

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFURLONG SCHOOL

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique reference number: 119868

Headteacher: Eddy Jackson

Reporting inspector: Mary Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th July, 2000

Inspection number: 189838

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Blackpool Old Road Blackpool Lancashire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Philip Higham
Date of previous inspection:	20 th October, 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mary Last	Registered inspector	History	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
		Music	Teaching and learning
		Provision for students over the age of 16	Key Issues for action
Saleem Hussain	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Dennis De Souza	Team inspector	English	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Geography	
Carol Etherington	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
		Modern foreign languages	
Mike Whitehead	Team inspector	Mathematics	Leadership and management
		Art	
		Religious education	
Chris Wonfor	Team inspector	Design and technology	
		Information and communication technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Highfurlong School caters for boys and girls with physical difficulties between 3 to 19 years of age. The pupils all have statements of special educational need and most pupils have additional learning difficulties as a result of their neurological impairments. It is therefore inappropriate to measure pupils' achievements in terms of national expectations and their progress is therefore judged against their prior attainments and work towards targets in their individual educational plans. At the time of inspection 22 girls and 33 boys were on roll from five to seventeen years of age. No pupils at the school have English as an additional language; fourteen are entitled to free school meals. Four pupils over sixteen are currently extending their education by attending for a further year at the school where their work follows a more vocationally orientated curriculum. The pupils are taught in age related classes with an average of eight pupils in each class. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to study alongside their mainstream peers at neighbouring schools or, for pupils at Key Stage 4 and over, at two local colleges. Pupils are drawn from a wide area including Blackpool and north Lancashire. All travel to school by local authority transport.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective in its work, providing high standards of education and teaching which enable pupils to make good and often very good gains in their learning. The school is very well led and managed and benefits from a committed, hardworking governing body. Since the last inspection, the school has worked very effectively to raise standards when a significant number of weaknesses were identified. Relationships within the school are excellent both between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves and they result in a whole school commitment to high standards, hard work and a shared wish and capacity to succeed. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides a harmonious and supportive learning environment, where all pupils, regardless of ability, thrive and make at least good progress in academic and social development
- Provides good and often very good teaching which is well planned with a wide range of motivating activities to challenge pupils, and ensure that they make good progress
- Makes outstanding provision for pupils' additional special needs, especially those with augmentative and alternative communication needs, which ensure that they make as much progress as possible
- Enjoys excellent links with the local community and with local schools which enrich and extend pupils' learning and work experience opportunities
- Promotes pupils' very positive attitudes and outstanding enthusiasm for learning which is supported by excellent relationships between everyone who works or learns in the school.
- The excellent leadership of the head teacher and the very strong management of the head teacher and governors ensure that all staff work well as a team to promote high standards of teaching and learning

What could be improved

- The curriculum, planning and assessment for pupils over sixteen
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development
- The role of subject managers in monitoring teaching and learning

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 October 1996 and subsequently monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in June 1998. The school has made very good progress in response to the key issues of the last inspection and is well placed to maintain its improvements through structured planning. It has very successfully dispensed with the departmental structure and subject managers now take responsibility for the curriculum across all key stages which helps subject managers and teachers to plan across all key stages. Alongside this development the school has redefined its curriculum to ensure all statutory requirements are met. A comprehensive system of assessment and recording has been introduced and this is proving effective in identifying pupils' achievements and forging a route of learning matched to their individual abilities. An effective range of accreditation has been introduced for pupils at Key Stage 4 and beyond; these include GCSE, the Certificate of Educational Achievement and the Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) certification at all levels. A strong programme of extra curricular activities and well focussed careers education, including work experience, further enhance pupils' learning opportunities. However, the curricular arrangements for students over sixteen are not yet fully effective in setting a clear aim and individual pathway supported by relevant teaching and assessment opportunities. The head teacher and Senior Management Team have reorganised arrangements for setting suitable targets based upon pupils' abilities and needs. These are effectively addressed in lessons enabling pupils to make good gains in learning. Procedures for child protection are understood and implemented by all staff. Health and safety agreements are regularly reviewed and the school has implemented good procedures for lifting and handling which meet current legislative requirements. Additional support staff have been appointed and are well deployed to ensure that pupils are well supported in both their care and academic needs. The school now monitors its performance through a rolling programme, which is tightly linked to the school's strategic planning documentation. Teaching is now at strength of the school. It is satisfactory in over nine out of ten lessons and good or better in over eight out of every ten. There are now detailed schemes of work for all subjects and the very good monitoring of teaching and learning in the core subjects is now under well structured development and proving effective in raising standards of teaching. However, the school has yet to monitor all non-core subjects so effectively. The school has resited its library to provide an attractive study area, which is regularly used by all pupils. The most significant progress has been made in arrangements for the education of pupils with additional special needs, particularly those who need augmentative and alternative communication strategies. The school now has clear targets for such pupils' learning, makes very good use of information technology to support pupils in classes and puts all pupils' needs at the forefront of its work.

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

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

At Highfurlong School, augmentative and alternative communication is a very strong feature of speaking and listening and, in this regard, pupils make excellent progress due to the excellent planning for their needs. Other pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening at all key stages. Pupils willingly communicate with visitors and speak and read with confidence in classes. Pupils make good use of their basic skills to support their work in other subjects and, as they grow older, demonstrate a mature approach to learning. They all make good progress against targets set for them in their individual educational plans and this helps them to progress through relevant steps of learning as they move through the four key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They enjoy all aspects of school life and show great enthusiasm in lessons. They all work very hard to achieve their best. The very positive attitudes that pupils display in and around the school are instrumental in maintaining the happy and cooperative learning environment.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good, in lessons, around the school and when visiting other schools or the local community. Pupils are supportive of each other and spontaneously help one another by moving chairs or picking up things from the floor. They try their very hardest at all times and work in a spirit of harmony and cooperation.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Pupils' personal development is very good, their confidence and maturity grow as they progress through the school.
Attendance	Attendance is good, most absences are due to illness and medical appointments.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Over ninety per cent of lessons are at least satisfactory and over ten per cent is excellent. Only three unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teaching in mathematics and numeracy are good and often very good, and enable pupils to deepen their understanding of the subject and use their skills in everyday situations such as shopping and measuring. In English teaching is good overall and is particularly effective in developing pupils' communication skills. Teaching in science is good and helps pupils explore the world around them. In personal, social and health education, teachers work very well with pupils both in and out of the classroom to ensure that they develop into mature young people with good learning skills to study independently or in cooperation with others. Teaching is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils regardless of needs and abilities. A major strength of teaching is the way in which staff plan to support all pupils in their learning especially those with communication difficulties.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities through a curriculum which is broad, balanced and relevant.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' social development is excellent and prepares them well for their lives during and after school. Provision for moral and cultural development is very good and pupils follow and understand school rules. Arrangements for pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very high standards of care for its pupils. It has very good arrangements for child protection and promoting health and safety.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very strong leadership of the head teacher and other key staff, ensure that all pupils receive a high quality of education. All management and administration procedures in the school are well focussed around the education of the pupils ensuring that the school runs smoothly, that money is spent wisely and that the school continues to develop as a self critical and improving organisation.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors are very effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and, ensure that the school provides very good quality education and strives for continued improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Procedures and practices for the evaluation of performance within the school are very good. Some managers of non-core subjects are not yet fully effective in monitoring teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very well to ensure that all pupils receive maximum benefit. The school applies principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children make • The secure and positive learning environment • The school's high expectations • The school's welcoming approach to parents • The improvement in their children's behaviour • The leadership and management of the school • That their children enjoy school life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of extra curricular activities • The amount and consistency of homework

Parents are very supportive in their views of the school. They are particularly positive about the way the school has changed in recent years and how well their views are taken into account. Inspectors support the views of the parents agreeing that the school has an inconsistent approach to homework. The school provides a wide range of activities during the holidays and weekends but is inevitably limited in what it can provide at the end of the day, by transport arrangements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom the school caters against national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment can take account of information contained in pupils' statements, annual reviews and individual education plans as well as lesson observations. The very complex nature of pupils' physical and learning difficulties means that there is often a wide range of skills and abilities within each group.

2. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well in most subjects across the curriculum. There are no significant differences that result from their age gender or background. The pupils' records and annual reviews provide substantial evidence of progress and achievement in most curricular subjects. Pupils also make good progress in relation to their targets set in annual reviews and in their individual education plans. The school has set realistic achievable targets based on teacher estimates of pupil progress and as a result standards have been improved or maintained even though the complexity of pupils learning needs at entry has increased. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a satisfactory range of accreditation for pupils at Key Stage 4 which includes GCSE, Certificates of Achievement, Northern Examination and Assessment Board (NEAB) unit scheme accreditation, and the National Design and Technology Education Foundation (NDTEF) Certificate of Competence. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have had a positive impact on standards in Key Stages 1 to 3.

3. Pupils' achievements and progress in English are good overall with standards of communication, including speaking and listening being, very good. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils convey simple meanings to staff and they listen and respond to instructions. By the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 they talk and listen in different situations and are able to organise what they wish to communicate. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are able to listen attentively to others in discussion, taking account of ideas and asking occasional questions. Achievement in reading is good, as is achievement in writing. In reading by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are starting to recognise their names and those of peers. By Key Stage 2 they read a range of books with increasing ease and accuracy. Higher attaining pupils are developing their comprehension skills and can identify information in books to support their comments. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' respond appropriately to non-fiction and can identify the key points. Last year four pupils at Key Stage 4 achieved distinctions in the NEAB certificate of achievement.

4. In writing by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attempt to communicate meaning by using recognisable marks on a page. By the end of Key Stage 2 they write simple sentences and try to organise and structure them. They show good use of full stops, and capital letters. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' writing shows more organisation and clarity. These outcomes are good in relation to their prior attainment. The good progress of pupils at Key Stage 3 and 4 is an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils with physical difficulties make progress with their writing skills with greater control, fluency and consistency in letter formation. A clear strength of the school is its use of information and communication technology and additional communication strategies to promote interaction for pupils with additional difficulties.

5. Very good progress in speaking and listening in the primary years contributes very effectively to learning a new language and pupils make satisfactory progress in learning French. Key Stage 4, all four pupils who took the Certificate of Achievement last year, achieved distinctions.

6. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are good in all key stages and the National Numeracy Strategy has been very effectively implemented resulting in raised standards. Pupils show growing knowledge and understanding of simple vocabulary of counting by the end of Key Stage 1. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 2 add and subtract to 10, solve simple problems with money and recognise simple 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional shapes. By the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE passes in mathematics were obtained by three out of four pupils.

7. Pupils' achievements in science are good in all key stages. Pupils cover an appropriate range of topics and undertake investigative work. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils use very simple vocabulary to describe living things, some of their body parts and properties of materials. By the end of Key Stage 2 they make very good progress responding to ideas making appropriate observations and predictions and attempt to construct a fair test. By the end of Key Stage 4 both pupils that took the exam achieved GCSE passes in the science test and the two pupils who took the Certificate of Achievement were awarded distinctions.

8. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology are very good. They are very confident using computers and for a range of purposes. They start to use information and communication technology to communicate simple ideas in symbols and text and improve their skills by regularly using word processors. Information communication technology is also used and as a tool for research, information retrieval and international communication using E-mail. By the end of Key Stage 4 the 6 pupils who took the certificate of competence in information technology obtained passes. Pupils who need information and communication technology to enable them to access the curriculum are very well supported via a range of switches, key-pads, and suitable software. In design and technology progress is good overall. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils join and assemble materials, older pupils extend this work using tools safely by the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are able to plan work, choose techniques, and use simple finishes to improve their work. They use tools to measure mark and cut materials safely.

