend their speaking and listening skills and consolidate their understanding well. Drama is used to particularly good effect in this respect, as in an excellent lesson on 'The Good Samaritan' in which a football fan was mugged on his way to the match. Similar, positive teaching qualities are evident in whole-school and class assemblies where planned opportunities for reflection and the consideration of ideas help to reinforce pupils' understanding in the subject.



114. The co-ordination of religious education is very effective. There is a good scheme of work that actively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is endorsed by a clear policy that reflects the locally agreed syllabus, and is reinforced by cross-curricular links to other subjects such as personal and social education. It is also sufficiently flexible to take account of topical events as they occur and to reflect the faith of individual pupils if necessary. There is a good range of artefacts, visits are planned to local places of worship and the subject makes a particularly significant contribution to the school's provision for collective worship.