

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **BLADON HOUSE SCHOOL**

Newton Solney, Staffordshire

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 8306009

Headteacher: Barbara Murfin

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell  
1405

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 190940

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Independent Special Residential
School category:	Communication disorders and moderate/severe learning difficulties
Age range of pupils:	5 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Newton Road, Newton Solney, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire
Postcode:	DE15 0TA
Telephone number:	01283 563787
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Appropriate authority:	Honormead Schools
Name of chair of governors: (Proprietor)	Simon Brook
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1405	Michael McDowell	Registered inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language, post-16 education.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19567	Mary Malin	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21265	Frances Gander	Team inspector	Mathematics, music	
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology	
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Art, design and technology	
27058	Kath Cannon	Team inspector	English, modern foreign languages, equal opportunities	
22391	Nicholas Smith	Team inspector	History, physical education	
23390	Mel Blackband	Team inspector	Geography, religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Office for Standards in Education  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bladon House is an independent special school for pupils aged 5 – 19 who have moderate to severe learning difficulties, communication difficulties and associated behaviour problems. There are 114 residential places available and 15 day places. There are at present 95 residential pupils; 67 boys and 28 girls, and 14 day pupils. All have statements of special educational needs because of their learning difficulties, and their attainment on entry is well below national averages. Pupils are drawn from across the whole of the country. The social and economic circumstances of their families are very mixed but the great majority of pupils are white and very few pupils do not come from families whose roots are in the United Kingdom. Currently there are three children from Indian families in attendance. A Black Caribbean, a Black African and a Chinese child also attend. Only one pupil comes from a family where English is not the first language. Provision for those aged 16 to 19 is made on separate sites. They are in residence about a mile from the school and travel to a centre for work-related learning each day.

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

Bladon House is a very effective school. Pupils achieve well and make very good progress in developing their communication skills. Teaching is of good quality with a high proportion of very good or excellent lessons. Very good leadership is provided by the head teacher and by others in leadership roles and the school is well managed. It gives very good value for money.

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

- Pupils are enabled to develop their communication skills very effectively.
- Teaching is of good quality with a high proportion of excellent and very good lessons.
- Pupils achieve well in English, where good provision is made for the development of literacy, and in design and technology, art, history, and physical education.
- Students aged 16 to 19 achieve very well in the courses they undertake and in developing their living skills.
- Pupils and students have first-rate relationships with the adults who teach and care for them.
- Personal development and attitudes to school are very good.
- Very good opportunities for learning are provided for students aged 16 to 19 that prepare them effectively for the world beyond school.
- Excellent care is provided for pupils, both during the school day, in the evenings and at weekends. They are given the help and support that they need.
- The leadership provided by the head teacher and others in important leadership roles is very effective.

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

- The organisation of the curriculum does not ensure that pupils aged 5 to 11 are offered the full range of learning opportunities appropriate to their age.
- Assessment of what pupils know understand and can do is inconsistent in foundation subjects, science and information and communication technology, (ICT), and does not give teachers sufficient clear information on which to base pupils' future 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

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the organisation and management of the school and an increase in the severity of the needs of its pupils. The school now provides for many more pupils with challenging behaviour and autistic spectrum disorder than it did formerly. It has done well to build on the strengths identified in the last report and act firmly to put right the weaknesses. The needs of pupils with complex speech and language difficulties are now well met and the curriculum is now satisfactory. The work of subject co-ordinators and heads of department is guided by clear job descriptions. Teaching and learning are well monitored and a school development plan is now used effectively to promote improvements. Schemes of work are now in place. The teaching of ICT is better, as is its use to support other learning. Improvement, overall, is good.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:		by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening		C	B	B	very good A
Reading		B	A	A	good B
Writing		C	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics		C	C	C	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education		B	A	A	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*		B	A	A	

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

The school is not required to set statutory targets for pupil performance at age 11 and age 16. However, it is gathering data about the performance of its pupils that will enable it to compare its effectiveness with that of similar schools. All pupils are set individual targets for academic achievement and social development. In most cases pupils achieve these. Achievement in English is good. Pupils get off to a steady start in developing their speaking, listening and literacy skills and their progress accelerates as they move through the school. Progress in reading is very good for older pupils. Achievement in mathematics and science, across the age range, is as good as can be expected. Pupils achieve well in design and technology, art, history and physical education. In other subjects, achievement is satisfactory. Students aged 16 to 19 achieve very well in their vocational and life-skill courses. Pupils' achievement in personal, social and health education is very good overall.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils very much enjoy being in school and in lessons they try to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils behave well and the school is very calm. Within lessons, there is a positive climate for learning. At break times pupils play together well and show respect for one another. Mealtimes are pleasant occasions. There are very few exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very positive and this helps pupils to develop confidence. They make very good progress in their personal development and gradually take more responsibility for their own life and learning as they move through the school.
Attendance	Good; unauthorised absence is rare and pupils are usually eager to attend.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:		Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching		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.*

There is a large proportion of teaching that is of very high quality and much that is good. Only on very few occasions do lessons fall short of expectations. Teachers have very good understanding of the needs of their pupils; they work consistently to enable them to become effective communicators. They manage their classrooms well and their planning of what they will teach is thorough; in most cases, it is soundly based on a clear understanding of what their pupils know understand and can do. A number of teachers who work with pupils with more severe difficulties have developed their practice through additional relevant training. Their classrooms are run on sound principles and give pupils the best chance of making progress. In most cases, teachers have good knowledge of the curriculum requirements for the subjects they teach. Classroom based learning support assistants make a great contribution to learning. Teachers manage their resources and the support staff assigned to them well. Other professionals including therapists make a vital contribution to learning. Because of the good teaching they receive, pupils learn at a better rate than might be expected and achieve well. They take part enthusiastically in their lessons and are proud of what they can do. The varied and interesting lessons that they receive help them to develop the skills and acquire the knowledge and understanding they need. The shortcomings in lessons that are otherwise satisfactory include uncertainty about the subject requirements, failure to reinforce learning through structured discussion with the whole group at the end of lessons and choice of tasks that lack challenge and variety. In those very few lessons, where teaching did not meet the required standards subject knowledge is weak, planning inadequate, management of the class uncertain and time not fully used. In these cases, pupils lose interest in the lesson, become distracted and do not make progress. The teaching of English is good across the age range with well-balanced lessons that promote concentration and learning. All teachers are aware of the need to promote the skills of

literacy and this is done well. Mathematics is taught well across the school and it is effective even in those classes where pupils have the greatest degree of need. Teaching in science is good with some excellent teaching of older pupils. Within the classrooms, personal social and health education is well taught and pupils acquire useful information about healthy living and being part of a social group. This learning is taken much further within the residential units where pupils put into practice much of what they learn.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: for the younger pupils learning experiences are not sufficiently linked to the programmes of study of the National Curriculum and present arrangements do not always ensure that pupils continue to build on what they know, understand and can do within subjects other than English and mathematics. Communication skills are thoroughly and carefully developed. The curriculum for pupils aged between 16 and 19 is very good. The curriculum is strongly enhanced by activities outside the classroom. Careers advice and vocational education are excellent.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; provision for social development is very good. The staff provide good role models that aid pupils' moral development. Pupils are given clear messages about what is right and what is wrong. There are some good aspects to the provision for spiritual and cultural development, but work in these areas is not fully and systematically developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; the school has excellent procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare. It monitors behaviour carefully and promotes good behaviour very well. Pupils' academic performance is well assessed in most subjects and it is carefully monitored but too little use is made of assessment to promote learning. The school makes very good provision to meet the special educational needs of pupils outlined in their statements.

Parents are very supportive of the school. The school works with them closely and keeps them well informed.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good; the head teacher gives very good leadership and others in leadership roles throughout the school make a very strong contribution. Teachers who have responsibility for the co-ordination of subjects within the curriculum do this well but some shortcomings remain that limit pupils' opportunities to learn.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory; the proprietors are supportive and keep well informed about the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. They carry out their statutory responsibilities. A greater degree of financial and procedural autonomy is being given to the school to help the head teacher's forward planning. Prudent steps have been taken to put in place an advisory body for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the head teacher has introduced very effective measures to keep a check on the performance of the school and she acts strongly to put right any inadequacies that come to her attention. The school seeks to compare its performance with others and is beginning to improve the performance of its pupils by setting targets.
The strategic use of resources	Good; financial controls are tight and good use is made of the money available so that staff with relevant expertise and sufficient teaching resources of good quality are available to meet the learning needs of the pupils.

