

INSPECTION REPORT

ABBAY HILL SCHOOL

Stockton on Tees

LEA area: Stockton on Tees

Unique reference number: 111787

Headteacher: Mr Mike Vening

Reporting inspector: Robert Thompson
10781

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 March 2000

Inspection number: 189767

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

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:	Ketton Road Stockton on Tees Cleveland
Postcode:	TS19 8BU
Telephone number:	01642 677113
Fax number:	01642 679198
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Otter
Date of previous inspection:	15 May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Robert Thompson	Registered inspector	Religious education	What sort of school is it?
			School's results & achievements
			What should the school do to improve further
Judi Bedawi	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Links with community, work experience
			Partnership with parents
Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Information technology	How well are pupils or students taught?
		Art	
		Equal opportunities	
Susan Hunt	Team inspector	English	Curricular and other opportunities
Mary Kingsley	Team inspector	History	
		Physical education	Care for pupils?
		Special educational needs	
Roy Lund	Team inspector	Science	Curricular and other opportunities (S)
		Design and technology	
Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Geography	
		English as an additional language	
Graham Pirt	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is school led and managed?
		Music	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Limited
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Abbey Hill is a very large special school. It caters for 211 pupils between the ages of eleven and nineteen years with moderate, severe and profound and multiple difficulties, for pupils with autistic tendencies and pupils with clinical anxiety. Two hundred and five pupils are white, one of African heritage and five of Pakistani heritage. There are two travellers on roll. One hundred and fifteen (54.5 per cent) pupils are eligible for free school meals. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years. All pupils, except four who are on assessment and those on the Norton site who have clinical anxiety, have statements of Special Educational Need. The school has been in an Education Action Zone since January 2000, and has recently achieved Technology College status. Twenty-one pupils and students are disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school is based on two sites, the main site at Ketton Road, and a smaller site at Norton, about two miles away, which deals with some Key Stage 4 pupils and Post-16 students. Attendance figures show a fall, overall, although this hides an improvement in the rate of unauthorised absence. There has been an increase in the number of clinically anxious students, all of whom have been refusing school for at least one year or more. There has also been a significant increase in the number of pupils and students in the sensory education base, from 13 to 21.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Abbey Hill School is very effective in providing high quality education for its pupils and students who have a wide range of special educational needs. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Teaching is a strength of the school. Leadership and management is very good, and the headteacher and knowledgeable governing body give very good strategic direction to the work of the school. Overall, the school has a low unit cost and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is a strength of the school.
- Relationships in school are very good.
- Careers and vocational opportunities are very good.
- The community's contribution to school life is very good.
- Overall, provision for pupils and students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Meeting educational priorities through financial planning is very good.
- The governing body's strategic direction of the school is very good.
- Pupils and students make very good progress in their independence skills.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is very good.

What could be improved

- Changing and toilet facilities in the sensory education base are inadequate.
- Storage for art, science and in the sensory education base are inadequate.
- The governing body does not fulfil its statutory duties regarding its report to parents.
- A policy for homework throughout the school.
- Ensure that all reports to parents consistently meet the standard of best practice already established in school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1996; since that time it has met all its OFSTED action plan issues. The school now has a curriculum that is fully broad, balanced and relevant for pupils of all attainment levels. Pupils in the sensory education base have access to subject specialist bases. The quality of teaching has improved. Teaching is now a strength of the school. Monitoring and

evaluation of teaching is strong. Provision for pupils spiritual development has improved. Opportunities for external accreditation have increased. Arrangements for recording and monitoring attendance across the school now meet recommended guidelines. The number of special needs assistants has increased. The school has achieved Technology College status. Accommodation at the Norton site has been greatly improved, including a new science laboratory. The value for money the school provides has improved and is now very good. The school is in a good position to make further improvement.

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	C	C	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	C		

* IEPs are Individual Education Plans for pupils with special educational needs.

A small number of students have achieved GCSE passes in English, history, ICT, mathematics and art. Some students achieved SMP mathematics at Levels 1 and 2. Students also achieved CLAIT awards in ICT. Overall, pupils and students make good progress across all subjects of the curriculum, particularly when compared to the targets set as individuals. Pupils and students with additional special needs, such as autistic tendencies, make particularly good progress in their work. This represents very good achievement for pupils and students.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils attitudes to learning are good. They settle to work quickly and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good, particularly in classrooms.
Personal development and relationships	There are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Attention to the development of pupils social and independence skills is good.
Attendance	Pupils like school, but overall attendance is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 11.

Pupils and students concentrate well, work independently, collaborate and persevere until tasks are completed. They settle quickly in lessons. The atmosphere in classroom is purposeful and contributes significantly to pupils and students achievements. Relationships in classes are very good, and pupils and students are very friendly and helpful to visitors. There are clear expectations of work and behaviour, and those pupils on behaviour programmes are targeted well, and supported by special needs assistants. The school council runs well, and gives pupils and students an opportunity to contribute to the running of their school. Pupils and students like coming to school, but there is a significant minority, particularly in Year 11, whose attendance is poor.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen, overall	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching across the school was predominantly good, with 99 per cent being satisfactory or better; 80 per cent was good or better, and 33 per cent very good or better. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in art, design and technology, music and science. Very good teaching was seen in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT. Teachers and special needs assistants work very well together. Teaching is a strength of the school and enhances the achievements of all pupils meeting the wide range of needs effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant and meets the needs of the broad range of pupils and students.
Provision for pupils personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, the quality of the provision for pupils and students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, care for pupils and students is satisfactory. However, there is a significant deficiency of toilets and changing areas for the sensory education base pupils and students.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to meet the wide range of needs of pupils and students. Extra-curricular activities are excellent. Opportunities for the development of pupils and students spiritual development have been improved. Social, moral and cultural opportunities are very good. There is a high quality of care for all pupils and students, but the toilet and changing facilities for pupils and students in the sensory education base are inadequate; they do not meet the needs of the pupils and students and impinge on their privacy and dignity. Although parents are pleased with the school, a small number of parents would like more information sent home in the form of home- school books for the lower attaining, non-communicating children, and homework for the higher attaining pupils and students.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, key staff and governors provide strong leadership with clear vision.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very good in shaping the direction of the school, but some aspects of the governors report to parents are not fulfilled.
The schools evaluation of its performance	This is good.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively and efficiently. Consideration has been given to the use of selected funding in the light of the availability of technology funding.

There is an adequate number of staff for most areas of the school. However, in the sensory education base there are times when there are insufficient teaching staff. Accommodation is very good at the Ketton Road site, but with a significant deficiency in toilet facilities in the sensory education base and lack of storage for pupils frames, chairs and equipment. Learning resources are good. Governors are very influential in shaping the direction of the school. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is strong. The shared commitment of staff and governors to school improvement is a strength of the school. Financial planning, which supports educational priorities, is strong.

PARENTS AND CARERS VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parents think pupils are well taught. • Most parents feel comfortable when approaching the school. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see more work sent home.

The inspectors judgements support parents very positive views of the school and what pleases them most. The team also support the view that homework could be more structured and regular.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils and students for whom this school caters against age related national expectations or averages. The report does however give examples of what pupils and students know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement, progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils and students statements, annual reviews and Individual Education Plans as well as lesson observations. The very complex nature of pupils and students difficulties means that there is a wide range of skills and abilities within each group.
2. Pupils make good progress and achievement across the curriculum. In English last year several students achieved national standards in GCSE English writing. Three obtained grade B passes, two grade C passes, three grade D passes and one each at grades E and G. Overall achievement in English is good. Standards in speaking and listening are very good. Pupils enter the school often lacking in confidence in expressing themselves, but soon improve and express themselves clearly, regardless of subject. Achievement in reading is good. Pupils make good progress through the school. Achievement in writing is satisfactory. Pupils follow handwriting programmes and this helps in the presentation of their work. Information technology is used well to redraft work and enhance presentation. Pupils learn well. Most are enthusiastic, interested and very co-operative in lessons. They often work independently and are supportive of their peers. The positive atmosphere in class allows the teacher to concentrate on pupils academic development without distractions.
3. In mathematics, pupils and students achievement is consistently good across all key stages and at Post-16. Last year one pupil achieved a grade D at GCSE level. Fifteen students passed SMP mathematics Level 1, and eight students passed SMP mathematics Level 2. The majority of pupils enter the school with very limited mathematical skills, lacking in confidence, and with considerable gaps in their mathematical language. Pupils become progressively more confident and capable with number work and their use of mathematical language. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils work on data-handling and produce charts from surveys carried out. They use time and money in practical activities and become familiar with fractions, such as halves and quarters. Autistic pupils understand the value of coins and that coins of different values may be used together to give an exact amount. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils follow a GCSE course, using decimals and ratios, and are aware of prime numbers and factors. Lower attaining pupils use fractions in a practical way, such as one chocolate bar and a half expressed as 1.5. Older pupils use tally charts well.
4. Activities are provided which require pupils and students to use their mathematical knowledge across all subjects of the curriculum. Mathematical concepts and language are well reinforced in other lessons, such as physical education when pupils are bouncing in their rebound therapy, counting the number of bounces. Pupils count as they pass the basketball to one another, trying to beat their last target, before they drop the ball. In science and design technology and food technology, pupils use measuring skills well. In French, pupils count to thirty, reinforcing their mathematical skills. In art, design and technology and food technology, pupils use their number skills well, counting and measuring. In music, pupils count as they keep to the beat.
5. In science progress and achievement is consistently good and often very good. When pupils enter the school their scientific skills are often at an early stage of development. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils select equipment, and set up a fair test. Ask questions, such as What happens if? for example, if rock salt is dissolved in water. Lower-attaining pupils know that materials can change, such as in an experiment to see how many books were needed to crush a paper cylinder compared to folded paper. At Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils set up apparatus safely. They understand electrical circuits, how heat loss occurs, and have good knowledge of parts of the human body. Lower attainers know that the human body needs to keep warm. They also study electricity and know how to use switches to turn lights off

and on. Students at Post-16, are generally those with a history of having great difficulty attending school, so they follow a similar course to pupils at Key Stage 4, but at a greater depth.