9. Pupils make very good progress in their personal social and health education. By the end of Key Stage 1 they learn about their families and are aware that medicines can make them better and they learn simple body parts. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils understand some of the benefits of having friends and that some substances can be harmful. They show an awareness of strengths and their targets for improvement. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are learning about relationships, the effects of loss and they have knowledge of where to get appropriate information and advice and about ways of keeping themselves healthy. By the end of their time in school, pupils' personal development is excellent and they show very high levels of maturity and as much independence as possible.

10. Pupils benefit from music lessons and music plays an important role in the life of the school. By the end of Key Stage 1 they sing songs, and respond to brief musical pieces. By the end of Key Stage 2 they are able to listen more carefully and use musical vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 4, all 5 pupils who took the GCSE in music obtained passes. Religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and pupils'

progress is very good. The positive changes in pupils' progress, seen in Music in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in religious education, represent significant improvements on standards since the last inspection.

11. Pupils make very good progress history. Their progress in geography, whilst at least satisfactory and often good at Key Stages 1 and 2, is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. This is mainly because pupils' learning objectives are not always specific enough. Although assessment procedures have improved the information gained from it is not used effectively to plan the next steps of teaching. In history by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils use terms like 'a long time ago' and 'after' and 'before'. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a greater factual knowledge about changes to their local area, they understand time lines and attempt to show divisions. By the end of Key Stage 4 all four pupils taking the certificate of achievement in history obtained distinctions.

12. Pupils make good and often very good progress in physical education and art. In physical education by the end of Key Stage 1 they practise simple skills alone and with partners. By the end of Key Stage 2 they then make good efforts to improve their performances safely and show ability to identify improvements needed. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are able to plan and make up more complex movements within the limits imposed by their physical disabilities. In art they start recording ideas and experience a range of materials by the end of Key Stage 1, later by the end of Key Stage 2, they are able to select appropriate resources and experiment with them using different tools and techniques. Older pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 show good knowledge and understanding of approaches and methods using an appropriate art vocabulary to modify and evaluate their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to the school are outstanding. They are extremely keen to come to school and enjoy school life. They co-operate fully with teachers and show very good levels of interest and involvement in lessons. This includes swimming lessons and physical education at the Blackpool Sports Centre. They apply themselves very well to tasks. They show high levels of concentration and take great pride in their achievements. They persevere for long periods in their learning. Pupils are keen to answer whole class questions and participate fully in their lessons. For example, in a religious education lesson whilst comparing Christianity with Buddhism, Year 10 and 11 pupils were extremely enthusiastic in recalling previously learnt facts. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved considerably since the last inspection.

14. Behaviour is very good. This makes a considerable contribution to pupils' progress in lessons and to the ethos of the school. The school is a very friendly and orderly community. Pupils are courteous and show respect for staff and visiting adults. Pupils behave very well in classrooms and at break-times. Lunchtime in the school hall is a very pleasant social occasion where pupils enjoy each other's company. There is no evidence of bullying and both parents and pupils attest to this judgement.

15. Behaviour management by staff is very good with a consistent whole school approach. Through this, reflection at assemblies and discussions about various types of rules and conventions, pupils have a very good and clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are fully aware of the system of rewards and sanctions and believe them to be fair. There were no exclusions at the school in the last academic year. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.

16. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves, are outstanding. This represents an improvement from the very good quality of relationships found at the last inspection. Pupils work together very effectively in pairs and small groups and many examples of such work were seen in lessons. For example, in a Year 10 and 11 personal and social education lesson, groups collaborated exceptionally well as they discussed police powers such as 'stop and search'. They shared ideas effectively and took turns to hear everyone's point of view. Pupils show very good levels of respect for the feelings of others but fewer opportunities to explore issues of spirituality. Pupils often celebrate each other's achievements, for example, in mathematics, by spontaneous applause when a pupil was particularly successful.

17. The pupils at this school are trustworthy and care for property. They respect their own property and that of others. They all share equipment and learning resources sensibly in lessons.

18. Personal development is very good. Pupils' confidence, independence and maturity all grow as they move through the school. Pupils frequently use their own initiative in learning. For instance, in swimming they use floats and aids very effectively for support as they practise basic limb movements. The school offers a number of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and pupils accept and undertake these tasks well. For example, library monitors take their duties seriously and are keen to ensure that books and information technology equipment are in good order. On many occasions that pupils show their care and support for each other by offering a helping hand with switching computers on and off, or by moving chairs for pupils less mobile than themselves. Pupils are keen to help teachers and each other by distributing learning resources in lessons. Research tasks are regularly set for homework and the school makes very good use of information technology to develop independence in learning.

19. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the community. For example, they support charities and good causes through fundraising. They often suggest good causes to support such as animal charities and 'Blue Peter' appeals. Clearly, pupils care for others in the wider community.

20. Attendance is good for this type of school. The vast majority of authorised absence is for medical appointments and illness. Unauthorised absence is extremely rare. The rate has reduced appreciably since the last inspection. Punctuality is good and registration periods are used as effective learning opportunities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The high standard of teaching is a strength of the school and, through careful planning and exciting activities, enables pupils to make good progress at all key stages. Teaching is satisfactory in over two out of every 10 lessons. It is good in over three out of every 10 lessons and very good in over one out of every 10. Nine lessons were graded as outstanding during the inspection, representing almost one in 10 lessons. The outstanding lessons were seen in mathematics, physical education, design and technology, art and music. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only three lessons, 2 in English and one in geography. This high quality teaching represents a very significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was less than satisfactory in half of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4.

22. High quality teaching is directly linked to very good gains in learning. This is particularly so at Key Stage 2 where six of the outstanding lessons were seen and where pupils made excellent progress in each of these lessons. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers plan in detail to identify precisely what each individual pupil should learn, ensuring that targets in their individual educational plans are clearly addressed. They organise activities which stimulate and interest the pupils and ensure that they work hard and concentrate throughout the lesson. For example, in a numeracy lesson at Key Stage 2, the teacher worked with pupils to demonstrate the process of multiplication but throughout the whole group session she continually checked understanding by asking relevant questions about the work. She asked the lower attaining pupils how many digits in a number, the higher attaining pupils to multiply two numbers in their heads and all pupils to repeat the rule concerning carrying units forward to the tens column. These relentless and highly challenging expectations resulted in pupils remaining alert, eager to learn and confident in answering questions. By the end of the lesson they demonstrated their understanding by completing exercises in multiplication accurately and at levels appropriate to their ability.

23. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not match the learning activity sufficiently well to the pupils' ability levels, either because tasks are too easy or too difficult. In a Key Stage 3 geography lesson the teacher did not expect pupils to work at a sufficiently brisk pace or provide them with activities which enhanced their knowledge or skills. They were mainly required to label and colour pictures of imported fruit, but the teacher missed opportunities to maximise the pupils' understanding through more analytical discussion on imports from South Africa. Where tasks are too difficult, pupils fail to achieve any sense of success. For example, in an English lesson at Key Stage 1 the task, requiring pupils to identify and match specific sounds in a poem, was too difficult. Consequently, pupils were unable to complete the work successfully and there were few correct responses to the matching or naming tasks. As a result the pupils were frustrated in their learning and, although their behaviour remained good, they made too little progress.

24. All teachers have been well trained in literacy and numeracy and are confident in delivering the national literacy and numeracy strategies. They have adapted the format of the numeracy and literacy hour well to meet the needs of the pupils, planning for relevant tasks which take the pupils' physical difficulties into account with work loads which are generally realistic. At all times in these subjects the content of the pupils' individual educational plans provide a useful focus for teaching and it is clear to see how pupils are working towards and achieving their learning targets. This clear and consistent focus on pupils' individual needs means that all pupils make equal progress and that the needs of those with additional special needs are extremely well defined both through the target setting process and through teachers' planning. All pupils, therefore, have equal access to teaching and learning opportunities.

25. Teaching in English is good and is particularly effective in promoting the communication skills of all pupils but especially those with augmentative and alternative communication needs. The very good attention to these pupils' needs is mainly achieved through staff's in depth knowledge of the pupils and carefully drawn individual educational targets which are delivered with skilled use of adaptive equipment. For example, staff prepare well to ensure that pupils use pre programmed 'big macs' to contribute to discussions, they provide adapted keyboards to help pupils write on the computer and help many others benefit from more simple but highly effective resources such as improved grips, writing frames or angled work boards.

26. In mathematics, teaching is good at all key stages and enables pupils to make very good progress culminating in them receiving a Certificate of Educational Achievement or GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4. Teachers inspire the pupils with their own interest in numbers and their uses and ensure that they have many opportunities to practise their knowledge in such lessons as music, food technology and physical education where they are frequently required to count, calculate or weigh.

27. In science teaching is also good and enables pupils to think more deeply about the world around them and the properties of materials. By the end of Key Stage 4 teachers plan for continued interest in the subject by supporting the pupils with a creative choice of resources. When studying the varied surroundings in which animals live, the teacher uses the education officer from the local zoo to demonstrate, with live animals, how snails, stick insects, cockroaches and mice have adapted to live in different environments. This exciting activity enables the pupils to see for themselves how the animals live and to make comparisons and connections to the pets they have at home.

28. Teaching is very good in information and communication technology. Teachers and support staff have been well trained to understand the range of computers and programmes available for the pupils and use them well to promote learning through word processing, data handling and for research purposes. Teachers emphasise the importance of information and communication technology by ensuring that pupils use the knowledge and skills they have gained to support their work in other subjects. The school displays pay witness to the teachers' planning of such high quality of work with examples of graphics work with results from research work and extended writing all featuring strongly.

29. Teaching is also good in art, design and technology, religious education and physical education where enjoyable and stimulating lessons ensure that pupils make good and often very good progress. The school is committed to providing a good range of physical education opportunities for all its pupils. The teaching of games and movement therapy and work in the hydrotherapy pool is all planned to ensure that pupils keep as fit as possible and maintain their interest in sports and outdoor activities. In French, history and geography teaching is satisfactory overall but in geography it is inconsistent, ranging from unsatisfactory to very good.

30. Teachers and support staff work as well formed teams to extend and develop pupils' learning. Support staff are generally well deployed and have in depth knowledge of the pupils which they use to inform the support that they provide. For example, they know when a pupil is too tired to continue and needs a break but also know when a pupil can do more and needs further challenge. All adults enjoy very good relationships with the pupils and organise activities within the classroom very well. They make their expectations of behaviour very clear and deal efficiently and effectively with the few pupils who have challenging behaviour. These successful strategies result in pupils who are enthusiastic learners and who behave very well in lessons and around the school.

31. Staff use assessment well to identify the gains that pupils make in lessons and against targets in their individual educational plans. Day to day assessment and feedback to pupils is also a strength and the school is just developing a system for levelling and moderating pupils' work. Although the school has well developed strategies for the core subjects, managers of other subjects are not yet fully involved in monitoring teaching with the result that pupils' progress through the schemes of work is not always securely identified. This is particularly so for pupils over sixteen, who do not benefit from a clear curriculum focus. The teaching at this stage lacks clear planning and direction and, although the ASDAN accreditation is a strength, teaching does not consistently identify

clear pathways of learning and individual learning goals for each student. Assessment is almost totally focussed around the students' work in ASDAN portfolios and other accredited courses, and the school is aware that the curriculum is driven by, rather than supported by, the accreditation opportunities. Nevertheless, these pupils are developing into reliable, mature young people, being prepared for life after school. They have very positive attitudes to their work as a direct result of the very good relationships and support they receive from the adults who work with them.