There are sufficient teachers with relevant expertise to meet the needs of pupils but in some subjects, it has proved difficult to recruit suitable staff. There is a very full professional team to support pupils' communication and learning needs and this is a strong feature of the provision made by the school. There are sufficient learning support assistants of good calibre and a strong well led group of workers who provide high quality residential care. Resources are satisfactory, as is the accommodation. There are good purpose built classrooms and living accommodation but much is still of a temporary nature and not entirely suited to its purpose.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p><b>Most parents feel:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That their children like the school and that it is approachable, well led and well managed</li> <li>That their children make good progress and become more mature and responsible</li> <li>That it makes good provision outside of the classroom and that the teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard and do their best</li> </ul>	<p><b>A few parents feel:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That insufficient homework is given</li> <li>That the school could work more closely with them</li> <li>That their children are offered too little to do outside the classrooms</li> </ul>

The findings of the inspection support the positive views of parents. Pupils have a full and relevant programme in the evenings that take the place of conventional homework. There are

many activities offered outside the classroom. The school works closely with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Achievement is good. Pupils who enter the school with very limited communication skills are well on the way to establishing reliable means of communication by the age of 11. By the time they are 16, their progress is sufficient to enable them to gain accreditation for their learning from national awarding bodies such as the Oxford, Cambridge & RSA Examination Board, (OCR). Students aged 16 to 19 build on this good start and make very good progress in their vocational courses. Overall, achievement and the progress made by pupils show significant improvement since the last inspection.

2. Effective teaching, well supported by speech and language therapy and soundly established practices for teaching literacy result in the youngest pupils taking the essential first steps in speaking and listening. Signing and symbols are used to enable pupils to pay attention, listen carefully, follow instructions and respond appropriately. By the age of 11, spoken vocabularies have increased noticeably in many cases and by 16, pupils have made good gains. They engage in discussions, hold conversations and give their views on a range of topics from current events to sport and music.

3. For the youngest pupils, reading is slow to emerge because many of them lack speaking skills. Good use is made of computers that simulate speech. Stories from "Big Books" are read together and these improve reading. By the age of 11, many are reading aloud from a structured scheme and figuring out how to pronounce unfamiliar words in the text. Progress is good, and this continues for those aged 11 to 14. By the age of 16, very good progress has been made. Reading is fluent and texts are well understood by higher attainers.

4. The youngest pupils are well on the way to developing their handwriting. Most can write their names by the age of 11, and a number write words and phrases without help. More extended writing emerges by the age of 14. This is good progress. In their final two years of compulsory schooling progress is also good. Written work is drafted and re-drafted with good use made of computers to help in improving presentation where pupils have co-ordination difficulties.

5. In mathematics, pupils across the age range make as much progress as can be expected, given their range of complex needs. The youngest pupils know and recognise colours and progress to classify objects according to colour. They recognise numerals and the higher attainers count to ten. The more common regular shapes such as a square, circle and triangle are known by name. A start has been made by some in counting forward or backwards using a number line to add or subtract two numbers. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils know numbers to 100 and can read and write these as digits. They add and subtract numbers up to twenty and notice patterns in series of numbers. Pupils' use of calculators has developed by the age of 16, especially in working out money problems. Good use is made of the chances that occur to use money in real settings in order to strengthen learning, such as in the school tuck shop. Pupils aged 14 to 16, tell the time, produce simple graphs, and measure and weigh objects. All pupils have individual targets in mathematics and reach these within the allotted time in most cases.

6. Achievement in science is satisfactory. By the age of 11, pupils have experienced a

range of topics in science, including the effects of temperature on liquids, mixtures of materials with water and investigations into sound and light. Sometimes the impetus in scientific learning is lost when activities planned to support the topic are not well judged. Where work is more strongly related to the National Curriculum as it is for pupils aged 11 to 14, learning accelerates. It is, however, limited to an extent by the small amount of written work that pupils produce. Their knowledge of living things develops and they record aspects of their findings using computers. By the age of 16, pupils have learned about the environment, the properties of a range of materials and their uses, and the human body. Their understanding and their ability to think and to concentrate increase.

7. In most other subjects pupils achieve well. In art and design, achievement is very good where teachers have strong knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils' achievement in design and technology is good and for those aged 14 to 16, it is very good as skills learned earlier are built on effectively. Very good work was produced by pupils in food technology, textiles and in other elements of DT by using construction kits.

8. In history, which is systematically taught for those aged 11 to 16, achievement is good. Younger pupils make satisfactory progress but history teaching for these pupils is not always planned to ensure that learning increases. Achievement in physical education is good and pupils respond well to a wide range of learning opportunities of high quality, including gymnastics, games, horse riding and swimming.

9. Achievement in geography is satisfactory; as with history, planning for geography for the youngest pupils is related to class topics or themes. However, it tends to be patchy. Pupils aged 11 to 16, now work to a scheme. This is new and it is too early to notice clear benefits in terms of what pupils achieve.

10. There is steady progress throughout the school in information and communications technology. However, some pupils with lower general achievements do less well, partly because hardware suitable for them, such as touch sensitive screens, is not regularly used.

11. Pupils make good progress in their music lessons but because the specialist music teacher has just joined the staff, their achievement over time is no better than can be expected.

12. Achievement is satisfactory in religious education which is offered to pupils up to the age of 16. Pupils develop sound knowledge of world faiths. They understand the significance of festivals, such as Diwali, and Christmas

13. Students aged 16 to 19, make very good progress in their vocational courses and in developing their literacy, numeracy and social skills. Their achievement is very good and is also accredited through OCR.

14. In personal, social and health education, pupils achieve very well. This is because what is learned in school is strongly reinforced by the very good experiences they have in their residential units. Pupils make marked progress in relation to their individual education plans and achieve the targets set for them.

15. There is no statutory requirement for the school to set whole school targets for pupils' performance. However, it has begun to collect data about the progress of groups of pupils using a nationally recognised scale that is suited to measuring the relatively small steps in attainment that the pupils make. It has submitted this data for analysis and comparison with other schools with similar pupils throughout the country. Initial findings suggest that pupils' performance compares favourably with that of pupils with similar special educational needs.

Soon the school will be in a position to set challenging targets for the performance of its pupils, should it choose to do so.

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

16. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good, as a result of consistent implementation of effective policies. The school's approach to the special difficulties of pupils has produced very positive improvement since the previous inspection.

17. Parents say that their children like school. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They respond to good teaching by showing interest in their lessons, and enthusiasm for their work. They overcome considerable communication difficulties in order to participate in lessons, making good use of signs and symbols. They are happy to show their work to visitors, taking pride in what they have achieved. The school encourages pupils to be positive, active members of the community.

18. Behaviour in lessons, around school, and in the residential accommodation, is good. Pupils play well together and meal times are pleasant social occasions. When pupils are first admitted to the school, behaviour is sometimes difficult, because they cannot communicate effectively. However, progress is rapid because the school has a well-developed and clear approach to managing pupils' behaviour and developing communication skills. Behaviour policies are clear and consistently applied, enabling pupils to become familiar with the routines and to know the boundaries. When unacceptable behaviour occurs, the disruption is brief, because of the skilled handling by well-trained staff. Incidents in both the school and the houses are recorded and discussed at senior management level, and there is very good communication between house and school. The school has a very positive approach to the development of good behaviour. All behaviour plans include an element leading to self-management, and the results can be seen very clearly as pupils progress through the school. Behaviour for most pupils by the age of 16 is very good, and self-regulated.

19. There have been only two exclusions during the past year, and these resulted from pupils with very special needs being inappropriately placed at the school.

20. Pupils' personal development is very good, largely because of the way staff encourage and foster the growth of self-esteem. Pupils know they are valued, and as a result can value the contributions of others. For example, in a design technology lesson, one boy suggested that a girl should be given a merit mark because she had worked all lessons without help. Pupils in assemblies enthusiastically applaud the success of those who are given certificates. No examples of bullying were seen or heard of during the inspection. Good examples were seen of pupils supporting each other. For example, in a reading lesson, a boy "listened" to the reading of a signer, and in his turn signed as well as speaking his reading. Relationships between pupils are good and sharing was seen, especially in the residential setting. Responsibility is taken by pupils, throughout the school, for setting up and clearing away, this was especially good in physical education and design technology. Pupils grow in confidence as they get older; they draw on this confidence, for example in a careers interview where the pupils show maturity, self-confidence, and an understanding of their responsibility for their future.

### **Attendance**

21. Overall, attendance is good at 96%, only marginally less than previously reported. Day pupils generally arrive on time but sometimes their transport can be delayed because of traffic. Registers are marked both morning and afternoon and day pupils are also registered as they come through the front door in the morning. The school meets statutory

requirements.

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

22. Teaching is of high quality; it enables pupils of all ages to improve their communication skills, to learn very well, and to achieve more than expected. It has improved considerably since the last inspection. With a threefold increase in the percentage of lessons that are very good or better there are far fewer lessons than previously, now just 4 percent, are unsatisfactory.

23. Teachers have very good understanding of the needs of their pupils. They know about their particular learning characteristics and difficulties and they use this knowledge to manage their pupils very well. The pupils respond to the well-planned opportunities to learn that are offered, by working hard in their lessons and completing the tasks that are set for them. In almost all cases, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the subjects that they teach. They are careful to match the content and activities of lessons to what they have discovered from assessment about what the pupils know, understand and can do. They assess pupils' attainments and measure their progress accurately.

24. Teachers use many strategies to promote learning; introductions to lessons are clear, with sign and symbols effectively used to convey meaning. In many, there is a balance of activities with practical tasks and discussions and question and answer sessions all playing a part. Where demonstrations are given, for example, in science or physical education, these are carried out well. Specific simple, but very effective, techniques are used to help pupils remember what they have learned. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher gave pupils a mnemonic phrase – "my very easy method just speeds up naming planets" - to help pupils remember the order and names of the planets in the solar system.