6. Pupil achievement in ICT is good. The new PC platform, recently installed as a replacement for outdated equipment, is still being developed and has therefore found pupils and students lacking familiarity and feeling frustrated by the demands of new publishing, word processing and design software.
7. Pupils and students in the sensory education base use switch pads and toggle switches to good effect when working to see the cause and effect of pressing switches. What happens when? What happens if? By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils log on and find programs, control a mouse to select items and icons. They select and change colours, save and print work. By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils follow the CLAIT information technology course. They follow the program target by target and use writing and graphics programmes confidently. Information technology is used well in other subjects to draw, write and enhance pupils work. Pupils in French lessons use listening centres, and some use La Francais interactive program to extend their studies.
8. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achievement in history and geography. During Key Stage 3, pupils gain knowledge of the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the rise of Nazism and Fascism in Europe. They linked their skill to geography by using atlases to find cities in Germany and other countries in Europe. During Key Stage 4, pupils study the Vikings, draw pictures of how they think Vikings would look, and described them as big, strong and fierce-looking. In geography, during Key Stage 3, pupils understand about traffic surveys and types of transport on the roads. They use maps and satellite projections of Britain well. During Key Stage 4, pupils prepare for GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement, depending upon their progress. They understand about tourism and its effects on the environment. Sometimes it brings prosperity to an area, but sometimes it destroys the local environment.
9. Pupils achieve well in music. Higher attainers demonstrate an understanding of pitch and rhythm. Pupils in the sensory education base beat a range of percussion instruments and try to keep a rhythm. Pupils and students work very hard and good learning takes place. Pupils are fully involved and remain on task for long periods of time. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils use keyboards, practising the use of both left and right hand playing. Pupils are beginning to understand and read from notation. Pupils play individually and in unison demonstrating a good sense of rhythm and the ability to sight-read. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have a good knowledge of chord structure, and are able to identify and name notes. They are able to improvise tunes around a chord.
10. Pupils achieve well in their French. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils count to thirty and recall vocabulary for all sports they play in school and at home. Work is matched well to pupils abilities, some using individually prepared worksheets, some using more traditional text books. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils know, understand and use confidently a range of phrases, referring to ages, names, countries and nationalities. Higher-attaining pupils used conventional textbooks well. The pace in lessons is good and pupils have good recall of past work and learn new vocabulary well.
11. Pupils achieve well in physical education. Pupils and students in the sensory education base use a trampoline for their Rebound therapy. They make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils develop their basketball skills well. They improve their passing, catching and shooting skills. Higher-attaining pupils run, move and pivot well during practice. Pupils at Key Stage 4, follow a course towards a Certificate of Achievement in physical education. During their trampolining session, pupils learn to perform a range of drops during a routine. They learn the names, back drop and front drop, so they can perform them again in future lessons. At Key Stage 4, they develop their basketball skills and are competent at passing and receiving a ball when working in pairs.

12. Pupils and students make good progress in their personal, social and health education, particularly during their careers programme. They work independently on their assignments, gaining new knowledge and understanding of toxic substances. They show good understanding of writing for jobs and the terminology used in advertisements. They understand the difference between a temporary job and part-time job. Their speaking and listening skills have developed well. They hold mature discussions about types of jobs and whether or not they could do, or would like to do, these jobs. Students use information technology very well to enhance their written work, and graphics programs to design posters, such as safety posters on toxic substances.
13. In design and technology, pupils, and students, progress and achievement is good. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher-attaining pupils sketch designs, measure accurately, mark out and cut wood and other materials. They fix materials using pins, nails and screws. Lower attainers mark wood, and cut to shape with help. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils discuss their designs and make, process and produce design sheets of a high quality. They develop their making skills well by the use of machinery to cut, shape and drill. Lower attainers and autistic pupils are beginning to assemble materials, for example, a sign for their base. At Post-16, students are involved in enterprise schemes in which they make garden furniture and toy boxes of high quality. They demonstrate high skills in designing and making, including the use of machinery and tools.
14. In Home Food Studies (HFS), at Key Stage 3, high attainers select, mark out, cut and sew material and appliqué, some with help. They select, weigh and measure ingredients and mix them to make pancakes. They cook one side and toss to cook the other. Low attainers and autistic pupils know the sequence for making a cake and other prepared foods and about healthy eating. Pupils in the sensory education base smell, taste and feel ingredients and some mix them, with help. Pupils of all attainment levels have a very good regard for hygiene and most wash up and clear away very well. At Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, high attainers attend the College of Further Education, where they prepare buffet meals and follow complicated recipes, like the preparation of a chocolate hedgehog.
15. In art, several students achieved national standards last year. Two achieved grade C at GCSE, four grade D, nine grade E and one grade F. Overall, pupils and students achieve very well and make good progress. In the sensory education base, pupils and students eye point and hand point as their responses when choosing colours for their work. One pupil moved a mouse to select the colour of his choice on the computer program he was using. By the end of Key Stage 3, students roll out clay and join into a pot with precision. They use their mathematical skills to measure and work to patterns they have cut, showing they have learnt well. At Key Stage 4, pupils pursue a pattern-changing exercise for their work for GCSE. They apply their mathematical knowledge of shape, using curved and geometric lines at random.
16. Pupils and students achievement in religious education is good. Many demonstrate good recall of subject knowledge and apply this knowledge appropriately to a range of concepts. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain good knowledge of various religions. They know of many festivals in Christian and other religions. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils, while studying Sikhism, were particularly keen to tie and wear turbans, handle artefacts, discuss and record their findings. This activity promoted good discussion about Christian and Sikh customs and beliefs. Pupils and students in the sensory education base respond to many opportunities for calmness and reflection. Good use is made of the White Tower sensory room, and tactile experiences such as smell, touch, light and hearing.
17. Overall, the achievement of pupils and students with autistic tendencies is consistently good when measured against their targets. They respond well to the programmes arranged for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

18. The overall attitudes that Abbey Hill pupils, and students over 16 at the Norton site, have to school and learning are good. Behaviour, particularly in the classroom, is good. The very good personal and social development of pupils and students, together with the very good relationships between teachers, other adults and pupils, and between the majority of pupils, are significant strengths of the school. However, the level of attendance is unsatisfactory, with too many pupils, particularly in Year 11, not attending regularly.
19. In a recent week overall attendance was 85 per cent, but in many teaching groups attendance was much lower, notably in Year 11. This unauthorised absence is higher than is normally found in similar schools. This, together with the number of holidays taken in term-time, some lasting for several weeks, plays a significant part in the low attendance. The school is currently having little success in improving overall unauthorised absence. There has, however, been considerable success at the Norton site in improving the attendance of several individual pupils and students who have histories of total non-attendance, school phobia or anxiety. There is consistently good and often very good attendance for the pupils with the severest and most complex disabilities.
20. Morning registration is innovative, with all pupils seated in their tutor groups within the school hall. This arrangement is highly effective in promoting and extending pupils social skills. It provides pupils with awareness and understanding of being a part of their whole school community. Registers are called promptly at the start and end of sessions, and before lessons start. Issues relating to registers and registration at the Norton site, raised in the last inspection report, are now fully resolved. Teachers do need to ensure that all Ketton Road registers are always marked in ink, and that unauthorised absence is correctly recorded and totalled each day.
21. Pupils and students are enthusiastic learners, enjoying their lessons. They settle to work quickly and very sensibly. There is good participation in question and answer sessions, seen, for example, in design technology lessons, or in explanations about murder plots in a literacy lesson. This has a positive impact on pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils work hard when doing written work, showing very considerable levels of concentration and perseverance, at times managing to improve and extend the quality and length of their written work. In other areas too, pupils and students show very good attention to their activities; for instance, cutting chocolate buttons into 'hedgehog spikes', carefully and accurately weighing ingredients for cheese straws, painstakingly using a mitre saw when making wooden picture frames, for a perfect end result. All pupils show clear delight at their successes and a growing determination to succeed when things do not work so well. They are justifiably proud of the work they produce. Pupils support one another very much and many good examples of both co-operative and collaborative work between pupils were seen; for example, working together to make a 'tourist' video about the local area, in food technology classes, or individual pupils offering help to others having difficulty in lessons, perhaps with writing or reading.
22. Behaviour in classes and in the whole-school assemblies is good. Lessons are usually quiet, often with a purposeful 'buzz'. Pupils are generally polite, inviting inspectors to visit their lessons unprompted, and aware of the needs of others, moving around the building sensibly. Behaviour at break and lunch-times is generally sound, although there can be some over-boisterous play. Any incidents are dealt with immediately by supervising staff. Pupils not wanting to go outside have good access to facilities such as the lunchtime computer club. The level of fixed-term exclusions is slightly lower than at the time of the last inspection and there have been no recent permanent exclusions. The vast majority of fixed-term exclusions are for bullying or harassment. The school does not have an incident book in which incidents should be recorded.
23. The quality of relationships between teachers, other adults and pupils, and between the majority of pupils is very good. Staff role models are very positive, apart from one area. After much debate, including all staff, governors and the student council, the school has set aside an area for smoking. Staff, parents and adult visitors are permitted to smoke in the courtyard in the centre of the school, and are visible to pupils when pupils are in certain classes. This is

contrary to the good personal, social and health education and advice taught by the school.

24. Pupils easily accept their teachers' guidance and there is generally a high level of mutual respect. Teachers value pupils as individuals. Pupils are keen to please and do well and appreciate being praised for good work or attitudes. They are extremely tolerant and mature with regard to others' disabilities, offering help willingly. A good example was seen in a personal and social education lesson where a profoundly disabled pupil showed pleasure when another pupil spoke gently to her, stroking her hand.
25. The attention paid to pupils' and students' personal and social development is very good, both through the formal programme of personal and social education and through informal opportunities and discussion. Pupils appreciate the school council, offering them a forum to express their views about the school. Teachers are committed to developing opportunities for pupils to gain confidence and independence in supportive surroundings. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to make their own decisions and work, as far as possible, independently. However, a weakness is that independent learning skills are not fostered sufficiently through structured homework, and this is a justifiable parental concern.
26. For students Post-16, the atmosphere at the Norton site is closer to that of a college, with students becoming increasingly responsible for their learning programmes, with many options and choices available to them. A small group of students was seen working independently on GCSE revision work. Students comment that they prefer the syllabus and life at Norton "because we can grow up here." They find the atmosphere relaxing. Behaviour is very good, reflecting the increased maturity of the students.
27. The very good development of social skills is given high priority. As much social inclusion as possible is arranged within the school, with some profoundly disabled pupils spending time in classrooms, or having access to practical subjects such as cookery and art. The system of morning registration and assembly gives all pupils a very good opportunity to meet their friends, or talk about out-of-school activities, or perhaps discuss problems with their tutors. Lunch-time is equally sociable. Pupils who are able, queue up to choose their food, and can decide where they wish to sit. They often decide to help or talk to other pupils who are not in their own teaching groups. Pupils who are on feeding programmes also participate in the social aspects of lunch. Regular residential trips and visits, both abroad and in this country, also develop social skills and pupils' confidence and personal development very well. Currently, Year 10 pupils are very excited about the forthcoming trip to Italy.
28. Pupils and students thrive on opportunities for initiative and responsibility. The business enterprise scheme is a good example, with pupils full of ideas on how to market and make their products effectively. The good quality careers programme also promotes initiative through, for example, work experience, and prepares older students well for adult life.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is good, overall, at all key stages. In 80 per cent of lessons seen, teaching was good or better and in a third of lessons it was very good or better. Only 1 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. The good teaching leads to good progress being made through lessons which are interesting, challenging and characterised by good and often very good behaviour. During the inspection some excellent teaching was observed in lessons of science, music, design and technology and art at Key Stage 4 and in the sensory education base.
30. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject areas and a very good understanding of the range of special educational needs presented by students. Students with additional and complex special needs receive a well-delivered multi-sensory curriculum, which they find stimulating and enjoyable. The commitment and energy of teaching and support staff who work in the sensory education base is impressive. With further development of resources and improvements in the base storage areas, the quality of teaching and learning could improve further.