32. Arrangements for setting homework are inconsistent between teachers and classes. The school aims to take an individualised approach to homework depending upon the ability and stamina of pupils to maintain their concentration after school. Where homework is necessary for accredited courses, teachers use it well. For younger pupils, however, arrangements are less well organised and understood by pupils and parents.

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

33. Overall, the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities for its pupils. The curriculum is good overall. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils, but is better at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. At Key Stage 1, the curriculum is satisfactory, but it is not yet sufficiently planned to ensure that pupils have full access to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Often there is a heavier focus on the Early Learning Goals that are relevant to pupils under five, and whilst this may be appropriate for some pupils, older pupils may not always be fully prepared to access the subjects of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Much time is devoted to daily sessions of structured play. These activities have clear educational targets, but again have an insufficient focus on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in some cases. The curriculum for pupils at post-16 is also satisfactory but is too dependent upon the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme both for content and assessment.

34. The school's strategies for promoting and teaching literacy skills are good, and for numeracy are very good. Many teachers place a consistent and relevant emphasis on the application of these skills in all their learning, for example ensuring that pupils have opportunities to read or calculate in all other curriculum subjects.

35. Due to inevitable difficulties over transport there are few after school clubs, but the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that enhance and enrich the curriculum and which provide additional learning opportunities for its pupils. Those who require study support are able to join homework sessions at lunchtimes. There are many outdoor and adventurous pursuits, most of which offer accompanying residential experience. Visits to churches, libraries, museums and other community facilities widen pupils learning opportunities. The wide catchment area clearly precludes a lot of out-of-school activities, for example sports, but pupils are encouraged to access these through joining a school-based Youth Club or a sporting organisation with which the school has very close links. Visiting speakers, for example in assemblies, also contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

36. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. It includes relevant sex education, drugs awareness education and aspects of citizenship. Formal lessons are well planned and taught and provide a very good quality of learning. More informally, pupils' individual development plans contain targets for their personal development and for the improvement of social skills that support personal and social education at an individual level. Careers education and guidance provided for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are also

very good. It includes supported work experience for all pupils no matter what their physical difficulties, with the mobile and / or higher attaining pupils, undertaking more independent work placements. For example, this year pupils have successfully worked in a small animal farm, a shop and a local government office all of which extend their knowledge of the world of work and broaden their experience of working with adults other than school staff. College link and taster courses, discrete careers lessons and interviews help pupils to know about the range of options available to them and to make informed choices for the next stage of education.

37. Equality of access to the school's range of learning opportunities is excellent. Pupils are enabled to take a full and active part in all activities in and out of school, including in lessons, on work experience, for integration opportunities and for residential experiences.

38. Pupils are supported in many ways through the school's outstanding provision for the whole range of their special needs. A variety of therapies, well matched to the pupils' physical, medical and learning needs, is provided. These include physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, hydrotherapy and occupational therapy. Additionally, comprehensive support from other services, such as medical, social and psychiatric, are all available to ensure pupils' effective access to the curriculum. All therapy and other external staff work closely with school staff, through a co-ordinated programme which minimises disturbance to pupils learning in lessons. For example, timetabled music/movement therapy lessons support the work of physio and occupational therapists. One member of the school's support staff is designated to co-ordinate work with pupils requiring alternative and augmentative communication systems and she liaises closely with speech therapists. Pupils are enabled to communicate their needs and feelings through a range of communication and technological aids. They also take a fuller part in lessons through the careful planning of sign and symbol cards that have specialist vocabulary needed for a range of subjects, including science. For example, in one Key Stage 3 lesson, non communicating pupils could answer complex questions about a scientific investigation by indicating what a plant needs using pictorial signs for growing, soil, water, light, warmth and the sun. Appropriate support is also provided for pupils with sensory impairments.

39. All pupils have annual reviews of their statements and transition reviews are held at age 14 to plan for pupils' future options. A multi-disciplinary meeting is held to discuss each pupil's overall progress. All of these measures ensure that pupils with additional special needs make excellent progress. The school meets all statutory requirements regarding Annual Reviews and the Code of Practice.

40. An outstanding range of widespread links ensures that the community makes an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. The head teacher is involved with the education-business partnership and has helped the school to build up an impressive range of community links, including those with partner institutions such as schools and colleges, local industry, work experience providers, careers services and employment support workers. Integration links with mainstream schools ensure that pupils can benefit academically, for example where they study a course at the local high school, and socially, by providing access to working alongside mainstream peers and in preparation for joining or returning to mainstream education. In turn, the school provides placements for a range of students, for example a nursing student was in school at the time of the inspection, providing good levels of support for her professional development.

41. The school has made very significant improvements to its curriculum since the last inspection. There are now good opportunities for pupils to achieve national qualifications at Key Stage 4 and very good arrangements for careers education and extra curricular

activities. The management of subjects is now more effective as subject leaders now manage their subjects throughout all key stages and are better able to plan for long-term learning.

Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development

42. Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the provision was found to be satisfactory. The school now prepares pupils well for the next stage of learning and to take an active part in life after school.

43. Most improvement has been in pupils' social development and this provision is now excellent. Pupils of all ages have opportunities to integrate with their peers in mainstream education, and the school has an excellent range of partnerships with other schools to support the inclusion programme. In school, many lessons are planned to enable pupils to work collaboratively and lunchtime arrangements provide for social interaction between pupils. They can participate in a range of out-of-school residential activities that allow them to mix with others in less formal settings. Older pupils and students have opportunities to undertake work experience and college placements and to visit and use community facilities. These opportunities give pupils access to a wider range of social situations and the youth club that operates in school on one evening a week is very effective in supporting the pupils' social programme. The school's promotion of pupils' social development is outstanding.

44. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. All staff provide good role models as do helpers with disabilities at the youth club, many of whom are ex-pupils. Pupils learn at an early age what is acceptable behaviour, as staff take the time to explain what is right and wrong. In personal and social education, pupils learn about citizenship and why society needs laws through thinking about why various organisations need rules. Pupils learn about how to care for the environment and fundraise to help others not so fortunate as themselves.

45. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Throughout the curriculum, pupils have opportunities to learn about their own local culture, for example by preparing and cooking local foods in design and technology. They learn about our cultural heritage through studying history, art and music. Art, music and religious education also contribute towards developing their awareness of other cultures and traditions and life in a multi-cultural society. French and Spanish theme days and regular residential trips to France introduce the European dimension.

46. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall but inconsistent throughout the classes. This aspect of the provision has remained as it was at the last inspection and still requires further development. Pupils have some opportunity to reflect regularly on their own achievements and those of others. Through weekly assemblies and religious education, they consider the beliefs and values of others and some classes hold additional class assemblies at the end of the day that give opportunities for reflection. On some occasions during lessons, pupils showed awe and wonder at the world. For example, when the youngest pupils were shown live creatures from the zoo and the education officer encouraged them to touch some of the animals, they were fascinated by how the animals looked and felt. An outstanding spiritual dimension was added to a Key Stage 2 art lesson on the work of Lowry, when the teacher created a calm and restful atmosphere for the pupils by darkening the room, lighting candles and playing suitable background music. In general, however, there are insufficient planned opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual awareness and to enable them to reflect on their own spiritual

values and acknowledge and respect those of others. Because access to spiritual development and reflection is inconsistently promoted through the school, some pupils have limited opportunities to deepen their understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school takes very positive steps to ensure pupils' health and safety. The level and quality of support in this regard is very good. The educational and personal support and advice given to pupils is also very good. These provisions contribute significantly to the caring and family ethos of the school and are effective in supporting pupils learning and personal development. The school has maintained the high standards found at the last inspection but has also improved provision for pupils' personal, social and health education.

48. Pupils receive very good care and support from staff and external specialists. Teachers and support assistants work together very closely and effectively in lessons. An outstanding feature of the school is the integrated support it provides regarding welfare and learning issues. In addition to the annual review of pupils' statements, staff and external support specialists hold annual conferences (Inter Disciplinary Meetings) for each pupil to ensure that their welfare and learning needs are being met and that each pupil has clear and appropriate learning targets. These conferences are highly effective in reviewing progress.

49. Arrangements for Child Protection are very good. Considerable improvements have been made since the last inspection, when arrangements were judged to be unsatisfactory. The school has a very good quality Child Protection policy in place. The designated officer is appropriately trained and effective in dealing with any issues. The school has carried out suitable training for all staff since the last inspection and everyone has very detailed guidance about child protection procedures. Monitoring arrangements are very good and staff are well informed of procedures and vigilant regarding any possible concerns.

50. The school has a very good quality health and safety policy and procedures. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and the school's governing body plays an active part in any issues. Staff are well trained in lifting techniques resulting in all pupils being handled with dignity and respect at all times. Arrangements are made to ensure that equipment and appliances are regularly tested. Accident and emergency procedures are very well developed and effective in dealing with problems. Three staff are trained and qualified in administering first aid. Fire drills are carried out regularly and are appropriately recorded. The school has made very good improvements to its health and safety procedures since the last inspection and has effectively addressed the issues arising.

51. The school works very closely with external agencies in raising awareness of health and safety matters. The Health Education Promotion Unit, Road Safety Officer, Fire and Police Officers are all frequent visitors to the school. They all give talks and presentations to pupils about many aspects of health, safety and hygiene.

52. Arrangements for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' academic progress are very good particularly in the light of gains made towards the targets in their individual educational plans. Pupils are regularly assessed, particularly in core subjects, subjects regarding their attainment and performance in tests. From this information staff are able to effectively track the progress of individual pupils. The use of assessment to inform planning and teaching is good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection where there was some weakness. However, as the subject managers do not yet monitor and evaluate teaching of all non-core subjects, some details of pupils' progress through

schemes of work, are not identified. The school recognises that it can make further improvements in this area to take full advantage of the high amount of assessment information held for each pupil. Statutory requirements for the annual review of Statements of Special Educational Need are effectively met and include good arrangements for the setting of targets for both Individual Education Plans and care programmes. The school has made an improvement in the recording of parents' and pupils' comments since the last inspection. There are very good arrangements to monitor pupils' personal development. Staff know pupils very well and good quality records regarding pupils' level of effort, attitudes and behaviour are well used to advise and guide pupils in their personal development.

53. There are good arrangements to monitor and promote pupils' attendance. The school has addressed the monitoring issue highlighted at the last inspection by developing clear routines for monitoring. There is a good partnership with the Educational Welfare Officer who works closely and effectively with the school. Staff take many informal opportunities to speak to parents about the importance of good attendance. These arrangements have resulted in a reduction in unauthorised absence since the last inspection.

54. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. There is a high quality behaviour policy in place. Detailed records are kept of any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. The school uses this information very well in monitoring and tracking progress in individual cases. The school has made improvements to its system of recording incidents and also now provides sufficient guidance for staff on its use. Staff are very vigilant regarding any signs of bullying or name-calling. The school makes excellent use of rewards to promote good behaviour. For example, bright and attractive certificates, class shields and individual trophies are awarded at weekly assemblies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. Parents have very positive views of the school and believe it provides very good education and support for the pupils. Replies to the inspection questionnaire and responses given at the pre-inspection meeting were very positive. Parents have a high level of confidence in the school, the headteacher and leadership and management. They are very pleased about the quality of education provided and the achievements of their children. Parents are pleased at the promotion of high standards of behaviour and say that their children enjoy school life. They find the school welcoming and very approachable about any problems. They say that the school is very responsive to their suggestions. They feel that staff are highly committed to supporting their children's welfare and educational needs. For example, the school recently admitted a blind child for the first time. Because the staff were keen to ensure they were equipped to cope with the specific demands of such a learning difficulty, the class teacher, classroom assistant, head teacher and parents all attended a training course in order for them all better to understand how to deal with the child's special needs.