25. In a very good lesson in horticulture for 16 to 19 year olds who have severe learning difficulties, the teacher used an imaginative strategy to enable him to gain his students' attention and make learning enjoyable. The students reinforced their knowledge of which animals and insects are "friends" in the garden, and which are "pests", by designing a board game. Players whose tokens landed on pests moved backwards, whilst those whose tokens landed on "friends" moved forwards. Learning is made very accessible to his students and they remember the names of several "friends" and "pests" in the garden, and what they look like.

26. Expectations of how pupils should behave are frequently very high and pupils rise to the occasion showing that they have understood what is required of them. In an excellent assembly for those aged 11 to 14, pupils celebrated each other's achievements noisily and happily, but they became quiet and reflective shortly afterwards as they held a two minutes' silence for Armistice Day.

27. Time is used well. In most lessons learning moves forward at a good pace. Because of the high quality of the support given by learning support assistants pupils are able to keep up their efforts throughout the lesson. In a very few lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. Others that are satisfactory have shortcomings. These include insufficient knowledge of the curriculum for the subject and weak planning fails to take account of the individual needs of pupils. There is failure to use the time allotted effectively. Weak understanding of the needs of some pupils, especially in relation to the management of their behaviour was noted on very rare occasions.

28. The quality of teaching in English is good. All teachers are aware of the need to help pupils to communicate as well as possible. Very good use is made of signing and of symbols to back up the spoken word. Consequently, pupils' communication skills including their ability to listen carefully, to look at and respond to signs, to speak or sign in return and to read text or symbols, develop very well over time. Teachers plan carefully to provide good opportunities in all subjects, for pupils to extend their communication and literacy skills.

29. Mathematics is taught well and pupils make use of what they have learned to aid their understanding in subjects across the curriculum.

30. There are very good relationships between pupils and their teachers. In the warm classroom atmosphere that prevails, pupils grow in confidence and come to believe that they can succeed as learners where formerly they may have failed. They develop good learning habits, for example, making good use of dictionaries to check meanings and spellings, or confidently using their sketch books in art, to try out their own ideas. Those who are in their final years in the school make their own choices of courses from within a broad range of possibilities, expressing their increasing independence as learners.

31. Teaching of those pupils who, in addition to language and communication disorder, have severe additional learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder, (ASD), is very effective. The majority of pupils have ASD and in these cases, acknowledged methods of managing pupils' behaviour and learning are used. Teachers in charge of these groups have been trained in these methods and they apply them consistently.

32. Support for their work is given by the other professionals who are expert in the development of speech and language and alternative means of communication.

33. Most pupils are residential and there is a full range of evening activities that meet their needs. While formal homework is rarely given, the structured programme of after-school activities addresses pupils' learning needs appropriately.

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

34. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range and quality of learning opportunities. There has been improvement in the relevance and continuity of what is planned within subjects since the last inspection mainly through the use of nationally available Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, (QCA), schemes of study. The use of these schemes is relatively new and there are areas, which have not yet benefited from this. The time given to each of the subjects taught is sufficient. However, the decision not to organise the learning experiences of pupils up to the age of 11, through the subjects of the National Curriculum, limits learning opportunities for this age group. The school makes use of the national guidelines for pupils under 5 to inform planning.

35. The school places a strong emphasis on developing communication. It does this very well. The policy for teaching and learning places the development of an effective communication system as the most important aspect. Teachers are expected to make use of sign and symbols to ensure that work is accessible. There is a department of augmentative communication in the school and clear guidance, advice and training are given on how best to encourage and refine pupils' attempts to communicate. There is an excellent symbols policy which lays out a standardised approach to symbol use throughout the school. Speech and language therapy is incorporated into pupils' daily experience and sign is extensively used. All this promotes pupils' access to the broader curriculum and enables them to develop their communication.





36. Other than in the subjects of English and mathematics, schemes of work are incorporated into topics. Consequently, pupils do not always build systematically on what they know, understand and can do. In subjects such as history or geography, their learning can be patchy.

37. The secondary curriculum for pupils up to the age of 16 is now based on nationally approved schemes of work and is characterised by sound planning and detailed teaching preparation. Learning outcomes for pupils are identified in each lesson. The pupils benefit from the careful match of curriculum opportunities to their individual learning targets. The curriculum offered does not however take full advantage of the programmes of study available. There are realistic long-term plans for the teaching of each subject but the plans do not yet ensure breadth and balance in the curriculum. Programmes of study in subjects have been developed independently by staff and there has not been sufficient attention given to addressing the co-ordination of the pupils' learning experiences throughout the curriculum. The school has not developed a range of accredited courses for pupils in years 10 and 11. Pupils follow a curriculum which is similar to that available lower down the school and are thus denied the opportunity to benefit from basic foundation level vocational courses that may be better suited to their age and ability. The curriculum at post 16 is well developed and provides a very good range and breadth of learning experiences. Pupils are able to exercise choice and independence in their learning and to benefit from a variety of work and college related programmes. This work is accredited through OCR.

38. Pupils with special educational needs are ensured of full access to the curriculum through the efficient services of specialist speech therapy and occupational therapy staff. Programmes for individual pupils are written into their educational plans and staff make good use of opportunities to work in partnership to support each pupil. The staff are all trained in the use of symbols and in signing words. There has been satisfactory progress in ensuring residential staff are aware of and maintain some of the programmes used in school. The school is making satisfactory progress in providing for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. A co-ordinator is in place who has benefited from advanced training and who is able to provide substantial and well-resourced training for other staff. There are facilities within teaching groups for the use of specific therapies for pupils who are autistic. School planning and on-going training have produced satisfactory improvements in provision.

39. Literacy skills are well taught throughout the school. Pupils follow national guidelines up to the age of 14 and the teaching and learning has shown good progress. Curriculum development in Mathematics has shown satisfactory improvement. Provision for older pupils is less secure since the content of the work is related to criteria derived from an accredited course more suitable for post 16 students and adults. Pupils in this age range would benefit from a continuation of programmes linked more effectively to the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies.

40. The school's range of extra-curricular programmes is good. There are numerous after school clubs and activities in which all staff take part. Musical, physical, art related and cooking activities are on offer as well as a computer club. The wide range of activities is maintained in the evenings and at weekends by care staff. Younger pupils are enabled to mix with other children at a local 'Brownie' pack and several pupils attend a local youth club. Good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are fostered by these activities. The activities aid independence and the exercise of choice for the pupils.

41. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. The development of this provision is one of the identified school priorities and effective policies are in place which stress the promotion of sensible choices of action and which emphasise the well structured teaching of drugs education and sex education. Topics are addressed more than

once so that pupils gain increasing knowledge and a more mature understanding as they move through the school. The subject is well co-ordinated and a good level of support is available to teachers. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good, resulting in pupils making good progress. Residential staff maintain the good relationships necessary to the promotion of this area and pupils gain from the regular reinforcement of the principles found in their lessons.

42. All pupils from 11-16 benefit from very well structured programmes in careers education. This area is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is very good, enhanced by very well prepared materials often produced by the co-ordinator. The records of pupils' involvement in careers education are exceptional and the regular and efficient system of careers interviews are conducted sensitively and professionally by the specialist careers officer who prepares thoroughly and makes excellent use of Makaton symbols to promote pupils' understanding and confidence. There is an up to date and well-resourced careers library, which is accessible to pupils. Work experience is efficiently operated and pupils' experiences are well documented through work logs and through photographs. The school has imaginatively used a theatre group in preparing pupils for life after school and the choices involved in that transition.

43. The school makes satisfactory use of its links with the community. Pupils attend outside organisations such as youth club and 'Brownies' and regular trips are organised for pupils by care staff. Older pupils and students are able to benefit from established links with a college of further education where they study computing and pupils annually visit the careers convention held in Derby.

44. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils enjoy full equality of access to the curriculum, both in the classroom and in the residential units. Liaison between supporting services and speech and language therapists is very good both with educational and care staff, which ensures consistency of approach at all times.

45. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and this has been maintained since the last inspection. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory, development of moral awareness is good and there is very good opportunities for social development.

46. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and the importance of religious education and assemblies makes a valuable contribution to this area of pupils' personal development. Due to the nature of many pupils' difficulties, attendance at whole school assemblies is not always possible. Assemblies are therefore sensibly organised either for single classes or for pupils from a specific key stage. They are well-planned and structured giving pupils good opportunities to reflect on national and world events, and personal experiences, such as 'Poppy Day' and its significance. Time is given for pupils to reflect and think of others. This was very successfully achieved in a Key Stage 3 assembly where all pupils remained silent in order to remember those who died in the fighting in World War 1. There are also opportunities for pupils to celebrate festivals such as Easter, and festivals of importance to other cultures, such as Chinese New Year. There are some opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and emotions in music lessons and through their artwork, but opportunities to appreciate and reflect on this is not sufficiently considered when planning lessons across the school. Many spiritual experiences for pupils are incidental, rather than planned, such as the obvious feelings of care and tenderness that pupils show when looking after the horses, or are evident in some classes and not in others. For example, there was a good end of day session in one Key Stage 2 class where pupils were encouraged to reflect on how they had worked, and also take part in a prayer. There is a need for the school to develop more of these opportunities across the school both in

educational and residential time.