31. The very good teaching seen in the autism class is strengthened by very good classroom support staff. Working as a team, the teacher and support assistant deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, in a well-thought-out support setting, which enables the students to interact appropriately and to improve their communication skills in a variety of ways. The support staff are committed, knowledgeable and hard-working. They are a valued support for staff, pupils and students at the school. Special needs assistants are planned into lessons and work well with teachers to maintain the pace of lessons and to give targeted support to those with identified special educational needs.
32. Teachers generally plan well for lessons, most of them using National Curriculum Programmes of Study and subject schemes of work to inform their planning. For instance, the schemes of work and lesson planning for design and technology at Key Stage 3 are of very good quality. The planning for information and communications technology (ICT) lessons is also very good, with simplified worksheets and guidance notes to enable students to access and use computers with minimum support from the teacher.
33. The special educational needs of the pupils and students requires a flexible and adaptable approach to teaching and this is a strength of teaching in most lessons. A good balance of support and independence is found in careers lessons. In many art lessons the teachers make good use of demonstration and are able to simplify the introduction to the work of well-known artists. This enables all students to benefit from an awareness of the creative output of different cultures and times. Lessons in history lack the variety of approach which can address effectively the differing needs of students.
34. Very good relationships, between teachers and pupils and between pupils, are a strong feature of the majority of lessons. This enables very effective management of classes and supports the development of good behaviour and of personal and social skills. The majority of lessons are paced well, although in some lessons with students who have additional special educational needs, the lack of effective support and clear planning leads to those students being left with little to stimulate their interest for unacceptably long periods.

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

35. The organisation of the schools' curriculum embraces two key stages and provision for Post-16 students with a very wide ability-range, from moderate learning difficulties (MLD), autistic pupils, pupils with anxiety disorders, severe learning difficulties (SLD) to profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD) on a split-site campus. In spite of this complexity, the school meets its statutory requirements by providing for all its pupils and students a broad range of relevant and appropriate learning experiences, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. A good effort has been made to improve curriculum arrangements since the previous inspection, especially in the sensory education base where specialist teachers take groups of PMLD pupils and students for technology, science, music and physical education, and with the Post-16 students at the Norton site. With the exception of time allocation for science, there is a good balance of teaching time between National Curriculum subjects, with an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics.
36. The Literacy Strategy, which has been adapted for Key Stage 3 pupils throughout the ability range, has had a distinct impact on the reading ability of the pupils, especially with MLD pupils. The school has also allocated a period per day throughout the school, including the sensory education base and Post-16, to adapt and use the Folens and the SRA reading recovery programme. This is proving to be extremely successful especially amongst pupils who last September were either unable to read or were reading at a much lower level. There are many good examples of numeracy strategy being used across the school.
37. Policies and schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4, and at Post-16, are very good in information technology, good in art, modern foreign language, music and English, and satisfactory in mathematics, geography, physical education and history. Provision for religious education is good following the Local Education Authorities' Agreed Syllabus. Separate policies and schemes of work based on the National Curriculum are adequately provided for in the

autistic group and the sensory education base provision. Art, in the sensory education base, is particularly good.

38. Since the last inspection, there are now more accredited courses in place to meet the needs of the majority of its pupils, in addition to the General Certificate for Standards in Education (GCSE) and the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) for higher-attaining pupils there are Certificates of Achievement, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), CLAIT in information technology, OCR in science and mathematics. There is internal accreditation in a wide range of subjects' for example, in PSE and English, pupils receive a certificate for each module completed successfully.
39. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. There are daily lunch-time clubs, such as Italian for beginners, dance, chess, ornithologist and science clubs. A student council meets on a regular basis, and over the past few years has acquired a pool table, access to a Jacuzzi club, and a coke machine for the use of the school. There are also evening youth clubs at the newly-acquired Hardwick Youth Club, which is now part of the Abbey Hill complex; a family social night for parents, pupils and friends of the school is held regularly. A cyber café is, at the present time, being installed within the Youth Club. In the school, there is an Autistic/Parent link held termly, and a tractor and grounds restoration project, which has transformed part of the school grounds into a sensory garden, with paths and a Japanese feature garden. The school won a prize at the Royal Horticultural Society for the best regional school project. The school regularly enters the Northumbria in Bloom and Greenfingers competitions. Most pupils attend residential throughout the school year; a group of SLD pupils went to Eden Valley last July. This April, a party from the school is going to Italy to return a visit made by Swedish and Italian students last April.
40. Links with the community are very good and a strength of the school. As well as pupils going into the community there are regular visitors to the school, and during the inspection week a local poet/writer came into classes to work on Shakespeare and poetry with SLD and MLD pupils. Evidence of links with the community are displayed on the school walls, both at the main site and the Norton unit. Abbey Hill School is regarded as an associate Lighthouse school by Community Service Volunteers for its excellent community links. The school is also in its first year of Barclays' New Futures project, with a planning team of students from Abbey Hill Ketton Road and Norton sites, Stockton Sixth Form College and Middlesbrough Art College.
41. The school has well-organised links with mainstream education - there is a technology partnership with Beaumont Hill School, Darlington. There is opportunity for high-attaining pupils to return to mainstream, and one pupil attends the local comprehensive high school on a part-time basis. Key Stage 4 pupils attend Darlington College of Technology for NVQ catering, and some Beaumont Hill students come into Abbey Hill School for sport. The new Technology College status of the school will hopefully encourage these links. There are good opportunities for SLD and autistic pupils to integrate at lunch times, breaks, assemblies and social events. The SLD and autistic pupils also integrate well for some subject periods, including the reading sessions. Pupils and students within the sensory education base integrate at lunch times and social events, especially with music. There is effective integration of PMLD pupils within PSE lessons and tutorial sessions.

42. Provision for careers education at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 is very good. Schemes of work are well planned and taught. There is a work experience programme for both Key Stage 4 and Post-16 students, wall displays and students' files demonstrate the variety of jobs attempted by the students. A Job Vacancy Board is displayed at the Norton site and students can apply for part-time work after school.
43. Personal, social and health education is good, the policy documents and schemes of work indicate that there is appropriate provision for the topics of sex education and drug misuse. In the PSE provision within autism, sex education is handled very sensitively and clearly with diagrams and pictures.
44. There are good opportunities throughout the school for developing independence skills, and these are clearly identified in the SLD and PMLD pupils and students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The targets for independent living for Post-16 students are appropriately integrated with life skills.
45. Pupils and students are welcomed each morning as they come into school; teachers encourage pupils to share their feelings and pupils are given instant and regular feedback on their achievements in class. The pupils and students within the two sites show a very caring attitude towards one another and towards staff and visitors. One Aspergers pupil within the autistic room was helpful to a lower-attaining pupil when she was attempting to count her money in a mathematics lesson. After lunch, able-bodied pupils, with assistance and supervision from staff, wheel pupils and students back to the sensory education base. At the Norton site, a student made a hot drink during the lunch break for a fellow student who was upset over an incident outside school; this is all self-motivated.
46. Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school is now actively promoting the spiritual development of its pupils and students. Collective worship takes place each morning, and whereas there is mainly a moralistic theme to the assemblies, there are spiritual moments when a group of pupils play a musical interlude, or when they are asked to reflect on Christ helping the lepers. During lesson times there are moments of spirituality. In a design and technology lesson a PMLD pupil called out 'look at me' when he heard the sound he was making sawing wood. On a visit to see *Macbeth* performed at a local theatre, a pupil remarked; 'that was amazing!' Last year, a group of pupils achieved a Healthy School Award from the local authority; their theme was that 'Health is about emotional and spiritual well being as well as physical.'
47. Provision for pupils' moral development is good; all staff provide good role models for pupils, showing examples of fairness, respect, courtesy and concern for others. The teachers have high expectations of the manner in which pupils conduct themselves and this is often reinforced in lessons.
48. Pupils and students display good social interaction. They are courteous, considerate and polite to one another, to staff and to visitors, and are keen to share their work with them. There are many opportunities during the school day for them to take responsibility for their own actions. At the lunch time clubs pupils have drawn up codes of behaviour and rules. As part of the English policy document for Post-16, students are being actively encouraged to be responsible for their own thoughts and actions by the work set for them.
49. The cultural development of the pupils is very good. A very good range of cultural experiences enriches teaching and learning in the school. There are opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity and richness of other cultures. Visits to France, the Lake District and North Yorkshire, the visit from Swedish and Italian students last year and the schools visit to Italy, will further enhance this. Attractive wall displays in classrooms and in the corridors reveal an abundance of local cultural visits to theatres and museums. E-mails to Romania and South Africa show excellent links with differing cultures. Religious faiths, Islam and Judaism are taught effectively and displayed within the Religious Studies department.

Extra-curricular activities

50. The last inspection found that the extra-curricular activities were good. They are now excellent, and the school offers an even wider range of activities, both during the school day and after school and at weekends. Although some activities are linked to the main school curriculum, others come about as a direct result of discussion within the School Council followed by adult help and the schools financial support. Football, basketball, chess and other board games, pool, art club, IT club and dance club take place at lunchtimes. After school, there is a youth club once a week, canoeing once a week, and regular football and basketball matches. Pupils are also involved in residential trips to outdoor centres, where they take part in outdoor and adventurous activities and in field studies associated with science, geography and history.
51. There are biannual trips to France, to reinforce the pupils language skills. Pupils and students from other European countries stay in the Youth Centre and take part in activities with the pupils and students from Abbey Hill during the evenings and at weekends. As one member of staff remarked. A lot of staff give up a lot of time. The schools extra-curricular activities have a very positive effect on the pupils academic and social development and the staff are to be commended for their commitment, especially in view of the difficulties the school has over transport arrangements because of the very wide catchment area.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

52. The pupils personal and social development is assessed when they enter school, and again at the end of Key Stage 3. The schemes of work are good: they are relevant to the needs of the pupils and students and are divided into modules, relating to a number of aspects, including personal safety, health and hygiene, sex education and drugs misuse. Parents are involved in a local initiative, Parents Role in Drugs Safety Education, in which pupils and students share activities between home and school. As pupils and students become older, they are increasingly involved in activities that encourage them to look towards the world of work and their own independent living after they leave school. As they progress through the school, pupils and students are able to reflect on major issues, like the death of close relatives or a school friend. In one such lesson, the teacher handled the subject with sensitivity and personal support, which enabled the Key Stage 4 pupils and Post-16 students to discuss the issues with great maturity. The quality of teaching is good and the PSHE curriculum makes a positive contribution to the pupils personal and social development.