56. A small number of parents were concerned about the arrangements for homework and inspectors agree that arrangements for setting the amount and frequency of requirements for homework are inconsistent between classes. Although the school's provision for extra-curricular activities is good, inspectors recognised that parents would like more for their children.

57. The quality of information to parents, especially about pupils' progress, is good. Noticeboards are well placed around the school and are well used to highlight many matters. Together with photographs and displays of work, they give parents a good insight into how, and what, their children are taught. Parents receive a good quality prospectus telling them about the school, its policies and procedures. A very good feature of Governors' Annual Reports to parents is the inclusion of pupils' articles about their experiences on their work experience programmes. The school issues newsletters regularly and these effectively keep parents abreast of dates, events and developments in the life of the school. They are well used to celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils' annual reports are of good quality providing parents with clear information about what their children know, can do and understand. The quality of information to parents has improved since the last inspection when it was no more than satisfactory.

58. Parental involvement in the work of the school is very good. There have been marked improvements since the last inspection. A strength of the school is its willingness to consult parents. A comprehensive questionnaire is issued to parents each year and several issues have been addressed as a result, for example, the school recently improved the soft play surface in the internal quadrangle following comments from parents. The school organises many workshops and open days for parents and these are highly effective in promoting good parental involvement in the school and in their children's learning. These events have included 'the arts' information technology, French, careers and 'healthy living'. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association provides tremendous support to the school through organising social and fundraising events. The Association has recently raised a considerable amount of money to go towards purchasing a new mini-bus for the school. A few parents help in school on a regular basis. For example, they help in the toy library and accompany pupils on school trips. Parent helpers are well briefed on their role. With the use of home school agreements parents are well involved in reviewing Individual Education Plans for their children and setting future learning targets. Home/School Diaries show that parents are effectively involved in their children's learning at home. All these factors contribute well to pupils' learning enabling them to make good progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the very strong management of the headteacher and governing body ensure that all pupils receive a high quality of education and make very good gains in learning. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, which results from an in depth understanding of the needs of the pupils and knowledge of the best ways in which they can be met.

60. The aims and values of the school are clearly met in its work as it provides the very best facilities and high quality education through clear, informed decision making in the light of very good knowledge and experience

61. Very good knowledge of the skills and expertise of the staff enables the headteacher to delegate responsibilities appropriately. The very strong professional skills of the governing body enhance this process by ensuring that at a governing body level, responsibilities are apportioned appropriately. For example, the chair of finance and

numeracy governor is an accountant, the curriculum and literacy governor is an educationalist and the chair of governors has a great deal of experience in management. However, whilst the management of art, religious education, mathematics and English is excellent but the role of other subject managers is less well developed as they do not yet monitor the teaching of other staff in their subjects.

62. The way in which the governing body fulfils its statutory duties is outstanding. The governors are well respected by the headteacher and all staff, and play a strong role in the development of the school. The governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus comply with requirements and are clearly presented. Despite the small number of governors, their collective skills make it a very strong governing body. Parent governors are strong, effective and dedicated to maintaining and improving the quality of education within the school. They are alert to the demands of the specialists within the school and the recommendations that they make. For example, parents proposed that the pupils would benefit from a soft play area outdoors. When the governors learned of this, they ensured that the provision was made.

63. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since the last report there have been many changes amongst staff and governors of the school. The present chair of governors was on the governing body at the time of the last inspection and serves the school well in taking responsibility for helping the school to move forward.

64. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching within the school is very good in core subjects but is not yet fully established throughout all others. All teachers and governors have had training in monitoring of teaching and the whole school has had training on how teachers should be meeting the needs of the support staff. This system of professional development is working well and is raising the morale of staff and increasing their professional awareness. Staff development interviews are held regularly with the headteacher and are conducted in the light of the monitoring of their teaching and their aspirations as teachers.

65. The school development plan has appropriate targets for improvement. The school's priorities for development are realistic and well supported by financial knowledge and planning. The action taken by members of the governing body and the senior management team has been very good in working towards the targets on the school development plan. The school development plan states very clear success criteria, and all elements are carefully costed.

66. The headteacher, senior management team and governing body show total commitment to improvement in the school. Under the leadership of the headteacher and the governing body the school's capacity to succeed is excellent, as there is a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is very definite about the changes that have been made for the better of the school and is equally passionate about the need for continuing to raise standards. The school provides good opportunities for students to undertake training placements for such areas as nursing or other vocational courses. It is well placed to provide opportunities for training student teachers.

67. There are very good procedures for the induction of new members of staff and they are very carefully monitored and supported when they join the school.

68. Financial planning is very secure. The school is in a positive financial position where it is able to meet the needs of the pupils and the demands of the school curriculum without

over stretching resources. However the school will be experiencing a reduction in its total budget in the months to come, as the number of pupils on roll has fallen. There is, however, carefully planned restructuring of staff responsibilities to meet the changing situation. Specific grants are used very effectively for their designated purposes. These include school support, social inclusion, performance and management training and the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The school spends money wisely; it links spending to its strategic planning and ensures it obtains best value for money when purchasing resources and services.

69. The use of new technology through the school is very good. In classes, pupils and students use computers for communication and to support learning in other subjects. Teachers and support staff use computers effectively when planning and producing school documents. The office staff use a commercial system to hold all records and these are carefully backed up each day. The office staff support the teachers well by preparing many policy documents and schemes of work. All school requisitions and accounts are managed through the office where there is proper separation of duties. An independent audit of accounts and procedures has been carried out and the recommendations have been put into practice. Records are kept securely and all data is password protected at different levels. The school office is very well managed and runs very effectively in support of all staff and pupils. Office staff also offer a warm welcome to visitors.

70. The number of teachers and learning support assistants is very good and meets the needs of the whole curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3 and 4. This is a great improvement on the previous inspection and provides very good support for all pupils, especially those needing augmentative and alternative communication. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in teaching pupils with physical disabilities and other associated learning difficulties. Learning support assistants are highly skilled and provide very good support to teachers and pupils which makes a positive contribution to their learning. All staff have undergone training in literacy, numeracy and information technology and this also has a very good impact on pupils' learning as many opportunities are taken to reinforce pupils' attention to basic skills throughout the school and across the curriculum. Staff training has a high profile within the school and is prioritised against the school development plan and individual staff needs. For example, learning support assistants have been re-trained in their handling and lifting skills. Staff new to the school have also received such training and several have become qualified first aiders. The headteacher meets with staff annually to discuss their job description, professional development needs and their role within the school. When staff have completed training they cascade this information to colleagues, for example, through staff meetings. There is a good policy and clear procedures for the induction of all new staff, including assigning staff to a mentor who oversees their work. The school has successfully maintained its Investors in People award gained before the last inspection.

71. The quality and standard of the school's accommodation is very good. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning as specialist areas such as the food technology room, hydrotherapy pool and sensory room all provide pupils with high quality resources. There is a science room, which is well used, but only has limited resources for pupils with physical disabilities. The library is very well stocked with a good range of books, CD-ROMs and video tapes and is frequently used by pupils to enhance their learning and research skills. Changing areas for pupils throughout the school are clean and well equipped with electric hoists to aid support staff and develop pupils' self-help skills, in addition manual hoists are available for use around the school. Specialised equipment, such as adjustable tables and chairs are plentiful and well used in all classrooms and specialist areas. The school is well maintained both internally and externally and kept very clean and tidy by the site manager

and his cleaning staff. Outside a new and brightly coloured play area has been developed for the younger pupils, and good use is made of the adjoining secondary school's sports facilities to extend the school's outdoor provision. Pupils' work is very well displayed in classrooms and around the school, which provides not only a stimulating environment for pupils to learn but also shows how highly staff value and celebrate pupils' work. The corridors are however very cluttered with additional equipment and as the hall is used for many purposes it has tables and chairs at one end which are always a potential hazard during physical education lessons. However, the hall is always extremely well cleaned after lunch and before afternoon lessons start.

72. Learning resources overall are good, which is also an improvement on the previous inspection. This enables pupils to learn with an appropriate range of equipment and resources that meet their needs and abilities. Learning resources for augmentative and alternative communication are outstanding and enable all pupils to communicate as fully as possible through an excellent range of peripherals and software programs. In some areas, such as information technology, art, and careers' education and guidance, resources are very good. Resources for literacy and numeracy have improved as a result of the National Strategies. In religious education, design and technology, physical education, and personal, social and health education there are a good range of learning resources for pupils throughout the school. In science, music, French and history resources are satisfactory but nevertheless adequate to meet the needs of pupils' learning, although in geography resources are barely adequate as they are missing some essential equipment such as maps.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to raise standards further, the head teacher and governors should:

- (1) Improve the curriculum, assessment, teaching and record keeping for students over 16 by identifying individual learning pathways for each student which prepare them purposefully for the next stages of their lives. The school should ensure that all teaching and learning is based upon a flexible yet challenging curriculum and supported by comprehensive assessment procedures which identify students' learning needs and achievements.
(Paragraphs: 31, 74-78)
- (2) Plan a whole school approach to promoting pupils' spiritual awareness by increasing planned opportunities within the timetable for pupils to reflect on major life issues and their own aspirations and goals.
(Paragraphs: 16, 44)
- (3) Continue to develop the role of subject managers in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects in order to ensure high standards in all areas of the curriculum.
(Paragraphs: 30, 52, 61, 64, 105, 118, 122, 126, 132, 143, 149)

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS OVER SIXTEEN

74. Students over sixteen can extend their education for a further year in a transition programme designed to prepare them for the next stage of their lives. Four such students were on roll during the current inspection, each working towards ASDAN certification at levels commensurate with their abilities.

75. Students make satisfactory gains in learning in two lessons and good gains in four. These gains are directly linked to the standards of teaching, which is good in four lessons and satisfactory in two. Staff ensure that as much responsibility as possible is handed over to the students. Staff treat them as mature young people and encourage them to be as independent as possible. The students value this approach and consequently their attitudes to work and their concentration are consistently very good. Because staff expect the students to take responsibility for their learning they respond well and their behaviour is very good. They willingly attempt adult tasks such as taking minutes of meeting when preparing a school leavers' assembly. At the local leisure centre students respond well to the challenge of organising the trip for example, pre booking the taxi, paying the entrance fee and finding the correct location. Their curriculum is further extended by attendance at two local colleges where, this year, students have studied information and communication technology, horticulture and business administration. An expressive arts course completes the curriculum along with opportunities for students to retake examinations to improve grades if appropriate.

76. Whilst these arrangements provide a rich range of activities they are mainly steered by the ASDAN challenges and whilst meeting the accreditation requirements effectively, the resulting portfolios are rather repetitive in nature. Students do not yet have the opportunity to negotiate an individual learning programme, which ensures that they are consistently and appropriately challenged, according to their individual needs and career choices, throughout this extra year of schooling. Arrangements for planning and delivering teaching are informal and insufficient records kept of the teaching undertaken by the teachers themselves or the nursery nurse. This situation has arisen mainly because the focus of recording is on what students do as part of the ASDAN framework. This is an unsatisfactory situation as pupils' learning experiences and achievements are not independently plotted or systematically identified. Furthermore, the work of the nursery nurse is not yet consistently planned, recorded, monitored or evaluated.

77. Despite these weaknesses the students' experience during this extra year enriches their learning and their understanding of life after school, particularly the characteristics of working in a busy college of further education, an environment to which most of them will move. The programme has already been particularly successful in encouraging one reluctant student to take up a place when she had not been confident to do so at the end of Year 11.