47. The school provides a strong moral framework for all its pupils, so that they learn to understand what is right and what is wrong, and how their actions or behaviour might affect others. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils increase their awareness of the impact their behaviour has on others. They effectively counsel and comfort those who are saddened by others' distress. This makes a positive impact on the relationships pupils have with one another. The majority of adults in the school are good role models, and they conduct themselves and behave appropriately, encouraging courtesy and consideration of others. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' moral development as they counsel pupils when they have difficulties. However, there are occasions when support staff who are new, or inexperienced in dealing with challenging behaviour, do not interact with the pupils enough and therefore there are some inconsistencies across the school. As pupils improve their communication skills and incidents of challenging behaviour diminish, they are given opportunities to take on more responsibility for moving around school independently and carrying out tasks of responsibility.

48. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Visits, in both educational time and those arranged as extra curricular activities and in the pupils' time in residential time make a very contribution to the overall development of pupils' social skills. There are opportunities for pupils to attend local groups of Brownies, Guides and Cubs, visit local places of interest, such as museums, and make use of leisure activities. These provide very good opportunities for pupils to enjoy each other's company and learn to consider each other's needs. The majority of pupils, when their behaviour difficulties and autistic tendencies allow, work harmoniously in lessons, for example in music they sing and play instruments together, and in food technology shop, prepare meals and share them with others. The majority of pupils in all key stages are very keen to introduce themselves to visitors; talk about their work and their experiences during the day. All school activities promote choice, autonomy and independence, and pupils learn to make decisions about what to do and how to relate to others. Mealtimes in pupils' houses, and in the dining room, are generally pleasant, social occasions where staff continue to support pupils' social skills unobtrusively.

49. Opportunities for cultural development are satisfactory. Visits to the places of cultural interest in the immediate locality, such as museums and galleries are organised, and for some pupils these contribute to both their cultural awareness and social development. However, due to the difficulty that many pupils have in taking part in outside visits these have to be limited to times when pupils can benefit from these experiences. History lessons also provide a perspective on British culture and customs, but pupils have difficulty in understanding the passage of time. The best examples of curriculum planning, by combining of history with geography provide pupils with opportunities make progress in both areas of the curriculum. For example, an enquiry into the history of canals for pupils aged 14, develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of the customs and cultures of a group of people who have been part of Britain's heritage. In religious education pupils learn about, and gain an understanding of, the importance of faith to people of different beliefs. The school celebrates a range of festivals from a variety of world religions. However, the decision to disapply all pupils from modern foreign language and the narrowness of the curriculum in some foundation subjects, such as geography and music, result in few opportunities for pupils to become aware of the sights, smells and sounds associated with other countries and cultures. The exception to this is in food technology where foods from different parts of the world are made and tasted.

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

50. The previous report stated that support, guidance and pupils' welfare was a strength of the school and that is certainly the case now. The school has built on the high standard identified in the previous inspection. The quality of relationships, the attitudes of teachers, care staff, key workers, occupational therapists and speech therapists all make a significant contribution to the very good quality of care provided by the school.

51. At the time of the last inspection, the schools arrangements and procedures for child protection were reported as securely in place. These have been developed and are now excellent. The school makes very good use of the local education authority's guidelines. All members of staff are aware of procedures to follow in the event of any concerns and all staff must attend a training course, which includes child protection and first aid before working on site.

52. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Prompt and efficient registration at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions complies with statutory requirements. The school follows up unexplained absences of day pupils with a telephone call home.

53. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good although this was not mentioned in the last report. The policy emphasises positive reinforcement as the preferred means of improving behaviour and the inspection team witnessed lots of positive praise. Focused intervention and support offered to pupils underpins good practice along with the hands on of the classroom support staff. There is an individual behaviour plan and targets for all pupils which is beneficial in enabling pupils and staff to monitor improvements and to remind pupils what their target is. Staff consistently apply the schools behaviour policy throughout the school ensuring pupils receive a consistent message about behaviour expectations. The school has very effective procedures in place to deal with the extremely rare incidents of harassment and bullying. None were seen during the week of inspection.

54. Procedures to promote the health, welfare and safety of pupils are very good both within school and the residential provision. Pupils are helped to develop an understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle through the personal, social, health education programme. On admission to the residential unit, pupils are given a planned eating programme where, although they are given choices, they have a balanced diet. Staff are certain that this improves their behaviour within a short period. Any health and safety hazards observed are noted and dealt with quickly and efficiently via either the health and safety committee or the head teacher. The health and safety issues noted in the previous inspection have all been put right Electrical equipment is checked and marked. The school has a member of staff who is the named fire officer who has ensured that staff are trained to use fire extinguishers and staff check that fire doors and panels are in working order daily. There are regular health and safety meetings and the representative attends other site meetings and has regular training. All staff have received training in first aid both in workshops and from a pharmacy where they are taught in the use of some medical applications. There is a medical room and two nurses.

55. The quality of care is greatly enhanced by the work of the therapists employed by the school. Speech therapists and occupational therapists vary their hours so that they can be in the residential units as the pupils get up in the morning to offer support and guidance to the care staff on how to best help that pupil get ready for the day. For example, some pupils may have a balancing problem. It is easier for them to sit in the shower so that they can shower themselves. They also have a chair in their room so that they can sit and dress themselves or at least start to learn how to do so by themselves.

56. The quality of educational and personal support and guidance offered to pupils is very

good Staff have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and difficulties and provide sensitive and caring support and guidance. Pupils are provided with a very good standard of pastoral care. Residential accommodation in houses is of a good standard and pupils have pleasant bedroom and communal living areas, which have very homely atmospheres. Care staff provide very good levels of care and support for pupils in houses. Daily routines in houses are well structured so that pupils are clear about what to do during each part of the day when they are not in school. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities in houses while working together with teaching staff to ensure that there is a consistent approach to pupils' care and education across the 24-hour curriculum. Education, behavioural and personal targets are understood and used in both settings, and consequently there is consistency in pupils' lives and learning. Care staff set good routines for pupils to follow, and provide environments in which pupils and students feel safe.

57. The procedures that the school has for assessing pupil's attainment and the progress they are making are good. There are very good and clear assessment systems in place for the initial assessment of pupils prior to being accepted by the school. These are multi disciplinary and provide a very comprehensive profile of the pupils' difficulties and the provision and support they need to overcome these difficulties. This information is used very well to set targets in all areas of development. For example, targets are set for literacy, numeracy, and for a range of personal development including communication. For some pupils literacy and numeracy are not their most immediate needs and in such situations targets are very specific to the pupil and based on prior assessment. Running in conjunction with these are individual behaviour targets, and care plans. All are thoroughly reviewed on a frequent and regular basis and provide comprehensive information on the progress pupils are making in these areas of their development. These systems make a positive contribution to the overall good monitoring of pupils' progress, and especially the very good monitoring of personal development.

58. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in curriculum areas and the monitoring of the progress they are making are satisfactory, but these are undergoing change as the curriculum develops. There is accurate and frequent assessment of pupils' attainment in literacy, communication and numeracy against the targets set in Individual Education Plans, and the resulting information provides evidence for the setting of new targets, and also provides teachers with clear information of attainment against nationally recognised 'Performance ' levels, or levels within the National Curriculum. However, assessment in the other subjects of the curriculum is less vigorous and secure Teachers have just begun to match pupils' attainment against the 'Performance Levels' at the end of each year in science, history, geography and religious education. These judgements are recorded but are not always fully used to help in lesson planning. Opportunities in lessons for assessment information to be collected as the lesson proceeds are not always taken. For example, learning support assistants could usefully record pupils' responses, to add to teachers' record keeping.

## **Residential provision**

59. The school makes very good provision for those pupils who are resident and some aspects of the boarding arrangements and the quality of the care offered are outstanding.

60. The boarding units are located both on the main school site and in adapted houses in the town centre. In each case, the standard of the accommodation is high. Even those living units that are housed in temporary buildings are very well laid out and are furnished to a high standard.

61. The most recent Social Services inspection report, followed up by an unannounced

visit, commended the standards of care and provision.

62. A very experienced and well-qualified head of care oversees the residential care staff and staff who lead teams and manage units are also of a high calibre. There are sufficient staff on duty, including “waking” night staff to safeguard the interests of the resident pupils. Child care staff are well supervised and given opportunities for training. Particular care is taken to ensure that the communication needs of pupils with autism or other complex communication difficulties are addressed. Signs and symbols are consistently and effectively used. A specialist teacher on the school staff liaises with care staff to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to this issue and to the specific needs of autistic pupils beyond issues of communication.

63. A wide range of activities is offered to residential pupils and students, including opportunities to join in uniformed groups in the community. Choice is an increasing element as pupils move through the school. Those in the houses for 16 to 19 year olds choose their own leisure activities. They are helped to take advantage of local facilities, for example, going to evening soccer training at a leisure centre. The houses provide a perfect opportunity for pupils and students to extend their personal social and living competencies. They help with tasks such as preparing meals and they are given excellent examples on how to behave by those who work with them.