Careers & work experience

53. The quality of careers education and work experience is very good. There is a school policy, which identifies active learning opportunities within the school. These opportunities prepare pupils and students well for future work experience. Pupils and Post-16 students are provided with relevant background material and information on which to inform their decisions about college or work possibilities. Careers education starts in Year 9, with pupils gaining understanding of appropriate attitudes and behaviour required in the work place. As they move up the school their knowledge and understanding is increased, for example, by visits to places of work and the involvement of the local careers officer, who is able to advise and support the pupils on matters such as interview techniques and qualifications. Fifteen Year 10 pupils are involved in a very good school mini-enterprise scheme, which it is hoped will be expanded in order to receive external support, funding and advice for pupils from business people. Pupils gain first-hand experience of college and other courses through visits to Abbey Hills' partner school, Beaumont Hill, and through participating in courses in catering at Darlington College of Technology, where they can gain a college certificate for successful completion of the course. It is hoped that it will be possible to run a GNVQ Level 1 course at the college in the near future. Many pupils are interested in catering as a career and others are involved in a business enterprise making garden furniture at the Norton site. By Year 11, many pupils and students are able to participate in work experience, sometimes lasting over a period of days for several weeks. Placements are very carefully investigated, with great care taken to match the work placement suitably to the interests and personality of the individual involved. Staff from the Norton site visit pupils regularly to ensure that they are content and

secure. In most cases the work experience placement works well, and pupils receive certificates from employers, which are placed in their record of achievement. Students at Norton have an increased understanding of the need to gain qualifications and accreditation, and they work hard to achieve their goals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The standard of care and support for the pupils is good. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff, which are an important factor in promoting personal development and academic progress. There is a positive atmosphere of care and the school has a purposeful feel about it.
55. The practice of Child Protection is good. The care that is taken of the pupils' health and safety is good. The appropriate policies have been adopted; new members of staff are given satisfactory induction in these areas. Risk assessments are undertaken in specific subject areas, for example, science; it would, however, be beneficial to the management of the school if all the risk assessments were collected together. There is good level of support for all pupils in and around school, before and after school and during playtimes, which results in a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
56. The adults in the school know the pupils well in terms of the pupils' individual physical, social, emotional and medical needs and this contributes to the pupils' welfare and their ability to make good personal and educational progress.
57. The annual report compiled during the summer term is used as the basis for the report for the Annual Review. All pupils have an Annual Review of their statement in July, and although these may not always be on the anniversary of their statement date, the reviews do occur on an annual basis. The normal Annual Reviews are held in July; however, the Transition Reviews for those pupils who are 14+ are held in January or February. This means that a pupil who is due for a 14+ review will have a period of eighteen months between reviews. The school accepts that this arrangement does not have due regard for the Code of Practice, but it is the arrangement that works best for the school. The school tries to ensure that parents are present for the Annual Review. The school requests other professionals to be present for the annual review, for example, the LEA educational psychologist. At the annual reviews, targets are set by which pupils' progress will be monitored during the ensuing year.
58. The school has an effective pastoral system, which is based on the form tutor. The tutor has contact with the pupils at three points during the day; for registration at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, and for a ten-minute tutor period at the end of the school day. During this latter period, pupils who are on report are able to receive support and guidance from their tutor, praise and commendation if the day has gone well; encouragement to try harder if the day has not been a successful one. The home-school books are completed, for those pupils who have them, during the final tutorial session of the day. The tutors also have a 40-minute tutorial period with their group during the week. The tutors are responsible for the same tutor group as they progress through the school, thus ensuring that the tutors have long-established and well-developed relationships with the pupils. This leads to a consistency in expectations of pupils' behaviour.
59. Teachers' files show evidence of assessment; in ICT, work is marked routinely with helpful comments. In art, there is half-termly assessment of project work. The grades are discussed with the pupils, enabling the pupils to have an awareness of their own progress in learning. Pupils receive merits for good work and commendations for good behaviour. For pupils whose disability is on the autistic spectrum, there is effective monitoring of work. The progress of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties is maintained by paper records as well as by videotaped recording of the pupils. These records are routinely shared with the parents. One positive outcome of this is that specific items of equipment which have been

beneficial to the pupil can be shown to the parents so that the pupil can use that item of equipment at home as part of their homework.

60. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are secure, and the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is developing well. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and their personal development are satisfactory. The school needs to provide and to keep updated a separate bound incident book.

Equal Opportunities

61. The school provides for a range of special educational needs, from moderate learning to profound and multiple learning difficulties. It also provides for older students who are anxious about attending school and who may have missed a considerable amount of school time through absence. All of these groups enjoy specialist teaching provision and an appropriate curriculum. The older anxious group of students are taught on a separate site, where they enjoy the benefits of a relaxed working environment in which they are treated as young adults and given the opportunity to succeed at school and gain public accreditation.
62. The students and pupils share lunch times together and evidence shows that they are supportive, caring and understanding of one another's needs. Many of the higher attaining students and pupils help with the wheelchair-bound pupils and students. Teachers and support staff are trained in lifting and handling procedures and are able to meet their routine medical requirements. The toileting facilities for those with additional and complex special needs are very poor and do not safeguard the respect and dignity of students.
63. All students benefit from very good teaching, and evidence from lesson observation suggests that they enjoy their lessons and work to the best of their ability to improve their achievements across the curriculum.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

64. The majority of pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Some clinically anxious pupils and school-phobic pupils who attend at the Norton Road site do not have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The rationale for pupils being placed in the sensory education base or in classes for severe learning difficulties is dependent upon their cognitive and social patterns rather than their behaviour. The planning in the sensory education base is a strength of the provision. The teacher in charge plans very effectively for the 21 pupils in the base. There is very effective teamwork among the special needs assistants. The provision of changing and toilet facilities in the sensory education base is a significant deficiency in the school. The length of time taken to evacuate pupils and students from the sensory education base in an emergency situation is also a weakness in the school owing to the increased number and condition of pupils and students.
65. Pupils and students in the Sensory Education Base receive specialist teaching for some curriculum areas and this enriches their very well planned curriculum. They integrate socially into the main school at lunchtime. They have appropriate feeding plans and special needs assistants who promote a very caring ethos towards the pupils. Pupils and students are able to make choices with regard to their lunch. Pupils and students receive specialist input as appropriate from physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapists.
66. Pupils and students who have additional needs, for example, hearing impairment, have those needs met by means of monitoring and support, by the peripatetic staff employed by the LEA. Pupils and students who are visually impaired have mobility training provided by the orientation and mobility officer and monitoring by the qualified teacher of the visually impaired.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. The quality of parental partnership with the school is satisfactory. Parents are generally pleased about the progress that their children make in lessons. They appreciate the care offered by special needs assistants, and the good quality of teaching that provides challenge, stimulation and promotes an enjoyment of learning in their children. A small minority of parents do, however, have concerns about the lack of homework. This concern is justified, and the inspection team agrees with the parents.
68. Currently, only a few parents are actively involved in the daily work of the school. Those that are, show commitment and enthusiasm, through, for instance, driving the school minibuses, helping to support individual pupils in lessons, hearing pupils read, or offering practical support and involvement in lessons, such as cookery and the business enterprise programme. Many more parents attend functions arranged by the Friends Association, which is currently raising money for more computers through events such as prize draws, pupil discos and the Christmas Fair.
69. The schools' decision to take over the running of the Community Centre and the school youth club has been greeted very positively by parents. They are pleased that this facility is open to them and their families in an area where few other facilities are available. Pupils attending the youth club enjoy meeting and mixing with other pupils and students and get used to seeing their teachers on a much more informal basis, outside the classroom. Many different activities and trips are organised. Pupils and students play board games or pool together, can learn to canoe, or simply relax with their friends. During inspection week, they thoroughly enjoyed eating pancakes made by staff from the Norton site. Parents feel upset when the youth club is sometimes closed at short notice, because it is difficult to get their children to understand. The Family Night on Thursdays is also very popular and attendance is improving now, following a considerable period of closure whilst essential rewiring work was undertaken. Money raised through the sale of refreshments and drinks, and activities such as raffles, is used to fund trips and events for the youth club. Parents strongly value the opportunity to meet others in a similar situation, to relax and enjoy activities such as line-dancing.
70. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory, overall. However, in the annual governors' report to parents there are omissions; there is no information about the next parent-governor elections; whether or not any resolutions were made at the last annual governors meeting and any action taken; no statement about school security. A few parents expressed concern about the lack of information reaching them regarding a recent parent-governor vacancy, although the school provided evidence of the letters being sent. Letters are regularly sent to parents informing them of, for example, school events, or any staff changes. There is a termly newsletter. Parents are invited to annual reviews and to the age 14+ transition review. In addition, they receive an annual pupil report, with opportunity to discuss progress with staff. Although most reports give pupils' progress, teacher comments are occasionally too general; for example, "has produced some good work in this area." The language used in some reports is too technical and not easily understood; for example, "can subtract with decomposition." Target-setting to enable pupils to make progress is variable. Good examples are to be seen in science and design technology, but in some other areas targets are too generalised to be useful, or not included at all.
71. There is no homework policy. This is unsatisfactory, as this is now a statutory requirement. Some parents expressed concern about the lack of provision of homework. The homework provided is inconsistent and variable depending on the individual member of staff. The use of homework diaries is inconsistent, with some teaching groups using them, and their use in other groups recently abandoned. The lack of regular, structured homework provision hinders development of independent study skills and pupils' ability to move towards gaining external accreditation and qualifications such as GCSE. Parents do not know how they can best help their children's learning at home and their concern about homework is justified. There has been appropriate consultation about the home-school contracts that are in place.