78. Since the last inspection the school has made satisfactory progress in establishing good opportunities for accreditation including GCSE and the Certificate of Educational Achievement as well as ASDAN. However, arrangements for planning and assessing individual learning pathways and for monitoring the work of all staff are not yet satisfactory.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	20	35	26	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	55
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	14

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	12	School data	0.1

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

The following qualifications were achieved by Key Stage 4 pupils in 1999:-

	SUBJECT	NO, ENTERED	NO. PASSES
GCSE GRADES D – G			
	Mathematics	4	3
	Science	2	2
	Music	5	5
	Expressive Arts	3	3
	ICT	3	3
WJEC / NEAB CERTIFICATES OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT			
	English	4	4
	Science	3	3 (1 Distinction)
	French	4	4
	History	4	4
NDTEF CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT			
	Work Experience	9	9
	ICT	6	6
ASDAN			
	Bronze /Silver	2	2
	Bronze	1	1
NEAB UNITS			
	English - 9 pupils achieved a total of 14 units		
	PSHE - 9 pupils achieved a total of 14 units.		

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	55
Any other minority ethnic group	

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: N – Y12

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7
Average class size	7.86

Education support staff: N – Y12

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	510

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	727 930
Total expenditure	757 981
Expenditure per pupil	12 848
Balance brought forward from previous year	120 758
Balance carried forward to next year	90 707

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	55
Number of questionnaires returned	33

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	13	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	23	6	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	23	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	58	19	6	3	10
The teaching is good.	68	29	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	21	2	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	16	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	65	29	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	29	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	29	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	32	10	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. Their greatest concern is the amount and frequency of homework, which is inconsistently provided between classes. Inspectors agree with their opinion and the school has recognised the need to act upon it.

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

ENGLISH

79. Pupils' achievement, in English and literacy, across all four key stages, is good in relation to their abilities and their prior attainment. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 good overall at Key Stage 2 but very good for the oldest, Year 6 pupils at this key stage. Pupils' achievements are also good Key Stages 3 and 4. This high quality his represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when progress was judged unsatisfactory. The improvements in standards stem from several factors including the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Key Stages 1-3 and the improvements in teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4. Additionally, very good planning and teaching for pupils' individual communication needs and careful monitoring of their work towards targets set in individual educational plans have also resulted in a clear focus on improvement. Pupils' make good progress in reading and writing and very good progress in speaking and listening in Key Stages 1-4, in relation to the carefully specified targets in literacy and communication identified in their individual educational plans.

80. Overall progress in speaking and listening is very good and evident in the effective and appropriate communication of pupils in all subject areas. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' strong progress in speaking, listening and communication is evident in their ability to discuss, 'who friends are' or by making relevant contributions in geography when handling materials like ice, sand and wet cloths. By Key Stage 2 they respond to questions, explain their work to an adult and show excitement and enjoyment when given opportunities to comment on others' ideas or opinions. Within Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils' speaking and listening skills show very good development as they compare contrast and evaluate their work while making a wall hanging in design and technology. By leaving age, pupils make a range of different types of contributions in planning a task, such as a leavers' assembly. They adapt their speech for the different skills of members of the group and modify their ideas in response to their opinions.

81. Overall progress in reading is good at all key stages. The youngest pupils demonstrate good use of appropriate terms to talk about books and they use picture clues, initial letters, and memory for word patterns for reading their poem, 'Rumble in the Jungle' together. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils make very good gains in learning. Higher attaining pupils use their reading strategies with confidence to extract meaning and read difficult words in their individual texts. Others show improving accuracy, fluency and expression in their reading. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to locate and extract relevant information in a poster on drugs and there is increasing assurance, accuracy and fluency in their reading. However, some lower attaining pupils still need systematic or occasional help. The range of reading increases further as does the quality of pupils' personal response to reading novels by the time pupils reach school leaving age at the end of Key Stage 4. In their study of plays they learn to compare differences between the tragedy, and comedy setting out the different features which characterise them in their writing. Good use is made of their reading in other subjects to find information, to read their own writing and to follow instructions.

82. Overall, pupils' writing shows good progress at all key stages. This progress is good in relation to the targets set for them and due to focussed attention to such targets by teachers and support staff. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can differentiate between print and pictures and they make satisfactory progress with learning to write letters by holding pencils comfortably, moving from left to right, top to bottom and attempt to start and finish

letters correctly. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' use of writing to communicate their ideas is very good. They use handwriting, word processors and specialist 'intellikeys' where appropriate, to describe and record their work across the subjects and to provide results and explanations in different formats as in the work on growth in science. There is good understanding of the need to spell correctly and to use full stops, capital letters and speech marks in their written work. By Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils produce good evidence of information and communication technology including the use of word processors and 'clicker grids'. They write about Charles Dickens and features and events of his life. However although the amount of written work has improved substantially there some over use of templates and structured resources resulting in some lack of challenge for some higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils produce less volume of work and the meaning is conveyed through brief phrases, and simple words. Nevertheless in relation to their abilities, they make good gains in learning. The oldest pupils in the school make very successful use of drafting, editing, proof reading, word processing and design to produce and illustrate poetry of a very high standard in relation to a history topic covering World War II. The presentation of the poem, 'In Flanders field the poppies blow', won a Flyde coast information and communication technology award. The range of independent work within the accredited courses has increased substantially with evidence of strong development in the use of written language as a tool for communication.

83. Pupils' behaviour is good and they respond well to their English lessons in all key stages. Their attitude behaviour and relationships are very good and often outstanding. These positive results come from the effective class organisation, well-matched tasks and the behaviour management strategies used by teachers and support staff to ensure pupils needs for participation are met. Pupils display high levels of persistence and enthusiasm because staff acknowledge their efforts and boost their self-esteem. Their high interest levels and good behaviour result from effective teacher feedback that is often specific and shows pupils how to improve. Teachers use their excellent relationships with pupils to ensure that they are aware of their own behaviour and its impact on others. They help them to relate constructively and patiently with each other.

84. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, at least satisfactory and very good in almost half of lessons at Key Stage 2. However, at each of these key stages there was one unsatisfactory lesson. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is good. The planning frameworks of National Literacy Strategy have helped to raise the overall quality of teaching and all teachers have satisfactory and often good knowledge of the subject. Where teaching is very good teachers are extremely well prepared with comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject, and how to teach it well, to meet the needs of each individual pupil. As a result there is usually good teaching of basic skills with broad and balanced coverage of reading, writing and speaking and listening. There is particularly effective and detailed planning for teaching literacy in Key Stages 2 and 3 where the match between learning objectives and pupils' needs results in them making good progress and choosing to read in front of their peers. In the most effective teaching, good interesting books, specifically targeted questions and tasks and selected strategies for demonstrating reading skills are used to promote and evaluate reading. In a Year 6 lesson for example the teacher's enthusiasm during shared reading inspired and motivated pupils in the group to volunteer to read aloud confidently. Pupils use the prompts and suggestions provided by the teacher for reading difficult words with immediate success. The well-paced teaching moves through short focussed tasks to consider the role of prepositions and their influence on meanings in sentences. Teachers and support staff plan together well to ensure that pupils with additional needs have access to the planned work with additional resources where necessary. Where teaching is unsatisfactory teachers do not identify clear targets which match work to the wide range of pupils' abilities. This omission results in excessive

use of worksheets or workbooks with pupils waiting too long for help which resulted in them becoming frustrated with the lesson and thereby restricts pupils' learning and enjoyment. Nevertheless, the standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection when a significant proportion was judged to be unsatisfactory or poor.

85. Arrangements for assessment are very effective overall. Reading test scores and the development of a good subject portfolio of pupils achievements in speaking and listening reading and writing ensures that good information on progress is available for teachers when pupils transfer from class to class. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Pupils' individual education plans have a suitable large range of effective and mostly measurable targets that are monitored systematically on a termly basis and records of progress are effectively kept. Many of the targets are successfully achieved within the time scales established. However, a few more demanding targets, which sensibly require prolonged and sustained effort by higher attaining pupils, are not yet consistently achieved.

86. The subject is very effectively co-ordinated by an enthusiastic subject manager. Developments in policy, the implementation of the literacy strategy and the regular revisions to the scheme of work and ideas for supporting planning illustrate a very strong commitment to improvement reflected in well chosen priorities within the subject development plan.

87. There have been very good improvements in English since the last inspection. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has helped to shape the format and content of teaching. Additionally standards of teaching and learning have risen considerably since the last inspection when a large proportion of teaching and learning were found to be unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

88. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is now very good overall with some excellent teaching for pupils in Key Stage 2. Where the teaching is excellent the teacher ensures that all pupils are well motivated by the tasks which are challenging and appropriate to each individual pupil. Pupils enjoy the challenges that they are given. In one class such challenges ranges from identifying the number '1' when given two cards, one showing a '4' and another showing a '1', to counting back from 130 in 13s. The most able pupils are multiplying hundreds, tens and units, whilst others work on their tables of 2, 6, 7 and 8.

89. The wide variety of activity and the significant amount of excellent teaching enable all pupils to make good and often very good progress as they grasp new concepts such as the concept of multiplication across the base. The total involvement and high levels of enthusiasm shown by the pupils result in an excellent atmosphere in which all learn well. The teachers' excellent use of signing to support her speech ensures that all pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

90. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a clear understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This shows good progress as pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are learning to recognise patterns and shapes. Here the teacher uses real fruits to make a pattern comprising apple, banana, orange, apple, banana, orange etc. Using real fruit motivates pupils well and they quickly recognise the pattern and are able to tell what fruit should come next in order to continue the pattern.

91. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. One class of pupils works on knowledge and understanding of the two different types of clocks and watches, namely analogue and digital and as the lesson progresses deepen their understanding and ability to tell the time. Pupils behave well as they take part in a mental mathematics warm up exercise. They enjoy identifying the place value of different digits in large numbers.

92. Pupils in Key Stage 4 work very well in two main groups. The higher attaining pupils are working towards their GCSE examination whilst the others are following an ASDAN course which includes more practical mathematics. All pupils are highly motivated thanks to the very good teaching that they receive. The GCSE group works very well and as a result revises and reinforces their knowledge and understanding of prime numbers and square numbers. As the lesson progresses, the pupils develop strategies and a formula for calculating the perimeter of a rectangle. In this situation pupils are very good at using their previous knowledge of algebra to substitute letters for lengths and widths, thus arriving at the recognised formula $C = 2(l+b)$.

93. In subsequent lessons pupils develop this information and, through investigative work on a circle, they develop an understanding of the ratio between the diameter and the circumference and learn that this is represented by the Greek letter 'p' (pi). Further work by these pupils results in their developing a formula for calculating the circumference of a circle.

94. Pupils who follow the ASDAN course 'Mathematics in every day life' make good gains in practical skills and enjoy the work immensely as they learn to set the clock correctly on the microwave oven. They revise their knowledge of the digital clock and, after reading the instructions, make a hot chocolate drink. In this situation pupils work extremely well together. They help each other to read the instructions on the chocolate powder and then, together, they set the clock and the heat level. First they heat the drink for one minute and then remove it carefully from the oven in order to give it a stir. The drink is then replaced for a further minute to produce a very nice cup of hot drinking chocolate. Pupils have to learn a little by trial and error, as the cup is not a standard breakfast cup. However, the result is very successful, and the pupils have learned a great deal about the setting of the oven and the handling of food and drink as it comes from the microwave oven.

95. The teacher has produced some very effective teaching aids for the group and they have been laminated to protect them from any spills that may occur. The success of pupils is recorded and the pupils' individual education plans are used as a measure of success and progress that the pupils make. The National Numeracy strategy is well implemented in the school and every opportunity is taken across the curriculum, to develop and reinforce pupils' skills in numeracy. This is particularly successful in links with music as pupils reinforce their counting skills in a wide variety of situations. Some involve 'counting in your head' whilst in other situations pupils sing the numbers out loud. This is clearly enjoyed by all.