64. The school takes all necessary precautions to vet and supervise staff. Medical needs are well taken care of. Food is plentiful and nutritious and meal times are pleasant social occasions. Relationships between pupils and students and the staff who look after them are very good. Staff know the young people well and make a valuable contribution to the assessment of their progress, including providing evidence for reviews.

65. Liaison between care staff and pupils’ families is very good. When parents wish to visit during term time, this is facilitated. Overall, the residential provision makes a very strong contribution to pupils’ personal development and towards enabling them to become effective learners in school.

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

66. Most parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the work done for, and on behalf of, their children. They are happy with the improvements that they see in their children within a short period. The school encourages parents to communicate with them, the head teacher has an open door approach and overall the school works towards a committed partnership.

67. Almost fifty per cent of parents returned the questionnaire. The positive comments include the fact that their children like the school, the teaching is of a high quality, behaviour is good and their children make good progress. There were no areas of significant dissatisfaction. Three parents attended the meeting to talk with the inspector and they were supportive of the work of the school. The inspection team agrees with parents’ views.

68. Many parents live far from the school; this limits the direct impact they have on its work. It also makes it extremely difficult for them to support fundraising or social events. However, many parents attend their child's review. Friends of Bladon House School, the supportive organisation that operates instead of the traditional parents’ association, includes taxi drivers, escorts and many others who are involved in any way with the school. Their brief is mainly fund raising which they do very effectively.

69. The quality of information provided for parents is good, especially information

regarding their child's progress. This has improved since the previous inspection where it was considered useful. There is a clear and concise prospectus, parents' handbook and a clear and detailed annual review.

70. Residential pupils can telephone home any evening and those with communication problems have an interpreter to help on a third telephone.

71. The school runs courses for parents that help them to understand the ways in which it works with their children.

72. Although there would appear to be little difference in the school's work with parents since the previous inspection report, there have been significant changes. These can be seen in the quality of information provided about children's progress, the opportunities provided to enter into a dialogue with the school and the provision made for parents to contact their children.. These have impacted well on pupils, parents and staff and overall there is an improvement on the previous inspection.

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

73. There has been a great improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection when they were weak. Specific criticisms were that far too little had been done to establish a sound curriculum and that the division of management responsibilities was flawed. This had led to pupils not being given the quality of provision that they required.

74. The leadership given by the head teacher is very good, and others in leadership roles make a strong contribution to keeping the school moving forward. All subscribe to the aims of the school. They fully understand the educational direction that the school must take and this is clearly set out by the head teacher. Since being appointed three years ago, the head teacher has acted vigorously to bring about the many changes necessary to ensure that pupils receive the education of high quality to which they are entitled.

75. Although there are no governors, the head has developed a broad strategy for school improvement. Wherever possible, she has sought relevant advice and very good use has been made of expertise available within the group to which the school belongs. Consultants have been employed to critically examine what the school provides and to give advice. There are now strong, credible figures in key managerial roles. The deputy head teacher has good understanding of the curriculum and of teaching and learning. The head of care is very experienced and knowledgeable. The provision for post-16 students is effectively led, as are key areas such as specialist knowledge of autism, augmentative communication, and occupations and speech and language therapy.

76. The proprietors are supportive and, through a network of advisors and regular contact, are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They carry out their statutory duties. Steps have been taken to give the school a greater degree of control over the money it has to spend. At present, for legitimate commercial reasons, the head teacher cannot be entirely certain of the budget that will be available to her in advance. To some degree, this limits the school's ability to schedule and plan expenditure to bring about improvement. A good recent innovation has been the appointment by the proprietors of an advisory board that acts to support the head teacher in her decision making.

77. There is a suitable wide-ranging plan that sets out priorities for development for the whole school. The head teacher has introduced very effective measures to keep a check on the performance of the whole school and she acts effectively to put right any inadequacies.



The school now seeks to compare its performance with that of similar schools and challenges itself to improve by setting targets for pupils' performance. The performance of teachers is kept under review and targets are set. The school applies the principles of best value well.

78. The head teacher makes effective use of the finances available to the school and resources are generally well used.

79. Staff have appropriate qualifications in order to meet the curricular requirements and a number of the staff have specific qualification in special educational needs. The co-ordinators are mostly subject specialists. This is however, an area to develop in the future because in some subjects, a curriculum that fully meets the needs of younger pupils has not yet been developed. Classroom assistants and care staff are appropriately qualified and integrate well with teachers and therapists. The school offers relevant training to all members of staff. The organisation and planning for this is very good and it has resulted in pupils with more complex difficulties being better managed. All pupils are achieving more than before in lessons.

80. The accommodation is satisfactory. The newly built accommodation is attractive and well matched to pupils' learning and living needs. The older residential provision is well organised, clean and comfortable but it is in temporary buildings not entirely suited to this purpose. The accommodation for the pupils who are over sixteen is very good indeed. Good use is made of the gymnasium and residential leisure areas. However, the school lacks specialist provision for a number of subject areas, including art and science. This is unsatisfactory, and has an effect on the delivery of the curriculum because it limits practical work. The lack of changing and shower provision for physical education is a serious omission. The school makes good provision for information and communications technology, including a computer suite and sensory rooms. Therapists and visiting staff have space to provide for the stated needs of pupils. The school is well maintained by an efficient team, the site is very large and requires constant repairs.

81. Resources at the school are satisfactory overall. The school has adequate physical education equipment; the library is small but has a satisfactory range of books. There are some Big Books and pupils borrow regularly. All resources are well used by staff and pupils.

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

82. In order to continue to improve the provision it makes, the proprietors and senior managers of the school should plan to:

- (1) Ensure that the curriculum for pupils aged 5 to 11, while taking full account of pupils' learning needs, also offers them the full range of learning opportunities appropriate to their age, that is to be found in the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. (Paragraph numbers 6, 34, 135, 141)
- (2) Take steps to ensure that assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do, within the foundation subjects, is accurately and consistently assessed and that the information gained from assessment is fully used by teachers when they are planning pupils' future learning. (Paragraph numbers 58, 125, 140, 160)

In addition to the issues above:

There are some more minor issues to which the attention of the school is drawn and which may be included in the action plan drawn up in response to this inspection. Amongst these are the following:

- Develop the role of the subject co-ordinator and monitor how it is carried out. (Paragraph number 79)
- Develop IT further both as a subject and its use across the curriculum especially with those pupils with greatest levels of need. Paragraph number 153)
- Develop the role of learning support assistants, particularly in relation to assessment. (Paragraph number 58)
- Improve accommodation by providing specialist areas for art and science, and changing facilities and showers for physical education. (Paragraph numbers 119, 127, 170)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	22	37	13	3	0	0
Percentage	5	28	47	16	4	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	109
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

## **Attendance**

### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	1.8

### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.2

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	103
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7
Average class size	7.8

**Education support staff: Y3– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	171
Total aggregate hours worked per week	152

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4,334,735
Total expenditure	3,866,211
Expenditure per pupil	33,619
Balance brought forward from previous year	See note
Balance carried forward to next year	See note

Note: The school was unable to supply this information for the following reason:- *"Bladon House is a private school run as part of Honormead Schools Ltd., a private limited company. The finances for the schools are part of the consolidated accounts for the Group and as such we are unable to provide separate Balance B/Fwd. and Balance C/Fwd figures for the period in question."*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	109
Number of questionnaires returned	42

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	31	2	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	50	40	5	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	52	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	33	14	2	33
The teaching is good.	55	43	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	38	5	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	29	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	29	7	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	48	40	7	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	43	43	2	7	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	29	5	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	26	7	2	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

83. English is good throughout the school. The consistently high quality of imaginative teaching, well supported by speech and language therapy, ensures that the pupils in all years and of all ability levels enjoy good overall achievements. Literacy strategies are well established across the curriculum, and complimented by the skilled use by all staff of signing and TEACCH and PECS communication systems. Pupils make a very good start in developing their communication skills when they enter the school and their progress in communication remains very good throughout their time there.

84. By the age of 14, the attainment of a very small number of pupils matches national expectations for their age, which indicates an improving trend over the previous two years. Pupils aged 16 and at Post-16 are encouraged to gain accreditation in communication through the National Skills Profile award and over the last two years, all pupils have gained a graded certificate.

85. By the age of seven, the pupils make steady gains in their communication and social development. This is due to the good use of signing and symbols by all staff. Although the pupils speaking skills are poor, which reflects the nature of their special needs, they listen carefully and follow simple instructions, such as when the teacher explains how to use a talking book. They demonstrate their understanding by using the mouse and cursor to turn pages backwards or forwards.

86. The achievement of 11 year-olds in speaking and listening is satisfactory. In vocabulary building sessions they verbally respond to the teachers' request for 'S' words with *snail, sock, snake or star*. Less vocal pupils offer picture cards, which indicates their understanding of the questions.

87. By the age of 14, the pupils engage in class discussions. The teachers' effectively targeted questions, such as when comparing fact and fiction diaries, encourages all pupils to use earlier and new vocabulary, which promotes their comprehension skills. They make good progress in speaking and listening.

88. The pupils aged 14 to 16 make very good gains in speaking and listening as they engage in lively question and answer sessions as well as good conversational interaction with their peers and staff. For example, in examining newspaper stories, they discuss topics ranging from music to sport, expressing their views and thoughts on these with a high level of maturity.