72. The school is aware of the need to further develop effective and beneficial communications with parents and has taken steps to remedy this. A recent parent questionnaire has been circulated and returned, with a number of parents expressing interest in becoming more involved in the school. There has not yet been time for these expressions of interest to be developed, or to have any impact on the life of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

73. The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide strong leadership and have a clear vision for the future of the school. This vision has led to the school gaining Technology College status and has resulted in closer partnership with other schools and the significant introduction of new technologies. The aims of the school influence positively the ethos and expectations. The aims have improved from the previous inspection and now include equality of opportunity for all in the school. The day-to-day management is good and leads to the smooth running of the school through the work of a committed team, including finance, administrative, support and building management staff. The monitoring of teaching and learning, undertaken by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, within the brief of local authority school self-evaluation, is very good and leads to targets to raise standards and the identification of training needs. The co-ordinators for curriculum subjects, with the overall curriculum co-ordinator, provide good leadership for the organisation of National Curriculum and other subjects. This has led to improvement in curriculum delivery since the previous inspection. The co-ordinators form a successful team, understand their roles and contribute successfully to the school improvement plan, which has improved since the previous inspection. This is now a three-year plan. It addresses successfully areas of achievement, teaching and learning, community, leadership and management, provision and inclusion. It is an effective document and process with costings and time-scales. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. However, there are a large number of targets, and these are not sufficiently prioritised.
74. The governors hold regular meetings and there are appropriate committees in place. Governors are very knowledgeable about the management priorities of the school featuring in the school improvement plan and are aware, through accreditation evidence, of a rise in standards. They work very effectively with senior staff in ensuring that these priorities are achieved. As yet, the achievements are not fully evaluated in relation to their cost-effectiveness. The school is beginning to compare costs and standards with schools with similar aspects and are satisfying themselves that competition is fair when investing in services and resources. The governors' knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school helps shape the direction it takes. The governors set performance targets for the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. There is a good relationship between the governing body and the headteacher and the staff. The governors have established links with classes in the school and this works well. The action plan, from the previous inspection report, has been successfully implemented by the governing body. However, although the governors have a very good understanding of many of the major strengths and weaknesses of the school, some statutory duties remain unfulfilled. There is no homework policy and certain requirements of the annual report to parents are not in place.
75. The financial management is very good. There are very good budget statements prepared for governors and these are discussed fully by governors at the finance committee meetings before being presented to the governing body. The significant level of funding for the Technology College status is strategically used within the very strict guidelines for this initiative. The careful budgeting of money, from end of year out-turn voted by the governing body, allows budget growth to occur for other subjects. Further funding, which accrued to the school through a refund on services and income through insurance payments for staff absent through illness, has been well planned for by being aimed at upgrading part of the school. An audit conducted by the local authority has been acted on and its recommendations implemented. The financial administration systems are very well managed, and very informative budget summaries are provided by the data systems manager for the use of the governors and staff. This information allows governors and headteacher to ensure that finances are kept in good order.

76. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff is good. However, on occasions there are inadequate numbers of teaching staff present in the Sensory Education Base. They are a highly competent and well-motivated team who work together to achieve the school aims. The introduction of the self-evaluation scheme in the school helps identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning. This leads to the setting of targets, with teachers, designed to improve the achievement of pupils and the development of staff. The review of partnership between teachers and special needs assistants as part of the Investors in People accreditation contributes to the very good support given to pupils by the special needs assistants. New staff are helped to develop through a good induction programme that provides mentoring support.
77. Overall, the school's learning resources are good. ICT provision is very good in most of the school. There are some good examples of switches used in the white tower in the sensory education base. In history, there is a shortage of artefacts and pictures. The school makes good strategic use of its resources.
78. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. Although the Ketton Road site is very attractive modern purpose-built accommodation there are shortcomings in certain areas. The sensory education base of the school, used for the education of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, has inadequate toilet and changing facilities. There is an insufficient number of toilet cubicles and the space within them is too restricted to allow pupils to be given assistance and prevents two-person lifting. This is a serious deficiency in the school. The school has identified this concern and governors have plans to resolve it. Because of the increase in pupils and students and the amount of support equipment for these pupils and students, there is a serious shortage of storage space, meaning that equipment is stored unsatisfactorily in work areas. There are other areas of the school, most notably science and art where there is a shortage of storage space. In PE, the changing rooms are in the main building. Pupils must change and leave the main building to go to the gym, several hundred metres away, and then return after an energetic lesson. Although many of the rooms provide very good accommodation spaces, the group sizes in some of the practical subjects makes the rooms crowded. The accommodation at the Norton site has been substantially upgraded recently and provides attractive and functional work areas. However, these modifications are in old timber buildings and concrete prefabricated structures. The toilet provision is unsatisfactory at the Norton site. The grounds and outdoor recreational areas at both sites are attractive and well-maintained. Significant work has been undertaken to improve the grounds at Norton. Buildings are maintained in very good order by a committed and helpful team under the excellent direction of the site manager. This makes a significant contribution to the learning environment, the positive ethos of the school, and encourages learning and personal development. Good improvement has been made in leadership and management from the previous inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. The LEA, together with the school and the governing body, should:
- Urgently address deficiencies in the provision of toilet, hygiene areas and storage in the sensory education base. (*paragraphs 62, 64, 78*)
80. The school and the governing body should:
- ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties to report fully to parents in their annual report. (*paragraphs 70, 74*)
 - ensure that all reports to parents meet the standard of best practice already established in school (*paragraph 70*)
 - provide adequate storage in science and art areas. (*paragraphs 78, 111, 115*)
 - develop, ratify and implement a whole-school homework policy (*paragraphs 25, 67, 71, 74, 90, 103*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	27	47	19	0	1	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	211
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	115

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	10.6

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	6.5

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

Nationally Accredited Achievement: 1999

GCSE	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
English writing		3	2	3	1			
English speaking And listening	2	4	2	1				
History			1	1	2	1	1	1
ICT			2					
Mathematics				1				
Art			2	4	9	1		

SMP	PASS
Mathematics Level 1	15
Mathematics Level 2	8

	PASS
CLAIT (ICT)	2

NVQ	PASS
Level 1	3

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	205
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	31	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	24
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.8
Average class size	13

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	711

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	1,426,717
Total expenditure	1,450,227
Expenditure per pupil	6,562
Balance brought forward from previous year	91,920
Balance carried forward to next year	68,410

1. Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	211
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	24	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	42	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	44	3	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	25	16	5	24
The teaching is good.	82	18	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	26	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	23	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	21	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	63	32	0	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	76	24	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	32	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	29	8	0	11

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

ENGLISH

81. In 1999, nine pupils at Post-16 were entered for GCSE and they attained B to G grades. This year it is anticipated that Post-16 and Key Stage 4 pupils will be entered for either GCSE or the Certificate of Education. Last year, no Key Stage 3 pupils were entered for standard attainment tests (SATs); however, it is anticipated that ten pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) will be entered at the end of that key stage this year.
82. Pupils are assessed, for reading recovery sessions, on entry to the school based on information from their previous schools. There is an 'in-house' assessment tests given to establish baselines and pupils are streamed according to ability and not necessarily according to age or key stage. Achievement in English is good, all pupils have a positive attitude towards the subject. Targets are set for MLD pupils. More detailed targets and IEPs are set for SLD, autistic and PMLD pupils. The targets are renewed appropriately, termly, for the lower-attaining pupils and annually for higher-attaining pupils.
83. Speaking and listening are very good. All MLD, SLD and some PMLD pupils and students who can verbalise, participate in group discussions in a mature, lively and meaningful way. Post-16 students discuss the merits of booking certain types of holidays and the dangers of broadsheet reporting in newspapers. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 acted out a play on drug misuse they had written, while Key Stage 3 lower attaining pupils recited poetry they had composed. Excellent speaking and listening skills were evidenced in French. Drama is well taught at Key Stage 4. There are excellent opportunities for the option groups to explore their imaginations and develop their speaking and listening skills.
84. Achievements in reading are good; many MLD pupils and some SLD pupils entering the school in Year 7 have very poor reading skills. They improve considerably as they progress through the school. Some MLD pupils reach Level 4 and above by the end of Key Stage 3.
85. The literacy strategy has been adapted by the school at Key Stage 3 to meet the specific needs of the pupils within the school. It has helped enrich the curriculum and maintain progress in standards of reading. Good resources support this work. In the sensory education base, pupils and students participate in role-play with staff during a literacy session, imagining they are trains. In Year 8, MLD pupils enjoy group reading from a Big Book, *Ghost Dog*. Key Stage 4 pupils use a Big Book to help them describe characters from *A Midsummer Nights Dream*.
86. Every group in the school participates in reading recovery programmes every day. These approaches are having a very positive effect on the reading ability of the majority of pupils in the school.
87. Achievement in writing is satisfactory. Higher-attaining MLD pupils use cursive writing within a year of starting in the school. This becomes standard practise by the end of Key Stage 4. The majority of SLD pupils will underwrite and some copy simple sentences. Pupils and students experience a wide range of writing for different purposes, such as lists, poems, letters, diary accounts, in addition to story writing. Spelling is targeted at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 with weekly tests. ICT is used frequently and effectively to produce redrafted attractive and accurate pieces of work.
88. The quality of learning is good. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and very co-operative in lessons. MLD pupils work independently at both key stages and Post-16 and are very supportive of each other. They enjoy the structure and pace of lessons, which helps them to concentrate and remain on task. SLD pupils work in the main with a little support and, as they progress, are encouraged towards independent thinking.

89. Teaching is very good at both key stages and Post-16. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and lesson content and activities are well-matched to the interests and abilities of the pupils and students. The co-ordinator for English no longer teaches the subject. However, the department is efficiently run by three English specialists. Relationships are very good between pupils and teachers, and teachers' expectations are high at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very high at Post-16. The special needs assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' progress in literacy skills, especially with autistic and PMLD pupils and students. The policy of the department, that homework is not given out unless requested, is unsatisfactory and needs reviewing. Some individual classes and the autistic group give out homework on a regular basis.
90. The English policy and curriculum meet statutory requirements and provide all pupils with breadth and balance. The curriculum for the autistic pupils and sensory education base is produced separately and caters well for those pupils and students. Whilst assessment is carried out, it is not always fully analysed. Individual targets for MLD pupils are often too general for progress to be evaluated, such as 'write 3 – 4 word sentences without help.' This lack of specificity with MLD pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 currently makes it difficult to analyse all targets and therefore to make judgements on whether teaching could be improved. Targets linked to IEPs for SLD, PMLD and autistic pupils are satisfactory and also at Post-16.
91. The quality of displays throughout the school and at the Norton site are very good and make an impact on pupils' and students' learning. A wide range of work is attractively displayed, including displays on *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Nights Dream* and Fables.
92. Resources for English are good. There is a library, and whilst it is stocked satisfactorily, it is not timetabled effectively by the department and is under used by pupils and students.

MATHEMATICS

93. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory throughout the school. Many pupils enter the school with very limited mathematical skills, lacking confidence, and with gaps in their mathematical language. Pupils become progressively more confident, especially with their number work and in their use of mathematical language. It is appropriate that many pupils now prepare for standardised assessment tests (SATs) and externally accredited courses. This is a significant development since the last inspection.
94. In their work on data-handling pupils produce charts from given information, such as their favourite colours and different types of transport. They carry out practical exercises and tasks on time and money, in the process becoming familiar with simple fractions such as $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$. Some pupils still get confused when measuring, subtracting, multiplying and adding, but this is recorded by teachers, monitored and acted upon. Autistic pupils understand the value of coins, and that they can have values of more than one. They know coins of different value may be used together to give an exact amount. Lower-attaining Year 8 pupils understand the concept of the passage of time, and count on years from birth until they started school. They count to eleven years after their birth date, the dates of two World Wars, and can take away 100 from 2000. Lower-attaining Year 9 pupils identify numbers to 100. They count on from a given number, and indicate the number of tens and units. They complete addition and subtraction exercises. Higher-attaining pupils are not setting their work out consistently well, and are not checking their answers.
95. By the end of Key Stage 4, those following the GCSE course order decimals, use ratios and are aware of prime numbers and factors. They understand and work out perimeters, area and volume, and are familiar with lines of symmetry. They work out the mode, median, mean and range, and are aware of some reasons for representing data. They use tally and frequency tables particularly well. Lower-attaining Year 11 pupils use decimals in practical situations, representing one chocolate bar and three tenths as 1.3, and one whole chocolate bar and nil tenths as 1.0. Year 11 lower-attaining pupils order numbers 0 to 20, and use tally charts well.