96. All pupils behave well in all lessons. They are highly motivated, very well mannered and work very well as individuals, in pairs, or as whole classes. This is reinforced through the very positive experiences that they have when learning in mathematics lessons. Pupils raise their hands when they wish to answer questions and also wait very patiently for other pupils, who may have difficulties in speaking, to answer. There is often spontaneous applause when pupils give a very good answer or work very well. This is encouraged by the teachers and helps to create a very good atmosphere for learning.

97. Mathematics is well co-ordinated throughout the school and assessment opportunities are created through the pupils' individual education plans that serve as a clear reminder of the progress that pupils have made towards their targets in many different areas.

98. There are sufficient teachers who are appropriately qualified to teach the subject and there are good resources available to ensure that all pupils have really good practical experience in school. Homework is set regularly and it is usually of an investigative nature. Resources are good and these are supplemented by many home-made resources, thanks to the dedication and hard work of teachers and support staff.

SCIENCE

99. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress and pupils at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 make good progress. In some lessons pupils are starting to make very good progress in lessons, for example in a lesson observed with pupils studying for GCSE and Certificate of Achievement at Key Stage 4. These pupils benefited from first-hand observations of the differences between animal species when a zoo education officer brought in a selection of live animals.

100. At Key Stage 1, teaching is very good with a very good range of activities which help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of science through specific science lessons, but also in personal and social education, religious education and through structured play. For example, when thinking about caring for themselves and others, they also learn about caring for pets. They can say which is their favourite pet and record choices on a class pictograph. They know that some things are living and others are not and they know that animals have babies and what we call some of these, for example horse/foal. Pupils can participate in charting the daily weather and they know that some things are hot and others cold. In a project on 'Colour, Light and Water', they can investigate what things float or sink, whether wet or dry sand pours better and what happens when certain colour paints are mixed. Teachers and support staff work together well to ensure that pupils work towards set objectives for developing their scientific knowledge and understanding, both in their structured play and in subject lessons, though these are often still targeted more at the Early Learning Goals than at the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum programme of study. Nevertheless pupils' progress is satisfactory overall and often good.

101. At Key Stage 2, the good teaching ensures a good quality of learning and pupils make good progress overall. Younger pupils start to understand what is a fair test and how to use equipment independently. Because teachers have high expectations for what they will achieve, pupils learn to measure accurately and they know how to change variables during an investigation. For example, during a good lesson on what plants need to grow and thrive, the teacher emphasised the use of correct scientific vocabulary and pupils made their own predictions. As a result, pupils of all abilities learned about how to set up and carry out a simple investigation and to talk knowledgeably about their findings. This has the impact of developing pupils' scientific skills but also giving valuable opportunities to use and increase their literacy skills. Older pupils know the main parts of the human body, understand their are different sources of light, know the colours found in a rainbow, and can carry out an investigation into how water can change from its liquid form into steam or ice.

102. At Key Stage 3, pupils are making satisfactory gains in learning overall. In some

lessons, they are starting to make good progress. Pupils know that plants need a range of things to thrive, including water, warmth, light and nutrients. They understand that photosynthesis is a process undertaken by plants, and higher attaining pupils can write down a word equation to explain this. In classifying animals, they can sort them into vertebrates and invertebrates. Pupils know that there are different types of forces and can explain gravity and friction. They know that a range of gases make up the air and start to gain an understanding of safety issues through their study of the different types of fire extinguisher and where these should be used. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good teaching. Where teaching is good, work is planned at a variety of levels and this results in work being well matched to pupils' abilities. Support staff are well deployed to support individual pupils, for example so that those with restricted hand movements can be enabled to take an active part in planting seeds for an investigation into plant growth. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, the teacher has lower expectations for pupils' independent recording of their work. Consequently, even the highest attaining pupils copy from the board rather than writing a full account of their investigations, which results in them recording only a narrow range of observations.

103. At Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress overall. Pupils know about electricity and magnetism, and understand that there is a range of commercial applications of these. In learning about light, they know about white light, the spectrum, refraction and reflection. They know about the periodic table and the elements within it. When writing up experiments based on chemical reactions, pupils are able to record their own findings and observations. Pupils can also utilise their numeracy skills, as seen when they present their findings in graph or tabular form. Teaching at this key stage is good overall, with an example of very good teaching in a lesson observed during the inspection. The teacher had organised a visit into school by the local zoo education officer. The teacher had briefed her well on the requirements for the visit, and it was securely based on the current part of the scheme of work. Because the teacher had done this and also supported pupils well through appropriate questioning, encouragement and unobtrusive offers of physical assistance, all pupils were able to take an active part in the lesson, handling some of the live animals, and making astute observations of variations based on personal first-hand evidence. The teacher recorded these on the board in a clear colour-coded system, ensuring that the visit was not just a successful one-off lesson, but that it would form a pivotal part of the work in the rest of the unit of study.

104. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy science lessons and their behaviour is good. They show high levels of interest and curiosity in experiments and enjoy discussing the results of practical work. The exciting range and content of lessons contributes positively to pupils' very good attitudes and relationships with staff and with each other.

105. Science provision has improved in a variety of ways since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and there is now a good quality policy document and schemes of work. A good balance of scientific knowledge is covered across life processes, learning about materials and the study of physical processes. Appropriate investigations are undertaken at all key stages, and the subject manager is currently reviewing these in order to ensure that pupils' investigative skills develop progressively throughout the school. She manages the subject well, but has a greater awareness of provision at Key Stages 1 and 2. Monitoring of the later key stages has recently been introduced but a full year's cycle has yet to be completed. The science accommodation has been improved by the addition of benches and there is a satisfactory range of resources. Practical equipment is well organised in topic boxes for the study of particular units of work. There is an over-reliance, however, on a particular set of commercially produced worksheets that are used throughout most of the school. Some teachers have started to

resolve this weakness by adding their own resources by downloading information from the Internet but, as yet, there are no formal arrangements for extending curricular resources.

106. Pupils now benefit from the opportunity to receive rewards for their achievements in science through the Certificate in Educational Achievement which gains them nationally recognised qualifications by the end of Key Stage 4. Science targets on pupils' individual education plans provide useful assessment opportunities for teachers to check on pupils' progress, but are as yet insufficiently differentiated to reflect the range of abilities present in many classes.

ART

107. It was not possible to observe art lessons at all key stages. Pupils make good gains in learning at Key Stage 2 and the quality of teaching is good with some excellent teaching. Lessons are very well planned to meet the individual special needs of all pupils. In order to do this successfully, the role of the support assistant is also very carefully planned and documented. Both teachers and support assistants make sure that pupils do not put clay into their mouths when they are working. They are encouraged and helped to make coils from which they make small pots. Some pupils need a great deal of help and encouragement, whilst others work very successfully on their own. As a result of this carefully targeted support pupils make good gains in learning.

108. The teacher is skilled in the way that she moves from one pupil to another helping to keep them all busy and enjoying themselves, as they work with the clay enjoying the texture and experience as they mould and build a pot. All pupils wear protective clothing and many take a full part distributing and collecting modelling tools and other equipment. Pupils make artefacts in the style of ancient Romans. They make small cups and clay coins that they decorate using modelling tools and small plastic building bricks or cotton reels to create a patterned texture on the surfaces.

109. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 study the work of great masters including Lowry, Turner and Matisse. Pupils can readily distinguish the work of the different artists and express their own feelings about their different styles. One pupil prefers the work of Turner to that of Lowry because the colours that Turner uses are more interesting than the rather drab greys of Lowry. Despite this preference, all the pupils in the class make excellent attempts at copying the style of Lowry. They pay particular attention to the colours that he used and to the angular and linear forms that he used to represent the figures and buildings.

110. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology to help with artwork. One pupil uses a roller ball mouse to manipulate the tools on a piece of painting software, which he uses to emulate the work of Lowry. Pupils also retrieve information from compact disks concerning the work of famous historical and modern artists. Pupils enjoy art lessons, they behave well and they always try hard to do their best.

111. The art curriculum is also very valuable in developing pupils' social and cultural awareness as they learn about society and the environment. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' plans and records show that pupils make very good progress. They study the relationships that there were between artists and their models, and how each was treated differently by society at large.

112. Scrutiny of records, photographs and discussions with staff and pupils, show that the school held a very popular 'Arts' day last year. Pupils and staff reported enjoying and sharing experiences provided by visiting artists and sculptors. Some made jewellery from decorative beads whilst others made model houses. Photography was available as was silk screen printing, woodturning and canvas painting. The school states that the day was very successful and it is hoped that it will be repeated this coming year. Pupils from display their artwork in the local art gallery in Blackpool. They have been very successful in recent years and have won second and third prizes in competitions.

113. Curriculum planning for art is excellent and the subject is carefully and very well monitored and facilitated by the art manager. The school has very good resources for art and the accommodation is satisfactory although there is no dedicated art room. Despite this, artwork has a profound effect upon the atmosphere within the school. The corridors are well decorated with the work of pupils and the work is very well displayed. The walls of classrooms support the artwork of many pupils that has been completed in a variety of lessons. Artwork is not confined to the art lessons, there is a great deal of cross-curricular art work done by pupils, especially in history and geography. Some of this artwork is three-dimensional. As pupils study Henry VIII, they make models of the Tudor houses and paint very good pictures of King Henry.

114. The teaching of art and the valuable experiences that pupils receive through art are a strength of the school and clearly enhance the quality of education they receive across the whole curriculum. The school has made good improvements in art since the last inspection, nevertheless, the subject co-ordinator does not yet routinely monitor other people's teaching of the subject as part of the subject monitoring.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

115. The school has made very good progress in developing design and technology since the last inspection and pupils' learning is now good throughout the school. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils use a variety of skills and techniques to design, make and evaluate their work. This includes construction equipment and food technology with the youngest pupils, who use their senses to evaluate their work. In Years 3 and 4, pupils use rigid materials to build an aqueduct, having previously built a viaduct and Roman Temple from card, testing the strength of their models using different weights. While in Years 5 and 6, pupils designed and made their own weaving frames, selecting different material from a wide range, and then modified and secured their weavings with staples and tape. By Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils' learning continues by consolidating earlier skills and developing their capacity to generate design ideas and evaluate their work in even greater detail. Pupils design and make wall hangings, using different materials, dyes and paints, and tools such as sewing machines, while in food technology pupils design and make their own pizzas, based on a previous selection of ingredients for taste, colour and appearance. Pupils of all ages use a variety of tools safely and have a good knowledge of safe practice. With increasing age their competence with tools increases and they develop finishing techniques, such as the different wall hangings that are displayed around the school. For older pupils, at Key Stage 4 and post-16, the relevance of design and technology is emphasised by links with the local collage. As part of their externally accredited courses, pupils have put on a production of the musical *Cats*. Pupils were responsible for designing and making the costumes, scenery, programmes and invitations, incorporating many of their information technology skills. They are currently working on a luncheon as part of another module.

116. The teaching of design and technology is good overall and occasionally outstanding at Key Stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge and take every opportunity to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills through their planning and questioning techniques to ensure pupils have understood their work. In one lesson, the teacher took every opportunity to reinforce the historical nature of the pupils' designs using appropriate vocabulary that was appropriately different to match pupils' needs. Careful planning ensures that tasks set for pupils are appropriate to their needs and abilities to ensure pupils' learning is as effective as it can be. The support of a learning support assistant ensures that individual pupils are given the help they require and this makes a very positive contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. A strength of teaching is the high expectation and encouragement that is given to pupils to extend and develop their ideas further and to evaluate their own efforts. This motivates pupils to produce good quality work and raises standards. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress and this, combined with good long and short term planning, contributes to raising standards. Very good use is made of the school's digital camera to record pupils' work, especially during the making phase. However, as these photographs have yet to be dated and contain an explanation of the activity, valuable information is being lost. The co-ordinator has acknowledged this omission and has already started to redress this issue.

117. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work and their behaviour is good. They concentrate for long periods of time and show extraordinary perseverance. For example, during a food technology lesson, one pupil with very limited hand function selected and picked up individual pieces of sliced mushrooms before carefully placing them on her pizza in exactly the correct position. This took an extreme amount of effort but she was determined that her pizza was going to be made precisely as she had designed it. Pupils throughout the school behave very well, they show concern for one another and for equipment and resources. With increasing age they develop improved designs and quality of work.

118. The subject is well managed and monitored. At its best, pupils' work is carefully monitored and the information is used to inform future planning. However, this practice is variable throughout the school and between the different aspects of design and technology. For example, occasionally some targets set for pupils in their individual education plans are too descriptive and are not used by some teachers. This needs to be addressed if targets are to be used to plan future work for pupils. The facilities for design and technology are very good and the subject has a good range of resources.

GEOGRAPHY

119. During the inspection three lessons in geography were seen, one in each of Key Stages 1-3. Geography is not taught at Key Stage 4. The judgements presented are supported by evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work and their individual targets, teachers' planning, and discussions with teachers and pupils.

120. At Key Stage 1 pupils' achievement and progress is satisfactory. As part of developing their understanding of such phenomena as deserts and polar regions pupils work with materials that feel warm and wet, cold and frozen, dry and hot and learn to label them with some accuracy. At Key Stage 2 pupils' achievement and progress is good. They state comparisons between Manchester and Blackpool and offer reasons for their answers. At Key Stage 3 achievement and progress of the oldest pupils is unsatisfactory. Their recall of earlier work is weak, they have difficulty locating South Africa on the map and they are uncertain about where north, south, east and west might be located. The amount and range of work seen is too limited to build on progress from Key Stage 2. The school has yet

to provide pupils with opportunities to study for accredited courses for geography at Key Stage 4.

121. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 where early concepts and communication skills are supportively taught through demonstration, and memorable experiences such as handling ice that can make learning fun. At Key Stage 2 teaching is good because the learning objectives are precisely specified and match pupils' needs, taking into account good care of their learning difficulties. Here, the end of the lesson is very effective because well chosen questions enable assessment of individual learning and ensure key points are reviewed. At Key Stage 3, the lesson was unsatisfactory as objectives and tasks are too broad to provide demanding work which uses time productively to promote pupils' learning. However, in all lessons, the very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that they display positive attitudes to their work, they behave well and make good efforts to undertake the tasks provided.

122. Overall achievement and learning in geography is compromised by rudimentary schemes of work which lack detail on key learning objectives, the types of suitable activities and resources and how they might be assessed and evaluated. These features impact through the very broad specification of Individual Education Plan objectives where pupils' learning is difficult to monitor, and planning for progress is less effective or not demanding enough. The development plan for geography points to the need for further resourcing for the subject. While this is appropriate there is insufficient focus on raising standards through consistent high quality teaching or through the monitoring of teaching by the subject manager. The school has made some improvements since the last inspection but recognises the need to continue developments.

HISTORY

123. Four lessons of history were observed, two at Key Stage 3, and 1 each at Key Stages 2 and 4. At Key Stage 2 pupils make very good gains in learning due to extremely well planned and motivating teaching. In a lesson on the Romans, pupils entered the room excitedly, asking if they were to wear their togas. They did this enthusiastically, fastening them proudly with brooches that they had made in an earlier art lesson. Pupils listened carefully as the teacher organised a discussion on the qualities of 'old' and 'new'. Then, using a sand tray, they searched for the coins they had 'lost' and upon discovering some, had to decide whether they were firstly, Roman and then, old. Once they had found and sorted the coins they recorded their finds by making a rubbing with wax crayons. This very challenging teaching helped pupils to extend their learning by adding their work to the already high quality display on the topic. Throughout the lesson the pupils behaved very well; they took turns to share resources and followed the adults' instructions carefully with the result that their work was of very high standards.

124. At Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils make satisfactory progress in their work because they are motivated and their behaviour is good allowing them to concentrate well and take an increasing pride in their work. Pupils show a genuine interest in the subject and try hard to do well when reading or completing worksheets with pictures of past and present. However, whilst teaching is well prepared with a relevant range of materials to support and guide pupils' learning, teachers do not always provide sufficient time for discussion or investigate pupils' thinking in sufficient depth. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the pupils were able to identify that in the 16th century people did not watch television or that they had horses rather than cars, but the teacher missed some opportunities to explore this thinking, such as considering who would have had access to horse drawn transport and why. By the end of this key stage, with careful questioning, pupils compare and contrast the practices of

Catholics, Protestants and Puritans. For example, the pupils learned that the Puritans departed from the conventions of the Catholic church by assuming simplicity in both design and ways of worship. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching is satisfactory. The teacher is secure in her knowledge of the subject and uses worksheets which are well matched to the pupils' reading abilities, resulting in them offering to take turns to read the captions to the class. They gain confidence through such tasks and subsequently concentrate well, learn more and deepen their understanding.

125. By Key Stage 4 pupils are working towards, and on target to gain, the certificate of Educational Achievement. Working in groups, higher attaining pupils demonstrate their increasing ability to work co-operatively yet independently, sharing ideas and editing them into extended text on the computer. All pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and a reflective insight into the experience of the Jews during the holocaust. They discuss their own feelings openly and with maturity. Lower attaining pupils work well with a support assistant's guidance, in determining the nutritional value of the prisoners' daily food allowance. They concentrate well, select pictures from a graphics library to illustrate their work and are able to explain the implications of the low calorie diet with understanding. These developing, mature attitudes are a direct result of the high expectations that the teacher has that pupils will critically examine a written account and provide their own response to the atrocities both in writing and orally. History makes an effective contribution to pupils' moral and cultural education in this regard.

126. There has been satisfactory progress in the subject since the last inspection with the introduction of an accredited qualification at Key Stage 4. However, although pupils are more involved in working independently, a tendency to rely on worksheets at Key Stages 3 and 4 still persists. The subject manager does not yet monitor the teaching of history by other members of staff.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

127. Pupils' progress in information and communication technology is very good and by the time pupils leave the school many are very independent and confident in using all aspects of information technology including the Internet and electronic mail. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. In addition, those pupils who use alternative and augmentative communication aids to control their environment make excellent progress and are able to communicate as fully as possible with their peers and staff, which has a significant impact on quality of their learning. For example, one non-communicating pupil was able to tell a member of staff that she was unable to concentrate on her lesson as well as her sitting position, as part of her physiotherapy programme, and this was effecting her ability to learn. When this situation was addressed and the pupil was allowed to sit in her wheelchair and concentrate on her work her learning improved dramatically. From the time pupils enter the school they are introduced to and use information technology for most lessons. This enables them to become very familiar with the equipment and use it with great confidence.

128. Pupils using more specialised communication equipment including speech synthesisers do so naturally and with ease across the entire curriculum to aid their interactions with other pupils and staff. Indeed it is only in music and physical education where little or no information technology exists. Some pupils, who have difficulty with their handwriting, save all their school work onto floppy disk and one pupil, in Key Stage 4, was delighted to have filled up one disk and is now working on his second disk. This has a significant impact on pupils' confidence to use information technology to aid their learning throughout the school and across the curriculum. In English and history, pupils have written

original poems and imported appropriate graphics, sometimes from the Internet, to illustrate their work. Some pupils have gained awards for their work when judged against pupils from all schools in the area. In mathematics pupils use graphs to display their collated data in different formats while in science the use of sensors has enabled pupils to display their results in different ways.

129. The quality of teaching and the expertise of all staff throughout the school is very good and has improved dramatically since the last inspection. All staff receive regular training and this has had a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning, which is also very good. One member of the school's support staff has a specialist role to support all those pupils who require strategies for additional augmentative communication and pass on this information to individual teachers and other learning support assistants. This has significantly improved these pupils' ability to learn, as they can now access all subjects at an appropriate level and communicate their needs. Teachers and support staff are also able to assess pupils' progress more accurately and plan future tasks that are suitably challenging. Pupils' learning progresses very well throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils learn to use a mouse with confidence and accuracy to click and drag shapes and colours or use a touch screen to create a picture or design within a paint program. Many are then able to save and print their work. They use CD-ROMs to research subjects such as The Romans, and many pupils use the school's digital camera to record their work and that of their peers. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have very well developed skills. For example, pupils know and use short cuts on the keyboard such as alt/tab to quickly move between different screens within a window environment, they use information from the Internet, including the school's own web page, to import pictures and images into text.

130. Pupils' behaviour is good. They work with speed, confidence and great enthusiasm and interest. Their behaviour is excellent, even when a task does not work properly the first time, and they treat all equipment with care. Many pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 take full responsibility for their own work, including external accreditation through GCSE and other vocational courses.

131. Since the last inspection the school has purchased a significant number of computers and these have been very carefully chosen with the needs of all pupils in mind. For example, the number of computers in each classroom varies according to the number of pupils who need specific and specialised equipment, such as switches and other peripherals. These have also been carefully purchased to meet pupils needs and new software programs are being added regularly. All computers in the school are also fully accessible to other pupils so that maximum use can be made of this expensive equipment. This careful selection of hardware has enabled all pupils throughout the school to have up to date equipment enabling high quality learning to take place. In addition, the library has a very good selection of CD-ROMs which pupils use to develop their research skills. A good range of adjustable furniture is also available in classrooms, which enables pupils to easily access computers in comfort.

132. There is a very detailed scheme of work, which covers all strands of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and provides good support for teachers' planning. The use of information technology across the curriculum is very good, although little attention has been given to music and physical education. Teachers' planning is detailed as is their assessment of pupils' progress. However, valuable information is being lost as not all work that is kept, especially in the newly devised portfolios, is dated or contains appropriate comments for example, the level and quantity of help each pupil received in order to complete their work. The co-ordinator is very experienced and supports colleagues with ideas and suggestions on how information technology can be used across the curriculum

but does not yet regularly monitor colleagues' teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

133. Pupils now begin French at Key Stage 2 where teachers introduce the concept of a foreign language through identifying basic vocabulary such as numbers and names of food using a suitable mixture of games to make learning fun. This early introduction boosts the pupils' confidence and enables them to enter Key Stage 3 with some basic skills and understanding of speaking the language.

134. At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. By the end of the key stage, they know a range of basic greetings and can introduce themselves in French. They can answer simple questions, remembering to add '*s'il vous plait*' or '*merci*' appropriately. They can count in sequence well into double figures but they are also able to say whether the teacher is showing the correct figures on a flashcard when she picks numbers at random. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The teacher is supportive and encouraging, for example if pupils are hesitating over an answer she will model the correct response for them. This ensures that lower attaining pupils or those who are nervous of speaking in a foreign language are given the confidence to join in the lesson successfully. Plenty of repetition is built in to lessons and this has the effect of allowing pupils to practise their pronunciation and reinforces their learning of vocabulary. However, the teacher gives too many instructions in English with too little use of accompanying gesture when she does speak French and therefore, pupils miss out on hearing incidental use of the target language, during lessons. Pupils can read simple words and short phrases and can use these to record what they learn. For example, in a lesson on '*Les vêtements*' pupils could combine the names of items of clothing with the correct colour to label a diagram of a clothed male or female figure.