89. Post-16 pupils make good progress in furthering their speaking and listening skills. The teachers' clear and unambiguous explanations allow pupils to follow oral instructions accurately. Signing and symbol cards are used well by staff and in the wider community, where pupils visit local shops and restaurants, and this enhances the communication opportunities for pupils with poor vocal skills.

90. The reading levels of seven year-olds are limited by their lack of vocal skills. However, very well planned and structured lessons encourage reading through computerised talking stories, which are reinforced through 'Big Book' references to the same story. Staff use symbol worksheets to encourage one to one reading, and one pupil, delighted at reading a sheet unaided, hugged staff as he proudly informed them of his achievements. This is an

excellent example of the pupils' improving self-esteem and spiritual development.

91. By the age of 11, pupils reading skills are efficiently monitored as they follow the Oxford Reading Tree scheme. Structured lessons provide frequent opportunities for pupils to read aloud. Higher achieving pupils use decoding strategies to attempt new words. Pupils make good progress although understanding of what they are reading is sometimes limited by their lack of reading experience.

92. The pupils aged 14 make good gains as they continue with the commercial reading scheme. Effective one to one sessions allow non-verbal pupils to read by signing, which demonstrates their knowledge of text, although some do not always understand the context of the story. Staff encourage and motivate the pupils by providing opportunities for shared and paired reading, keeping good records of pupils' progress.

93. By the age of 16, most pupils make very good progress. They read with fluency and understanding, using a range of voices and humour to portray the different characters. Lower achieving pupils read mechanically and without expression, but are able to discuss the plot and suggest the outcome of the story. Reading is further encouraged through imaginatively planned lesson resources, offering a range of materials from books, poems, posters, magazines and newspapers, which emphasises the relevance of reading in everyday life.

94. Post-16 students are encouraged to read as part of their work towards National Skills Profile certificate awards, although much of the focus is on functional reading skills such as understanding written instructions.

95. Seven year-olds steadily develop their handwriting. Lesson planning is well timed to allow for daily written exercises and the needs of individual pupils are well met. For example, lower achieving pupils trace lines and letters to develop their hand and eye co-ordination skills, while higher achieving pupils trace or copy whole words and sentences.

96. By the age of 11, the majority of pupils write their names and some achieve words or incomplete sentences unaided. There is evidence in their work of simple spelling tests based on frequently used words. However, handwriting styles are uneven and immature. The teachers' consistently good marking contains relevant comments on the degree of help needed by the pupil to achieve a specific piece of work.

97. By the age of 14, the pupils' writing has progressed from single words to making complete sentences. They identify nouns, subjects and objects. Although handwriting styles are still immature and uneven, the size of letters is reduced and there are spaces between words. Higher achieving pupils use joined writing, which indicates their improvements. Teachers promote the use of story frames which helps pupils organise their thoughts and think about their spellings when writing. In Year 9 literature classes, pupils show positive enthusiasm to the teachers' proposal that they should start a personal diary.

98. Achievement is good and the work of 16 year-olds contains evidence of draft and redrafted paragraphs, with the final piece being word-processed. Where pupils continue to have hand and eye co-ordination difficulties, good use is made of laptop computers to enhance their presentation skills. This promotes their sense of achievement and self-esteem. Where teaching is particularly good, the teacher uses a photograph to focus the pupils' attention and the pupils volunteer their thoughts, which are transferred to the board as a paragraph to be copied as a handwriting exercise. Some good teacher/pupil interaction on grammatical points ensures that pupils know when to use full stops and capital letters.



99. At Post-16, the students' handwriting skills are complimented by word-processing opportunities. For example, in design and food technology, they record their achievements in draft form before completing their reports on computers. The good progress in writing made from age 11 to 16, continues.

100. Since the previous report, the Staffordshire literacy structure has been introduced throughout the school. This is strongly complimented by the very good provision for augmentative communication through the TEACCH and PECS communication systems and the close planning links between teaching staff, care staff and speech and language therapists. The pupils' individual education plans have at least one literacy target, which applies to all lessons. Literacy and communication skills are very well promoted across the 24-hour curriculum. For example, in English, the speech therapist signs alongside a short video story which is later discussed by verbal and non-verbally communicative pupils, and in science, pupils access vocabulary and pronunciation through laptop computers. During off-site visits, pupils of all ages are encouraged to use their picture or vocabulary cards to communicate with the public.

101. In the eleven lessons seen during the inspection, two were satisfactory, with nine being good or very good, and this is reflected in the quality of learning. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Well-balanced lessons are structured to promote maximum concentration and learning. The teachers' good monitoring and assessment procedures are ongoing and used well to inform lesson planning. The needs of all pupils are well met through their individual education plans, which are used effectively as working documents. The pupils benefit from very good relationships with staff, who present very good role models. Difficult behaviour is handled sensitively and preserves the pupils' dignity at all times. Most classroom assistants offer good levels of support in group and one-to-one sessions. However, a small number are not always well deployed and appear unsure of their roles and this results in some pupils' inappropriate behaviour being unchecked.

102. This well-managed department is strongly led by a committed and enthusiastic co-ordinator. The quality of documentation is good and is jointly planned with speech and language therapists. Good assessment procedures are used well to inform both curriculum and lesson planning. The co-ordinator monitors the subject and the quality of teaching, which highlights staff needs, and these are addressed through in-service training days and target setting. The use of TEACCH and PECS is very well established and liaison with on-site support services is very good. Speech and language therapists frequently work alongside teachers in the classroom, which ensures that all pupils are fully included in lessons. There are good links with neighbouring establishments which have allowed one pupil to become fully integrated into the Derby School for the Deaf and another pupil to attend on a regular part-time basis. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, although there are few hands-on artefacts to reinforce learning and uninteresting photocopies replace textbooks, for example in work on the *Diary of Anne Frank*. The small library is adequately stocked, although a number of reference books are outdated and there is no computer for research. Library records indicate that it is regularly used by students. Computer software is underdeveloped, as is the use of computers to support learning.

103. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and the co-ordinator has ensured that the issues raised at that time have now been addressed. The National Literacy Strategy has provided a framework on which work in English is built. Progress in reading and writing has quickened and teachers now have high expectations of what can be achieved. The work of the co-ordinator is now guided by a job description and work in teaching and learning in English is effectively monitored. Liaison with those responsible for augmentative communication is good.

## MATHEMATICS

104. There has been a good improvement in the provision for mathematics since the last inspection. The school has sensitively introduced the National Numeracy Strategy for pupils aged 7 to 14, which has been adapted well to meet the special educational needs pupils. It is also making good use of the National Skills Profile as a form of accreditation when they are 16, but not all teachers have successfully linked the individual targets for pupils to the work in the profile. Every pupil now has individual mathematics targets as part of their Individual Education Plans. The quality of teaching has improved and the provision of learning resources to support numeracy, especially for practical work has improved but still requires some improvement, as does the inclusion and use of information and communication technology to support learning.

105. Pupils' achievements and their progress throughout the school are satisfactory. In some classes for 7 to 14-year-olds, the quality of teaching is very good, due either to a high level of subject knowledge or expertise in teaching. In these classes, pupils with additional special needs, such as autism, achieve well. The progress pupils make in working with numbers, and their understanding of money is good. However, there is insufficient evidence in pupils' files to show their understanding and knowledge of shape, measurement and the handling of data. Where records exist and pupils have been at the school for a long time, progress is at least satisfactory.

106. Pupils aged 11, make satisfactory progress. Lower attaining pupils recognise different colours and classify objects by their colour. They find the written number on a card when presented with its name or sign. Higher attaining pupils count accurately up to 10, overwrite or independently write numbers. A few pupils identify different shapes, such as circles and squares, and with the help of a number line calculate simple subtraction of units from tens and units. Pupils aged 11 to 14, make satisfactory progress. The highest attaining pupils recognise and write numbers up to 100, complete addition of 3 digit numbers, and understand number bonds up to 20. They can count in two's and three's both backwards and forwards. They identify different shapes and can name them. Lower attaining pupils make good use of number squares to work out different patterns in number problems, and complete basic addition in tens and units. There are a few pupils who are only at the stage of matching and identifying different numbers and shapes, while others count to 10, and in sets of 10.

107. By the age of 16, pupils have developed their skills further. Higher attaining pupils use a calculator to undertake add three amounts of money and are able to compare this amount with a specific amount. They recognise amounts of money when written down and accurately give the amount in pounds. Some pupils are not able to make these comparisons and have difficulty deciding whether they have enough. Pupils of all abilities use money in practical settings, such as the school's tuck shop. The majority know the names of coins, and in some cases how many are needed for specific amounts, such as they need three 10p pieces for 30p. They also use their knowledge of time to read a digital clock, and some pupils can tell the time accurately. However, pupils are not at the stage of working out how long events last, such as their favourite television programme. Data handling, the production of simple graphs, and measurement and weight is seen in a few pupils' files but is not sufficiently represented in their work.

108. Overall the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good across the school, and in some lessons for pupils aged 7 to 11 or 11 to 14, it is very good. Pupils respond very well to the structured and calm atmosphere in the majority of lessons, and therefore relationships are good and sometimes very good and this further enhances the learning opportunities. One lesson for pupils aged 14, lacked these good features. Here there was a

lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject and the work set was too difficult. It did not link to pupils' targets. Partly because of this, pupils were not engaged in the lesson and they learned very little. The strengths of teaching lie in the teachers' very good knowledge of pupils, the detailed planning with different activities for pupils of different abilities that clearly links with the pupils' targets.