96. Older students in Post-16, following the Certificate of Achievement course, improve their mathematical language work by consolidating their knowledge, understanding and practical use of addition, subtraction and multiplication. They draw lines accurately, become confident with fractions, and use the clock to tell the time independently.
97. Pupils in the sensory education base choose independently from a given task and attempt to imitate. They select equipment from a given range, using gestures and some vocalise. They relate two objects together and secure hidden objects. Some are familiar with numbers and search for disappearing objects. They indicate an awareness of the next event and place objects into a container. They handle data, such as books and photographs, and sort non-identical objects.
98. The quality of teaching has generally improved since the last inspection, when the quality of teaching was sound for both lower attaining and higher attaining. More than half the lessons seen were good. Teaching is strongest for the lower-attaining pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, and the higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4, and the students in Post-16.
99. The strength of teaching is the teachers' relationships with pupils. They are aware of individual needs and plan lessons accordingly, enabling pupils to progress and become more confident. Teachers ensure that all pupils are seated or positioned correctly before teaching begins. The best lessons are characterised by teachers clearly explaining the learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson, making learning fun, and maintaining a brisk pace through the lesson. Pupils respond with enthusiasm; they are eager to answer questions and take pride in completing their work. Questioning is used well to develop thinking and improve understanding. Opportunities are given for pupils to talk about mathematics, and to clarify their thought processes. This also gives teachers opportunities to assess learning and understanding. Questioning is sensitive, giving time for pupils to answer. Teachers and most pupils usually wait until the answer is given. Pupils spontaneously applaud one another's success. Special needs assistants are used effectively, as when working with small groups using 'signing' skills as an appropriate means of communication hastening progress. They are involved well in the planning of lessons and the teamwork between staff is very good. Timed tests are used well to consolidate learning. Praise and feedback are used well, successfully motivating pupils and helping to keep them on task. While strengths outweigh weaknesses, overall, there are some issues that prevent good lessons from being even better. Sometimes the work set is not quite challenging enough for the higher attaining pupils. Some lessons are too short in terms of time. This is a pity, because many of the lower and higher attaining pupils are so well-focused and interested in mathematics that they would benefit from longer lessons. In the isolated lesson, where teaching was not satisfactory, planning was inadequate, and there was weak knowledge of key facts leading to confusion. The lesson ended in some disarray.
100. Although the school has no formal policy for developing numeracy across the school, activities are provided which require pupils to use mathematics across the whole curriculum, and there are good examples of pupils using their mathematical skills in other subjects. In science, pupils regularly measure, weigh and predict. In design and technology, they understand the differences between 3-D and plane objects. In food technology, they count in spoonfuls and weigh using single pound balances. Older pupils develop their numerical skills in their mini-enterprise, which includes marketing, the estimation of profit margins, and the cost of materials. In physical education, older pupils count to eight when bouncing on the trampoline. In music, younger pupils reinforce their work in fractions when find out the meaning of $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ notes. In French, they count to thirty. In art, higher-attaining pupils use rules to measure materials such as clay, and have good knowledge of space and form.
101. As a result of high quality teaching many pupils enjoy mathematics. The lower-attaining and the higher-attaining pupils are enthusiastic. Pupils enjoy working with the teachers and the special needs assistants. They think hard about questions and try to give sensible answers. Pupils are usually very well-behaved in lessons. Most teachers make clear their high expectations at the beginning of lessons and pupils respond positively.

102. The subject continues to be well led, and some notable improvements have been made in this subject since the last inspection. There is now a teacher on Norton site who works with the coordinator to ensure better continuity and progression between the key stages. At Key Stage 3, more pupils are completing their SATs, and for the older pupils, accreditation is now more extensive and appropriate. In fact, the majority of pupils, except those in the sensory education base, are now working towards some form of external accreditation. The use of information technology is underdeveloped, given the good resources available, as is the use of homework.

SCIENCE

103. The pupils achievement was reported as satisfactory for high-attaining pupils following the last inspection. It is now good for pupils of all attainment levels at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and at Post-16 at the Ketton Road site. The pupils achievement at Key Stage 4 is being adversely affected by the group sizes, which are too big for the practical areas of accommodation available. The pupils achievement is also being affected by the inadequate amount of time devoted to science; approximately 8 per cent of taught time. Compared with the last inspection report, pupils in the sensory education base now have full access to a relevant curriculum, based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.
104. The pupils knowledge, understanding and skills are assessed when they enter the school and their subsequent targets are reviewed regularly and reset. Their achievement is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The students achievement is also satisfactory at Post-16.
105. At Key Stage 3, high-attaining pupils select equipment and materials and some understand the concept of a fair test and ask the question What will happen if ----?, for example, rock salt is dissolved in water and then filtered. They pay very good attention to health and safety issues. Low-attaining and autistic pupils know that materials can change and predict how many books, for example, will make a paper cylinder collapse, in comparison with folded paper. Pupils and students in the sensory education base touch and feel different materials and some express or indicate preferences.
106. At Key Stage 4, high-attaining pupils set up equipment, including Bunsen burners, safely. They know facts about how the human body works, electrical circuits, heat loss and the parts of a plant. Some pupils work towards the OCR examination. Low attainers know, for example, how the human body needs to keep warm and how switches turn off a light. Pupils and students in the sensory education base follow a candle flame with their eyes and some can blow it out. Some make choices about colour.
107. Students at Post-16, on the Norton site, are mainly those who have had great difficulty in attending school and so they follow a similar course to those at Key Stage 4; working towards the OCR examination, but at a greater depth than the pupils at Key Stage 4.
108. The pupils and students attitudes to their learning are good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post-16. They are keen to learn and maintain their interest well and this is directly related to a wide range of carefully chosen activities with plenty to do in each lesson. All pupils and students respond very well to the sensitive use of praise and encouragement from the teachers and special needs assistants. As a result of this, they take great pleasure in their achievements and the achievements of others and they are keen to demonstrate what they can do to visitors. The pupils and students behaviour is very good in all lessons and this is linked to the teachers good group management skills, with clear boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. The relationships between pupils, students and adults in science lessons is good.
109. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post-16. Teachers have a very good understanding of science as a subject and because of their detailed knowledge of the needs of pupils and students, their ability to produce activities to match these needs is good. The process of base line assessment, target-setting and ongoing assessment is good. Teachers also make good use of science as a vehicle for teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy,

and pupils and students are constantly practising their communication skills and ability to make predictions, through the teachers skilled questioning. Weighing and measuring within science, contribute well to overall numeracy skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and students, which challenge pupils and make sure that they think hard about what they are doing. Good use is made of the lesson time and pupils and students have a good range of activities and plenty to do, which maintains their interest and concentration well throughout lessons. They make good use of questioning to enable pupils and students to recall what they have learned previously and to relate what has been learned to their previous experience. Where appropriate, effective use is made of direct instruction, and sensitive support is given both directly and through the use of the special needs assistants. However, insufficient use is made of computers to enable pupils to access the curriculum. The teachers manage the groups well, with a good use of time and resources and a relaxed but firm and consistent approach to discipline.

110. The subject is led very effectively by the co-ordinator, with good curriculum and very good development planning. Teaching and learning is monitored well. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and there is a laboratory technician in post for half the time. Accommodation would be good for smaller groups but is unsatisfactory at the Ketton Road site for the maximum size of fifteen, which are expected to be taught in the practical areas. The cramped conditions for such large groups are affecting the pupils access to equipment and are affecting the pupils achievement in experimental and investigative science. In addition, storage is inadequate on the main school site. Resourcing is good, overall, but the levels of software available are underdeveloped.

ART

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good at all key stages. It is often very good at Post-16 and in the autistic unit. On occasions it is excellent at Key Stage 3 and in the teaching of pupils with additional special educational needs. On these occasions, the teachers very good subject knowledge, coupled with their excellent relationship with pupils, is used to deliver a well-planned lesson that fully engages all pupils. Demonstration in these lessons is very effective in improving communication skills and making the lessons enjoyable and challenging. Multi-sensory lessons of art enable pupils to investigate light and movement and to experience the tactile and visual pleasures of silk-screen painting. They learn the names of the primary colours and observe the effect of colour spreading across silk. They respond by eye and finger pointing, expressing their pleasure by smiling, gesturing, vocalising and signing. Good use is made of the work of the artist Mondrian, to explore the theme of change. This enables pupils at Key Stage 3 to use direct painting as a way of investigating the form of fruit they observe. They learn to paint freely using well-developed colour-mixing skills.
112. Pupils at Key Stage 4, because of their educational developmental stage, find it difficult to understand perspective. The ceramic skills of Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are demonstrated well in lessons. The teacher's very good knowledge and understanding of ceramic materials and processes ensure that there are high expectations of achievement in pottery lessons. Pupils are able to roll, cut, form and join slabs of clay; with these, they then produce shoe forms from designs drawn in earlier lessons, decorating them in individual ways. They use coloured glazes and impressed or scratched patterns to decorate their slab and coil pots. By the end of Key Stage 4, many of the pupils have developed their art skills and knowledge sufficient for them to enter successfully for the GCSE examination in art and design. Further systematic challenge to their observational skills would enable more rapid progress to be made and raise the standards of work further.
113. Pupils' response to lessons of art is very good at all key stages. They enjoy the lessons and concentrate well on their work. Those with additional and complex special educational needs are able to concentrate for long periods in the sensory art lessons. Autistic pupils and students develop their communication skills effectively whilst working on their paintings and collages. The group of older, anxious pupils is able to grow and mature through the very good, supportive relationships they enjoy during lessons.