135. At Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress, with higher attaining pupils starting to make good progress in some lessons. All pupils can ask and answer questions using short sentences, and the more confident pupils can build these up into simple conversations. For example, in a good lesson where the classroom had been set up to resemble a French cafe, pupils were able to order items of food and drink from a menu they had devised themselves, with higher attaining pupils acting as waiters and waitresses going from table to table welcoming the customers, taking orders and serving the food. Teaching is satisfactory with many good features. For example, in the role-play lesson, she had brought in real tablecloths, crockery, cutlery, glasses and food/drink. Because she had gone to so much trouble to create an authentic atmosphere, pupils gained experience of what it is like to use their language skills in a realistic situation.

136. Information technology is used well to enhance the quality of learning. For example, pupils have made their own reading books for others to share. The menus for the French cafe were typed, laid out and illustrated by the pupils, using the colours of the French flag. The use of information technology enhances the quality of learning in French, especially in the development of pupils' reading and writing.

137. Since the last inspection, when some pupils were making poor progress and resources were inadequate, there has been a range of improvements. The current subject manager has put in place a curriculum that is now satisfactory and is creating a bank of appropriate resources. Pupils now enjoy their lessons and respond consistently well to their lessons. The subject is introduced for older Key Stage 2 pupils, giving them an opportunity to study the language for longer and to build up more vocabulary and skills. Higher attaining pupils can now gain accreditation of their achievements and there are plans to introduce other units of accreditation for the lower attaining pupils.

138. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development through French theme days in school, regular residential trips to France and by building up pupils' awareness of the European dimension through looking at French food, currency, culture and traditions. A French-speaking performer has visited the school to give pupils an opportunity to hear the language spoken by a native speaker. Pupils would benefit from other such opportunities to enable them to develop better pronunciation.

139. There has been a very good improvement in the school's provision for the subject since the last inspection, when a significant amount of teaching and progress was less than satisfactory. Pupils are now all making at least satisfactory progress, with some groups making good progress which culminates in them successfully studying for the Certificate of Achievement by the end of Key Stage 4.

MUSIC

140. Four lessons of music were observed during the inspection and teaching and learning were satisfactory overall and outstanding in two of the four lessons observed. The progress that pupils make is in direct relation to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is outstanding pupils make excellent gains in participating, leading others and working as part of a group. For example, in a music and movement - therapy session, the needs of a mixed age group of children were very well met. This music and movement therapy session provides a stimulating and challenging alternative for pupils who cannot participate in swimming at the local pool. Through the skilled teamwork of two teachers a subtle mixture of listening, singing and movement was organised which provided each pupil with an individual opportunity to participate at an appropriate level. Standards of behaviour were outstanding as pupils waited expectantly for the beginning of each activity. The practised skill of the music teacher combined with the excellent organisational and teaching skills of the movement teacher resulted in a lesson that moved at a very good pace, kept pupils motivated and consolidated their skills in counting forwards and backwards with well-known songs. With the lesson under way, pupils were able to demonstrate their understanding of matching a movement of their own choice to music by taking their turn as leader whilst others followed. The high quality guidance and physical help provided by teachers and support assistants followed well matched individual goals and resulted in all pupils making very good, identifiable gains in learning. All pupils, regardless of ability or confidence, worked towards their individual targets and were able to undertake their tasks with eagerness and contribute to the enjoyment and learning in the lesson.

141. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers are less confident and rely upon pre-recorded music to steer the pupils' learning, pupils learn to respond satisfactorily to changes in tempo and mood. They demonstrate their understanding by adjusting the pace and volume of their playing, but they are less motivated and less enthusiastic because the music is not live. However, all teachers make effective connections between the music pupils hear and the composers. Pupils react best to music that they know, such as in Key Stage 1 where pupils recognise music from The Jungle Book and share their

pleasure and enjoyment by increasing their gestures and general reactions. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers do not maximise opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills and knowledge by setting high standards regarding playing singing and listening. For example, they give praise to pupils when they play a percussion instrument in time to a recording, but do not then set more challenging tasks such as maintaining a steady beat for an identified number of bars or without the help of the recorded music.

142. No music lessons were seen at Key Stage 4 but pupils work successfully towards GCSE. This curriculum model is very effective in providing recognition of the work that pupils do and in extending the opportunities for those pupils who are interested in music to continue their studies until they leave school. Music plays an important part in the wider life of the school and pupils join with other schools to take part in festivals and other musical events. The school mounts an ambitious and popular musical show each Christmas which is valued and enjoyed by parents; this makes a valuable contribution to pupils social and cultural education as the school makes every effort to involve each pupil in the production.

143. The school has made some progress in developing the subject since the last inspection in that it now has schemes of work. Whilst their content is good they are not routinely followed in lessons and pupils do not, therefore, follow a route of learning through the curriculum which is suggested by the documentation. The subject manager does not yet monitor the teaching of other staff in music and is therefore unaware of this situation. The school has recognised the need to match the planning to teaching and also to provide opportunities for monitoring and an effective method of assessment to identify each pupil's steps of learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in physical education overall, and in swimming pupils' progress is very good, whether in school using the hydrotherapy pool or at a local swimming pool. This is a similar finding to the previous inspection for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, but an improvement for older pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

145. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills through games activities such as relay races and throwing activities, while in gymnastics pupils work in pairs to copy their partners movements. Through their throwing and catching skills, pupils learn to grasp and release bean bags into a learning support assistants' hands or through a hoop, while others throw and catch over greater distances with increasing accuracy. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 4, many have good spatial awareness and a developing awareness of tactics, for example, during a game of rounders, hitting the ball into space. Some pupils do take some responsibility for their own learning but this is limited and could be improved. For example, during the warm up and cool down part of a lesson, individual pupils could be asked to suggest appropriate activities and lead these phases of the lesson.

146. The quality of teaching overall is good, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4, although at Key Stages 1 and 2 it is no more than satisfactory, this is mostly due to a lack of staff confidence. All teachers change for lessons and are good healthy role models for pupils, often demonstrating what is required. Unfortunately, many learning support assistants do not change for lessons, but do provide very good support both individually to pupils and to the teacher. The teacher at Key Stages 3 and 4 has a good knowledge of the subject, which ensures that skills and techniques are taught in a clear and well structured way. Pupils are taught basic games' skills well, such as the rules for relay races and participate

with enthusiasm and interest. Some pupils show remarkable perseverance to succeed, for example, releasing a bean bag through a hoop, took one pupil a great deal of time and effort but he eventually succeeded and his delight was obvious.

147. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the teacher carefully modifies each pupils' learning objectives to meet their individual needs. For example, when teaching the javelin, the more physically able pupils are taught to throw the javelin first from a standing position and then using a run up to gain a greater distance. While those in wheelchairs are supported by learning support assistants, modifying their throwing technique, so that they can still be part of the whole class activity.

148. Pupils' progress during swimming is very good. For those pupils using the hydrotherapy pool in school, the quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Pupils are gaining water confidence and in the hydrotherapy pool they work with outstanding determination towards the individual targets set for them. Despite her obvious physical difficulty, one pupil made every effort to raise herself from the water and pick up a bucket strategically placed on the edge of the pool as part of a competitive game. For those pupils who attend a local swimming pool, their progress is very good. Pupils work in three ability groups progressing from water confidence using flotation aids, to using a float to develop their leg action, while the top group are swimming confidently on their front and back developing appropriate breathing techniques. Pupils also learn life saving skills, such as surface dives and retrieval skills, and many attain national certificates for life saving and swimming distances up to 800 metres.

149. Pupils of all ages are very enthusiastic about their physical education lessons and work hard showing good levels of concentration. Pupils show very high levels of care and concern for each other, they listen carefully to their teachers and learning support assistants and often encourage and support each other. For example, spontaneously applauding each other during games activities.

150. There is an appropriate scheme of work and policy based upon the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, including outdoor and adventurous activities which pupils undertake during residential activities to the Lake District and locally during events such as the Millennium Youth Games. The subject is well managed, and the co-ordinator has a very good understanding of pupils' learning at Key Stages 3 and 4, as he teaches these classes, although his knowledge of Key Stages 1 and 2 is not as good, as the monitoring role does not yet extend to observing other teachers' lessons throughout the school. Planning for most lessons is good, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4, as are the assessment opportunities. The school has made a good attempt to record pupils' learning through a portfolio of their work which contains some good photographs of pupils' work in gymnastics, outdoor education and swimming. However, in some photographs pupils are not wearing appropriate kit for physical education lessons, and photographs do not contain any dates or written information explaining the assessment value of the photograph. Learning resources are good. Although the hall is large, it is used for many different purposes including a great deal of storage, however teachers are aware of the health and safety implications and good use is made of the school's outdoor facilities, and also the facilities of the adjoining secondary school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

151. The teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. It was good at Key Stage 2 and 4 and very good at Key Stages 1 and 3. Unfortunately it was not possible to observe the teaching in all key stages but judgements were made through scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' records. Religious education is taught in line with the local authority's agreed syllabus. The school's schemes of work and lessons are planned very carefully to meet such requirements.

152. Pupils in Key Stage 1 complete a unit of study entitled 'Caring for others'. In this study, they learn how to look after each other and their families. They understand the need to care properly for animals. During one session, local zoo staff brought live animals for pupils to see and handle. In this way pupils learn to respect animals and treat them carefully. Pupils see rats, mice and a large tarantula. There are moments of awe as they gaze upon these creatures.

153. Great attention is paid to developing communication skills during this session as pupils describe what they see and feel using spoken language or through signing. Pupils' achievements are good as they gain rich experience of animals and the different ways in which they live.

154. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good gains in learning as they listen carefully to stories read by the teacher from the Bible. In one lesson the teacher reads the story of the prodigal son. As she reads she questions pupils very carefully on their understanding of the story. Pupils in turn respond with very sensible and sincere answers. There is a groan of disgust as the pupils hear how the prodigal son was so hungry that he had felt like eating the food that he was giving to the pigs. During lessons the support staff work extremely well to ensure that all pupils are able to take as full a part as possible in the lessons. One assistant attends to the clinical needs of a pupil so discreetly that the pupil is not distracted from the story at all. This is really outstandingly high quality support.

155. In another situation a support assistant prepares an electronic communicator to enable one pupil to make happy and sad responses to different situations described in the story. All pupils are very well behaved and thoroughly enjoy the lesson.

156. Pupils in Key Stage 3 deepen their understanding and make very good progress in studying more stories from the Bible, both old and New Testament. They also study comparative religions learning about Judaism and Buddhism. Pupils learn that the synagogue is the community centre and the place of prayer for those of the Jewish faith. They also learn about the role that the Rabbi plays in the life of the synagogue.

157. Pupils in Key Stage 4 carry their studies even further by making clear comparisons between the beliefs and customs of people of the Buddhist religion and people of the Christian religion. They appreciate the differences and the similarities; how Buddhism is founded from a base of great wealth and importance, whilst Christianity comes from a base of humility and poverty. They also understand that both religions nurture a life of kindness and generosity and that they condemn greed and anger. The high expectations and the challenge of the teachers ensure that all pupils make very good progress.

158. Lessons are well planned by the teachers to include a variety of activities to help maintain the motivation of the pupils. These activities are also carefully matched to pupils' individual skills to ensure that all are taking a full part in the lesson. As a result pupils take an avid interest in lessons and concentrate well. There are very strong links with moral and social development for all pupils. Pupils learn about the social and religious meanings of marriage and divorce. They also follow the ASDAN course 'Respect for others' and discuss such topics as the future of the planet and understand the concept of authority in society. The subject is well monitored by the manager and pupils' progress is mapped through targets on their individual education plans.

159. The school has made very good progress in this subject since the last inspection when a significant amount of teaching and progress were found to be unsatisfactory.