109. Teachers use behaviour management strategies consistently, notably using TEACCH techniques, and in the best lessons learning opportunities are maximised, along with the consistent use of signing and symbols. For example, pupils are brought together for a short group sessions which supports their personal development and then return to their workstations with support staff, to work on very good individual objectives and activities drawn from their individual numeracy targets. Support staff make a positive contribution and are especially effective in those classes where teachers are new to the school, but they are insufficiently involved in the assessment through the recording of pupils' responses.

110. The curriculum for mathematics is good and two strengths of the provision are the clarity of the numeracy targets devised for each pupil, and the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. For those aged up to 14, mathematics is well planned. However, teachers, especially those who are new to the school, do not always have sufficient guidance about how to plan the next stage of learning for their pupils. The curriculum is cross-referenced to national "Performance Scales" published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and the school uses this as a good assessment and recording procedure so teachers can track pupils' progress. In addition, pieces of work are kept as evidence of assessment, but the quality of information about when and how they were completed varies between classes is neither dated nor annotated. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16, is satisfactory at this present time, but the National Skills Profile is being used as a framework for planning the mathematics curriculum. it was intended to be used to help plot and to recognise achievement so that it may be accredited.

111. Co-ordination of the subject is very good. The school has been very fortunate in recruiting a teacher from mainstream primary education who has benefited from training in the National Numeracy strategy and is experienced in managing and developing a subject. This co-ordination also benefited from the school's decision to allow the co-ordinator time to monitor and evaluate and develop the subject. Consequently, the co-ordinator feels empowered and valued and the commitment to improving the subject is excellent. Teachers of 7 to 10 year olds have benefited from her experience and there is a clear development plan for areas that needed to be improved. For examples, resources to support practical mathematics and to support learning have been improved, and these are often tailored to individual pupils.

## **SCIENCE**

112. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science throughout the school, and they achieve soundly across a range of science topics. The school has managed to maintain the standards reported at the last inspection.

113. Up to the age of 11, pupils to learn about science through "topics". They freeze water and melt ice, and they mix different materials with water to see the effects. They sort items such as fruits into different groups. They look at how sounds are made, and where light can come from. Sometimes, however, the essential science content of lessons can be lost, as when pupils made a graph of the colours of staff's cars. This had little to do with their science topic of "pushing and pulling".

114. Pupils aged 11 to 14, begin to learn from the National Curriculum. However, they are not able to complete very much written work. Pupils learn about the human body, very small creatures, flowers and other plants, and different groups of animals. Most often pupils only learn a small amount about each topic. Occasionally, they will use computers to make a graph of what they have observed. Pupils go on visits outside the school to support their learning, such as to a farm, but on such occasions, the broad nature of the topic can dilute the essence of the science.

115. Pupils aged 14 to 16, learn about the human body, in much more detail. Their lessons include work on the different organs, the senses, reproduction, and healthy living. They learn about the environment, and about the nature of some materials and their uses. Some of the resources are not appropriate to the age of the pupils, including worksheets drawn from a science scheme for much younger pupils.

116. Overall, higher attaining pupils gain a basic understanding of many simple scientific ideas. They make suggestions about their ideas, and offer reasons why things might be happening. Others begin to pay more attention as they progress through the school. Their progress is more in terms of increasing concentration, improving behaviour, developing social skills and growing general understanding than in acquiring specific scientific facts and skills.

117. Teaching and learning are good and ranged from satisfactory to excellent during the inspection. Teachers plan their lessons well, and build effectively on what pupils have already learned. They prepare good resources, and use them well to enliven the learning. Their use of signing is a very good aid to what pupils understand, whether during the good introductions to lessons, or whilst the pupils are doing their own work and the staff are assisting individuals. In one particularly good lesson, the teacher used signing well whilst explaining and demonstrating a series of "shakers" - sealed plastic cups filled with different materials - to see what different sounds they made. All of the pupils were very well involved at the start, and all staff worked very well in supporting them and encouraging them during their individual work. One pupil was not able to cope with the pressure of the work, and he became very restive, but staff made very good efforts to re-involve him in the work several times. The worksheets were very appropriate to the needs of the children, and their level of working, and there were several different levels of difficulty in them. The pupils who finished the main task moved on to making their own shakers, using new materials. Pupils are told how well they are doing in lessons, which encourages them. The pace of learning in most lessons is good, and teachers expect pupils to be attentive, and to concentrate well. The pupils, for the most part, behave well; they pay good attention to what the teacher is saying, and they concentrate well on their individual work. In general, worksheets, although good individually, are used in too many lessons, and computers and other technological equipment are not used often enough. Several lessons started late or finished early, and so pupils' learning time for science was reduced.

118. Leadership and management are satisfactory, although the recently appointed co-ordinator has not yet taken up the post. In the meantime, a member of the senior management team is keeping watch over the subject. Staff have completed early assessments of what pupils can do, but not all records are up to date, and this makes it difficult for them to change their termly plans to match how well the pupils are progressing. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some very good planning of each half-term's work by the teachers. Sometimes what is taught does not match well with the planning, especially if it is brought under the umbrella of a "topic", and the basic science aspect can be lost. Sometimes the topic dominates the lesson planning, and all pupils up to the age of fifteen will be doing the same topic, such as "sound" this term. In the lower part of the school, the planning is through the foundation stage curriculum. This complicates things for teachers,

who need to plan different levels of work from this stage to National Curriculum level. Resources are satisfactory for teaching the present curriculum, but some more imaginative resources would help the teaching and learning, as would the use of a separate room for some science lessons, especially for the secondary age pupils. This would help to raise the profile and status of the subject with pupils and staff. There has been some monitoring of the standard of teaching by the senior management team. In the absence of a co-ordinator, the school does not have any clear and definite plans for how it wishes to develop this subject, but this situation should change soon.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

119. Achievement overall, in art and design, is good, an improvement since the previous inspection when it was found to be satisfactory. For some pupils, where the teacher's subject knowledge is good, achievement is very good. Occasionally, teachers' lack of understanding of the subject means pupils do not do as well as they could.

120. Younger pupils make satisfactory progress in painting and collage by using a variety of materials. One group made attractive photograph frames using sponge printing. Most of the work done by the pupils is very structured, following a model produced by the teacher, and this results in the production of very similar work. This is partly due to the particular special needs of the pupils, but sometimes because the teachers do not have enough specialist knowledge.

121. By the age of 11, pupils are achieving well, as a result of good teaching. They understand how to vary pressure when shading with pencils, produce different textures with paint, and mix colours, for example to produce darker skin tones under the eyes in a portrait. Thirteen-year-old pupils relate colours to moods, saying that happy pictures have bright colours, or that yellow is a happy colour, and blue a sad one. Using collage, pupils copy the style of Picasso, though most could not bring themselves to combine features, viewed from different angles, in their portraits.

122. By the age of 14, pupils are using a sketchbook for preparatory work, have developed very good observational skills, and show good understanding of a range of techniques. They compare and contrast works by famous artists, say which they like, and give their reasons. They paint or make collages in the style of a variety of famous artists.

123. Pupils up to the age of 16 continue to make good progress. They work in a variety of media producing 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional work on topics and themes they have chosen with their teacher.

124. Most teaching observed was good or better, with only one lesson judged to be unsatisfactory. In one excellent lesson, the teacher's subject knowledge was very good and her enthusiasm, good pace, and good use of questioning, inspired and informed pupils, who responded with interest and rapt attention. Management of pupils is good in all lessons, resulting in good behaviour. When lessons are well-planned and interesting, behaviour is very good. Art is taught by class teachers, not by specialists, so the quality of lessons, and level of expectation, varies according to the knowledge and understanding of the teachers. Planning based on "Equals" for younger pupils, and QCA guidance for those aged 11 to 16, is inconsistent, and sometimes lacks detail. There is no consistent assessment or recording of progress, though a portfolio of work is held by the co-ordinator.

125. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has built up a supply of books, pictures and posters, trained support assistants in display, and organises whole school displays of pupils' work. However, there is no monitoring of teaching, and monitoring

of planning is not yet fully established. More needs to be done to create schemes of work, which meet the special needs of the pupils, to establish planned progression, and to provide for assessment and recording.

126. There is no specialist accommodation for art, and this, together with the lack of storage space which restricts the range of materials available, places limits on the range of artistic experiences offered to pupils.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

127. Achievement overall in design and technology is good. It is very good for older pupils, and makes a significant contribution to their personal development and preparation for life after school.

128. Progress is satisfactory for pupils up to the age of 11, through a creative arts curriculum, which is, however, limited because it is taught by non-specialist teachers, in the classroom. Pupils learn basic craft skills such as cutting and sticking, and modelling with play dough, but there is little evidence of the design element of the subject.