114. Co-ordination of the subject is made difficult by the wide range of special needs managed on the two school sites. However, the subject is led effectively with a clear sense of purpose, outlined in the recently rewritten department handbook. The ethos of the department and school celebrates the work of pupils and ensures a high profile for the subject. Good displays of pupils' and students work and good quality prints of well-known artists' work, enhance the overall presentation of the school. There is, however, a shortage of storage space within the art room for both work and materials. Good links with two European schools are used to exchange festive cards designed and made by pupils.
115. The department has made a good response to the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, and good schemes of work are now in place to ensure the continuity and progression of work through the National Curriculum. Pupils and students are challenged effectively in the majority of lessons and are involved in the appraisal and assessment of their own work. There is an effective assessment and recording system in place. The use of information and communication technology has been slow, due to the changeover to new systems, and it remains underdeveloped.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. Design and technology is taught as craft, design and technology (CDT) and food technology and textiles, which is taught, with some lifeskills, as part of Home and Family Studies (HFS). The pupils achievement was reported as satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, following the last inspection. It is now good at all key stages and at Post-16. However, the pupils' achievement is being affected in practical activities because of large group sizes and consequent difficulties of access to practical areas and the sharing of machinery and equipment.
117. In CDT, at Key Stage 3, high attainers are able, for example to, sketch designs, measure, mark out and cut wood and other materials, using coping and tenon saws. They can fix, using pins, screws and simple joints. Low attainers can, for example, mark shapes on to MDF (medium density fibreboard) and cut to shape, with help. Pupils from the sensory education base can listen to the saws and touch and feel the texture of the materials. Pupils of all attainment levels pay very good regard to issues of health and safety. At Key Stage 4, high attainers are able to discuss the design and make process and produce design sheets of high quality. They are developing their making skills, some using machinery to cut, shape and drill well. Low attainers and autistic pupils are marking out and cutting and shaping materials related to everyday objects, such as a mobile telephone. In the sensory education base, pupils and students at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 are beginning to assemble materials, for example, a sign for their base. At Post-16, high and low attainers are involved in enterprise schemes, in which they make items, such as garden furniture and toy boxes. They demonstrate considerable skills in designing and making, including the use of woodworking machinery.
118. In HFS, at Key Stage 3, high attainers select, mark out, cut and sew material and appliqué, some with help. They select, weigh and measure ingredients and mix them to make pancakes. They cook one side and toss to cook the other. Low attainers and autistic pupils know the sequence for making a cake and other prepared foods and about healthy eating. Pupils in the sensory education base smell, taste and feel ingredients and some mix them, with help. Pupils of all attainment levels have a very good regard for hygiene and most wash up and clear away very well. At Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, high attainers attend the College of Further Education, where they prepare buffet meals and follow complicated recipes, like the preparation of a chocolate hedgehog.

119. Pupils and students attitudes to learning are very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post-16. The pupils and students are keen to learn and their interest is maintained by well-chosen, exciting activities and plenty to do. Pupils and students respond well to praise and encouragement and are keen to demonstrate what they know and what they can do, to others. They take pleasure in their achievements and in the achievements of others. Behaviour is very good and this is directly related to appropriate behaviour management by the adults in lessons. Relationships are very good and the pupils and students clearly love doing the subject and there is a healthy buzz in lessons. HFS makes a very good contribution to their personal development
120. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post-16. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and experience and have high expectations of the pupils and students; consequently, the pupils and students respond to their tasks with enthusiasm. Planning is very good at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, because of teachers good subject knowledge and their intimate knowledge of the needs of the pupils and students. Teachers make good use of design and technology as a vehicle for encouraging communication, through skilled questioning within the designing and making process. Pupils and students numeracy skills are constantly reinforced through measuring and weighing. However, insufficient use is made of information and communications technology (ICT) to enable access to learning and through control systems. The teachers make very good use of the special needs assistants in a mutually supportive and collaborative way. The wide range of activities, with a skilful mix of practical and theoretical and plenty to do, keeps the pupils fully occupied and interested throughout every lesson. Teachers use questioning very well to enable pupils and students to recall what they have learned previously and to reinforce their development of skills at every stage of the lessons. Management of the groups is good, with a firm, fair and consistent approach to discipline and clear routines for teaching and learning. As a result of this, the pupils and students put on their overalls, get out work, clear up and wash up without being asked. They are very business-like and well organised.
121. The management of the subject by the co-ordinator is very good, overall, with good monitoring of teaching and learning. Staffing is very good, with well-qualified and experienced teachers and a half-time technician to support the subject. Accommodation on the Norton site is very good. However, group sizes are too large to enable easy access, or more than satisfactory supervision, in the practical areas of the workshop and food technology rooms on the main school site. There is very good regard to health and safety issues throughout, but the school should review the size of groups accessing cookers in the food technology room on the main school site. Resourcing is good, overall, but there is insufficient software to enable access to the curriculum and to further develop control technology within the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

122. Pupils' achievement in geography is appropriate for their levels of prior attainment. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their geography lessons. Sometimes they make good progress. They show development in the acquisition of geographical skills throughout the school, with the lower attaining pupils following the National Curriculum programmes of study for Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils now follow appropriately accredited courses, including up to GCSE.
123. Pupils in Year 7 know that most of earth's surface is water, that the largest areas of land are called continents, and that large areas of water are called oceans. They name the different countries of Britain and recognise that the countries of the British Isles are small. Year 8 pupils understand the meaning of the seasons, and identify the differences between them, such as spring and autumn, summer and winter. They know why there are different seasons, and that the earth is a sphere spinning on an axis, and warmed by the sun. Year 9 pupils locate Australia on a map and a globe. They know that Australia is a continent and is an island, and that it is opposite to England. For example, when it is daylight here it is night there; when it is summertime in England it is wintertime there. Lower-attaining Year 11 pupils know that Aborigines were the first inhabitants of Australia, that they are nomadic and live off the land. They recognise key features of the land, being familiar with pictures of Ayers Rock. They know that South Africa is part of the continent of Africa, and that many animals that live in South Africa do not live in England. They appreciate that South Africa is four times as big as England,

can find South Africa on a map, listen to African music and help make a visual display. Higher-attaining Year 11 pupils identify the main plate boundaries in the world, and know the key features of earthquakes and volcanoes. They compare and contrast more economically developed urban areas, such as Manchester, with Rio de Janeiro a less economically developed area. They study tourism and understand what attracts people to go on different types of holiday. They are aware of the impact of visitors on areas, in particular the negative aspects of tourism such as erosion and pollution.

124. The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory. Sometimes it is good. Relationships are good. Planning provides breadth, balance and relevance in the geography curriculum with content that is appropriate and meets statutory requirements. Classroom routines are well established. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, leading to good lesson content. New ideas are explained to pupils with clarity. Teachers have high expectations and this leads to good learning. Good questioning takes place in lessons. Key terms are used well. Lessons are well prepared and there is usually a good pace in lessons and appropriate high expectations, helping pupils to persevere with the task. Displays throughout the school are good and support learning, as with the work on the local water cycle. Pupils' work is marked in a consistent and positive manner. The contribution made by special needs assistants is good, and is a particular feature of many lessons.
125. The subject has improved since the previous inspection. More lessons are good, especially those taken by the non-specialist geographers. The shortfall in resources identified last time has been remedied, though more artefacts are still needed. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening. Some pupils also benefit from a good range of visits that support their work in this subject, including visits to the local church and theatre, Stockton High Street, residential trips, and even a visit to a local Italian restaurant. Relevant accreditation is now offered to the higher-attaining pupils.

HISTORY

126. During the inspection, lessons at the end of Key Stage 3 for pupils with moderate learning difficulties were seen, in addition to history for pupils with severe learning difficulties at Key Stages 3 and 4. One Post-16 pupil at the Norton site is resitting GCSE history, preparing for the examination by private study. History is not offered as a GCSE option at the Ketton Road site. A discussion was held with the co-ordinator, the policy and curriculum plans were discussed, and work was scrutinised which enabled judgements regarding attainment and achievements to be made.
127. Pupils make satisfactory progress in history. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties learn about the causes of the Second World War, including the effect of the Treaty of Versailles. They know that Germany invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland and that Britain was a friend of Poland. Pupils with severe learning difficulties learn that the Vikings were big and strong and that they wanted to live in Britain as it was warmer than their own country and that Britain had better land for growing crops. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the written presentation of their work and this could be improved by an increased expectation of the pupils.
128. The quality of teaching in history was satisfactory across the key stages and there was good cross-curricular input when teaching the pupils about the causes of the Second World War. The locations of the countries of central Europe were discovered by using atlases. Teaching is adapted to the special educational needs of the pupils. Teaching could be improved by a greater use of artefacts, models, pictorial material, audio and video tapes. The questioning technique used to initiate a dialogue with the pupils could be more extensive and make greater use of pupils' own knowledge. The pace of the lessons could be improved with a greater

variety of activities for pupils. Pupils stay on task during the lessons. The special needs assistants are used effectively to support the pupils' learning.

129. The curriculum is planned effectively to provide a good range of learning opportunities for the pupils. The planning includes appropriate assessment schedules. Good opportunities for visits to historical sites are incorporated into the curriculum planning. The curriculum is well differentiated for different groups of pupils.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

130. The quality of teaching is good, overall. The new PC platform, recently installed as a replacement for outdated equipment, is still being developed and has, therefore, found students lacking familiarity and feeling frustrated by the demands of new publishing, word-processing and design software. The co-ordinator's very good knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology (ICT), has enabled the majority of students to overcome the difficulties they face and make good progress with their work. Lessons are well planned, with appropriately simplified worksheets and notes of guidance, enabling the students to access and use the software programs. The high expectations of achievement and the strict requirements of the accredited course, taken by Key Stage 4 and Post-16 students, ensures that they work accurately and present their work neatly. Students who have additional and complex special needs benefit from the knowledge and skills of a support assistant, who assesses their aptitude with switch pads and toggles. The lack of suitable software and plug-in switch devices, restrict the development of their ICT skills. However, a local university research student is developing software in the department that is designed to improve their access to PC software. The lack of special needs assistants for the larger classes of Key Stage 4 pupils, slows the pace of progress in lessons, as the teacher works hard to support students in difficulties with their work.
131. The majority of students is able to access the word processing software and the Internet and learns to download graphics and text from the Internet. They are able to copy text, changing fonts, highlighting, moving and resizing text and importing graphics to text. They word process for different purposes, form-writing, letters of application, poems, CVs, short stories and essays. Higher attainers at Key Stage 4 and in Post-16, enter data on spreadsheets and calculate columns and rows of figures, checking and correcting as they go. Students with additional special needs use switch pads and toggles to activate apparatus in the multi-sensory room, as well as control boxes and other communication devices in the classroom. They relate their actions to the response of bubble tubes, infinity screens and a range of other light and sound devices. They develop eye and finger pointing skills and register their reactions through vocalising, smiling and gesturing. Higher-attaining students in these classes are able to control simple software applications on the PC, using switch pads or toggles.
132. In lessons, the students behave well. They enjoy the lessons and benefit from the good supportive relationships within the classes. Most students are keen and well-motivated to develop computer skills. They work hard and concentrate well through the lessons. They are courteous and confident in talking to visitors and are pleased to show them the work they are doing. They generally do as they are asked and accept advice and guidance readily.
133. The department benefits from the strong, well-informed, management of a co-ordinator who is developing ICT across the school in response to its Technology College status. At present, new resources are not widespread in other departments. The ICT department is leading the way, with its networked computers and the provision of an e-mail address for all students who are able to access the network. The use of digitising resources for animation, video and image manipulation is developing well in the school.
134. The department has made many improvements since the last inspection, including the quality of teaching and the level of resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

135. The standard and quality of teaching in French is good. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are acquiring increasing skills and knowledge about the language. They participate fully in the lessons, using phrases and recalling vocabulary about personal details, nationalities and sports.
136. The good standards observed in the previous inspection have been maintained. The standard of teaching continues to be good and occasionally very good. Pupils continue to respond well to the teaching of the subject, are well-motivated and have good attitudes in the subject. They sustain both effort and concentration and show a willingness to participate and are not reluctant to use the language in front of others. Good relationships between staff and pupils have a positive impact on learning.
137. Lessons are well prepared, with clear planning that outlines the activities to be undertaken and which link with the assessment and recording sheet where learning objectives are described. The scheme of work clearly describes the structure that pupils follow and this is an appropriate content for these pupils. There are different schemes of work for the range of groups that study French. These range from appropriately modified schemes for pupils with severe learning difficulties, through the 'OK' scheme for pupils at Key Stage 3 to the 'Allez y' scheme for pupils at Key Stage 4. Assessment and recording sheets are completed for all pupils and there is good knowledge of the progress pupils are making in the scheme. Teachers make the lessons enjoyable and have pleasant attitudes to the pupils. The work is challenging, and teachers have high expectation of the pupils. There are clear routines used to enable pupils to participate fully. This leads to a good pace and change of activities in the lessons where oral work is linked to written work and ICT. At times the lessons lack a little pace for the pupils, for instance, when some worksheets are used that do not sufficiently target the learning task and whose completion takes too long.
138. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils construct and use simple phrases to describe personal details and possessions, recall numbers, make informed guesses of less common vocabulary, and respond with simple greetings. Pupils copy or spell with increasing accuracy and are beginning to use regular and irregular verbs, such as *être*, *avoir* and *faire* in the exercises.
139. Pupils at Key Stage 4, have made more progress and use phrases that are more developed and of greater complexity. They are more able to respond in French and are keen to respond in the language as often as possible. They hold simple conversations about themselves and some of their likes and dislikes. Pupils of all abilities complete worksheets and exercises on body parts, sporting activities and social activities.
140. The subject is well managed, with ongoing assessment taking place and a commitment to raising pupils' achievement in the subject. The aims for the subject are clearly described in the policy, and teachers work to achieve them with success. The co-ordinator understands the needs of the subject well and contributes to the school improvement plan as part of her subject responsibility. French is important in the life of the school. However, the school also extends pupils' knowledge further with very positive e-mail links with other European countries. The very strong link through the Comenius Project contributes significantly to pupils' learning as well as to their cultural and social development. Staff also offer clubs at lunch time to develop other European languages, most notably Italian. There are good cross-curricular links with geography and the subject contributes to pupils' literacy skills. Although the department uses computers regularly some are now becoming out of date and the necessity of further development has been recognised by the department. The overall provision and teaching of French is good.

MUSIC

141. Achievement in music is good. Despite the wide range of abilities in the school, pupils with moderate learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties, as well as pupils and students in the sensory education base, participate fully in a range of challenging and enjoyable musical activities appropriate to their needs. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are usually very good and they show enjoyment and satisfaction at their performance. Some pupils take great delight in performing and provide an example to others as they perform in assembly and at other times. These include individuals singing and playing piano as well as an ocarina band. In the sensory education base pupils participate in songs with enthusiasm. Pupils in other parts of the school demonstrate increasing knowledge and skills that allowed them to play from notation, compose and improvise. In an excellent lesson, pupils demonstrated knowledge of note values of crotchet, quaver, minim and semibreve. Music contributes significantly to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils, particularly when listening to the wide range of music to which they are introduced.
142. The good standards observed in the previous inspection have been maintained and developed satisfactorily since that time. The standards of teaching, and the learning by pupils, continues to be good at most times and sometimes excellent. Improvement has been made in the extension of provision to pupils and students in the sensory education base. There has been improvement in pupils' attitudes to the subject, which is nearly always very good.
143. Lessons are well planned, with clearly-defined activities from the scheme of work that relate to the targets on the assessment and recording sheets. The use of performance contributes to pupils' personal development. The planned use of musical passages from different composers and cultures extends pupils' awareness and cultural development. The teaching is almost always good and occasionally excellent. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers is utilised fully, leading to challenging, enjoyable and sometimes exciting lessons. The classes are well managed and the routines of the subject are well understood by the pupils, leading to good progress in lessons.
144. At Key Stage 3, pupils with severe learning difficulties are putting their developing knowledge of named notes into practice and developing keyboard skills in playing simple tunes. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are applying their knowledge of note values when playing simple tunes from notation on the keyboard. More advanced work on note values is undertaken when pupils use percussive instruments, such as floor drums, to play notation including crotchets, quavers, minims and semibreves. Pupils also compose their own passages in 4/4 time.
145. At Key Stage 4, pupils in the sensory education base participate in group singing activities and use percussion instruments. Pupils with severe learning difficulties beat rhythms to accompany piano music and orchestral pieces. They find great enjoyment in this activity and some pupils are able to maintain quite good timing. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are able to develop improvisation around the major seventh chords and are able to name the triad and the seventh successfully. These pupils are following an AQA accredited course.
146. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. Assessment takes place on an ongoing basis and there is a commitment to raising pupils' achievement in the subject. The policy describes the aims for the subject, and teachers' work to achieve them with success. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the needs of the subject in the school with the range of pupils ability. She contributes to the school improvement plan as part of her subject responsibility. Music is an important part of the life of the school, with performances by the pupils featuring at different times. Staff also offer clubs at lunch time to develop aspects, such as the ocarina band. Although the department still uses the well-equipped keyboard suite, the use of computers and midi is under-developed as yet. The overall provision and teaching of music is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

147. During the inspection, lessons for the end of each key stage for pupils with moderate learning difficulties were seen, in addition to physical education for pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple difficulties. Some Key Stage 4 pupils with moderate learning difficulties are working appropriately towards an accredited course in physical education.
148. Every Wednesday, Key Stage 3 pupils link with Northfield Comprehensive School, which is a designated Sports College, where they enhance their physical education curriculum, and benefit from input from specialist teaching.
149. On a Friday afternoon all pupils, except those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, enjoy sports sessions. This activity is well co-ordinated by the PE Co-ordinator. To support this session specialist staff are brought in to enable a wide range of sports to be offered. This is a strength of the physical education curriculum.
150. A discussion was held with the PE co-ordinator, photographs were viewed and curriculum plans were scrutinised, which enabled judgements regarding attainment and achievements to be made.
151. Pupils make good progress in physical education and some pupils achieve in line with national expectations. They understand about the need to move into a space when playing ball games, to pivot and to keep their elbows in when catching the ball. Pupils enjoy their PE lessons and all the pupils participate with great enjoyment, and they achieve well in local football competitions.
152. The quality of teaching is good, overall, with some very good areas of teaching. The teachers are secure in their subject knowledge. Physical education is undertaken by teachers qualified in the subject. A number of staff at Ketton Road site have undertaken appropriate in-service to enable them to teach boccia, BT Top Sports and orienteering, to an appropriate level during sports options sessions when non-specialist teachers are teaching physical education. This works well and ensures that pupils receive high quality coaching. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils and the pupils work very hard to achieve new skills. The pace of lessons is good and the pupils stay on task throughout the lessons. Support staff and resources are used well to contribute to good teaching.
153. The curriculum is well planned, with a very good range of opportunities for participation in different sports. The pupils' knowledge about sport is reinforced by suggestions for watching sporting activities at home. The links with a local mainstream school support curriculum knowledge. The work done in PE continues to be a strong feature of the school and has a positive impact upon pupils attainments.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

154. The quality of religious education has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is now consistently good and has a positive impact on the development of pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural, including multicultural, development. Co-ordination of the subject has improved and is now good. The co-ordinator is now based on the Ketton Road site, overseeing religious education across the school, planning with the sensory education co-ordinator and teachers at the Norton site.
155. Standards are now high, achievement in religious education is good. Many pupils demonstrate very good recall of factual information and apply this knowledge appropriately to a range of concepts. Lower-attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 demonstrated good knowledge of spring festivals. They understand the festival of Shrove Tuesday, Lent and the forty days and nights

fasting leading up to Easter. Higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 recall the story of Moses, his exile, and his recall to Egypt, and enjoyed the stories of the Plagues.

156. By the end of Key Stage 4, lower-attaining pupils revisited the festival of Shrove Tuesday and discussed what they would give up for Lent. Pupils associate the hard-boiling of eggs and decorating eggs with Easter, and the concept that the egg and the chick symbolised new life and new hope. Higher-attaining pupils showed good knowledge and understanding of Sikhism and the Jewish festival of Purim. They recalled in great detail the story of King Ahasuerus and his Queen Vashti. While studying Sikhism, pupils were keen to take part and wear turbans.
157. In the sensory education base pupils and students are given opportunities to reflect and respond. The White Tower, sensory room, is used very effectively to stimulate pupils. Sound, smell, light and touch are used well during reflection periods to provide calm periods for pupils. They listen well to music, smell and respond positively. Staff talk to pupils continually informing them of what is about to happen and checking for communication and response.
158. The quality of teaching across all key stages is consistently good. Subject knowledge and knowledge of individual pupils is particularly strong. There are high expectations of pupils behaviour and work. Questioning is used very skilfully to check for understanding. Learning is exciting and fun. Lessons are brisk with well-timed changes of activities to motivate and stimulate pupils. Resources are well organised in advance, easily accessible and well used by teachers and pupils. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils respond eagerly and are keen to participate. A good example of this was in a Key Stage 4 lesson, where pupils were invited to tie and wear turbans. They all wanted to have a try, and this stimulated discussion about the customs and traditions of the Sikhs who wear them.
159. When special needs assistants are in classes, they are used well, targeted to pupils with most need. This allows the teacher to concentrate more on others, enhancing the quality of education in the class for all pupils.
160. During Key Stages 3 and 4 lessons, pupils literacy skills are enhanced when key words are put on the board to help pupils concentrate and complete their written work. Speaking and listening skills are used well during discussion sessions. All pupils are encouraged to participate fully and make good progress.
161. There are good wall displays in the classrooms, and the range and quality of learning resources and artefacts is good. Daily assemblies positively support religious education throughout the school. Every day starts with a quiet reflection period of two minutes in assemblies, which sets the tone in school for the day. Pupils respond positively to this and leave assembly prepared well for their first lesson.