129. By the age of 14, pupils achieve well, making very good use of the specialist accommodation and equipment. Higher attaining pupils do so independently and support is provided at an appropriate level for those who need it. Pupils work in a range of materials, including fabric, wood, plastic and clay. They measure carefully and use a variety of tools safely, including an electric drill, saws and sharp knives. They are very aware of health and safety rules, such as the wearing of protective clothing, goggles, and the importance of hygiene in food technology. They can find and name the tools they use for working in wood. Displays show evidence of design, for example when pupils made African masks in plastic.

130. Pupils achieve very well by the age of 16, building on skills learned earlier, and becoming increasingly independent. They follow plans, or recipes well, adapting them to meet their own needs. For example, one pupil substituted tomatoes for leeks, because he did not like leeks. Though very good work schedules are provided, pupils are encouraged to contribute their own ideas. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their work, and name and collect the necessary equipment and ingredients, moving confidently around the food technology room. Pupils are given opportunities to learn useful skills. Some were seen painting wooden boxes they had made, following plans, and one girl was following a pattern, with support, to make a skirt. Pupils use construction kits, creating their own designs as well as using the instructions provided. Development plans include the opportunity for higher attaining pupils to work with an engineer.

131. Teaching overall is good and pupils learn effectively. Planning is good in the lower school, and very good, with some excellent features, for pupils from 11 to 16. This, together with the very good understanding of pupils' learning difficulties, and provision of learning opportunities, means that pupils' rate of progress improves as they move through the school. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and independent working, and these expectations are fulfilled in well-planned, relevant, interesting lessons. Pupils are interested in their work and take trouble to ensure it is of the best standard. On occasions, pupils work well together. Older pupils benefit from teachers' specialist knowledge, and the excellent use of alternative communication systems of symbols and signing. Assessment and recording, including self-assessment is very good, and pupils work towards accreditation

132. The subject is very well managed by a co-ordinator with very good subject knowledge,

who supports colleagues, monitors planning and teaching, and has provided a broad, balanced and very relevant curriculum. The co-ordinator's strong belief in equal opportunities, linked to high expectations, means that pupils are challenged; while very good supervision, linked to an emphasis on health and safety, ensures that the challenging work is carried out safely. As a result, pupils develop independence and self-esteem.

133. Accommodation has improved since the previous inspection, with the provision of specialist rooms, and this has made a significant contribution to the improvement of achievement in the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

134. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. This maintains the standard found at the last inspection. Pupils aged up to 11, study the subject as part of their general topic based work. They have studied aspects of the weather such as the wind and its effect on trees in autumn and they have constructed simple weather charts based on their own observations. However, pupils do not cover all the elements of the National Curriculum programmes and their learning in geography is restricted by the design of the topic framework.

135. In the 11-14 age range, more specific work is planned. However, this planning is very new and pupils have yet to fully benefit from the range and breadth of the programmes now in place. Where there is better planning, pupils make good progress, for example, in their work about an Indian village. Pupils find India and the village on large-scale maps and they answer questions about aspects of the village's life. In a lesson where the pupils compared photographs and plans of the village, they showed evident gains in their knowledge and understanding of village features. In other lessons where the pupils were shown traditional Indian cooking utensils, they clearly understood the differences and similarities to utensils that they use in cooking.

136. Pupils aged 14-16 study aspects of the local area. This is a combined history and geography project. Pupils make good progress and develop an understanding of the features that led to the growth of the brewing industry.

137. Teaching is satisfactory except for the 11 to 14 year olds, where it is good and it leads pupils to show a good attitude to their learning. Clear understanding by the teacher of what should be taught results in lessons in which pupils work with concentration and are enthusiastic to answer questions. Pupils are challenged by the work, in these cases, where the pace of lessons is brisk and lively. Pupils behave and support each other when they work collaboratively for short periods.

138. In all geography teaching, the pupils' basic skills are well catered for since each piece of written information is accompanied by appropriate symbols to aid the pupils' understanding. Teachers plan effectively and carefully prepare work, adapting it to the differing ability levels of pupils. In some cases, however, particularly with the younger pupils, lessons are not planned as a series that integrates the development of geographical skills with the study of topics or places. This is a shortcoming. Lessons where actual objects are used as points of reference, such as Indian cooking pots and utensils, are particularly effective. Support staff are well briefed and provide good support to individuals. In some lessons, support staff were very effective in teaching small groups of pupils.

139. Overall, the school's planned work for geography is satisfactory. The planning format

is very new and gives a broad guide to the areas to be studied. It does not at present cover all the National Curriculum programmes. This is particularly the case with younger pupils who touch on geography as part of a topic based curriculum but who do not systematically study it. The units of work for older pupils, which are now being taught, are prepared thoroughly. Realistic learning outcomes have been identified and these have been linked effectively to pupils' individual education plans. Specific lesson planning is good. Teachers show how they will teach and how they will adapt the work for a range of ability within the class. Assessment within the subject is at an early stage and clear guidance has not been offered. Co-ordination of the subject is not fully developed and monitoring of planning, teaching and learning is not yet in place. Resources for teaching are satisfactory and they are stored efficiently.

## **HISTORY**

140. Achievement in history is good. Progress is most apparent for those aged 11 to 16, as pupils aged up to 11 have limited opportunities in history because of the way the curriculum is organised for younger pupils.

141. By the time that they are 11, pupils show curiosity about familiar class routines and demonstrate understanding of language relating to them. They have experience of how things follow one another in a sequence. A good example of this was the sequence of symbols that is used to show the class timetable. In their talk about their interests, higher attaining pupils distinguish well between old and new motor cycles. Pupils take part in discussions of the past. Higher attaining pupils recognise flags in symbols on the Second World War when the group is considering the countries involved. All pupils have experienced work on the past; they have been introduced to Victorian times and talked about people from that period in work on the story of *Oliver Twist*.

142. When they are 14, most children have completed work on the causes of World War 2, and explored the reasons behind the war. They all talk about the countries involved and develop empathy by trying to consider the feelings of children alive at the time. Higher attaining pupils discuss the involvement of countries outside Europe. Most pupils are moved by the story of Ann Frank and they want to find out more about her life and times. Through quizzes, pupils recall the dates of the war and that it lasted six years. Visits from people who were involved in the war help them to understand that the conflict involved 'ordinary people'.

143. By the age of 16, pupils show understanding that many every day things have changed over time. They take part in humanities lessons about the local area. When they visit Burton they examine clues on its' importance in the industrial past and begin to realise that the town and the canals were an important feature of Victorian life.

144. By the time that they leave school, pupils and students have had experience of many such visits. They appreciate the past and develop an interest in what happened yesterday. They work hard on projects in local history and build up an appropriate vocabulary.

145. Teaching is good and consequently pupils enjoy history. They like the artefacts and the stories of famous people and they respond by looking after things and behaving well. They work with a sense of enjoyment and answer questions. They try hard to imagine things like aeroplanes overhead, and think about other people's feelings. Every pupil is happy to get things right and their friends celebrate with them. Their good behaviour has a positive effect on learning. In the best lessons, teachers use the schemes of work effectively and address the individual needs of pupils. Lessons are planned efficiently and the purpose is very clear. Encouragement and praise motivate children to learn. There is good understanding of the needs of pupils, and resources and support enable pupils to learn comfortably. All teachers



use a range of activities to interest pupils; however, lack of opportunities to visit places of interest limits the experiences of the children.

146. The history curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. The new curriculum and schemes of work are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is a specialist who has a clear vision for the future of the subject. He has very high standards and expectations and is working to raise standards and an awareness of the importance of history. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has developed a central pool of resources and will enrich the delivery of the subject. He has few opportunities to monitor the delivery of the subject by class teachers. This is an area for development.

147. The use of information and communication technology is under-developed and pupils and staff do not have the opportunity to use computer-assisted learning. Do they access neither the Internet or use digital cameras or videos to record their progress.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

148. Achievement is satisfactory and most pupils make steady progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, more remains to be done. The progress of lower attainers is less good because insufficient use is made of specially adapted equipment such as touch-sensitive screens and simple switches. Using these means, lower attaining pupils could gain expertise in controlling aspects of their environment. A limiting factor is that teachers do not have expertise in making and using such provision.

149. By the age of 11, pupils use the computers in the information technology room. They gradually learn to use the keyboard to write their names, or short sentences. They choose games or learning programmes, and put the disk in for themselves. Some pupils draw very simple pictures, and they answer questions about information that appears on the screen.

150. By the age of 14, pupils have learned to use the computer mouse with more skill, and draw pictures of the musical instruments that they have made. They select different items from a screen picture, and copy a short piece of writing. They look at pictures that have been printed from Internet pages, and understand that there are many examples of information technology in use around them.

151. By the age of 16, pupils have learned to load their own programs independently, including their own work from previous lessons. They change the print style, size of letters, and correct their spelling mistakes. Some produce a street map and look up information about the planets on the Internet. They use a graphics program to colour and arranged shapes. Pupils learn about the uses of technology in the community, such as bank cash machines, shop tills, traffic lights and CCTV cameras.

152. Lower attainers show less interest in computers and some will work on them only when being actively encouraged by a teacher or support assistant. Others have little to do with the computers at all. It is possible that these pupils would be more motivated if they were introduced to more interesting programs, and equipment that was easier to use, earlier in the school.

153. Although most pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons in the information technology room, they do not always have the chance to use and improve their skills in other lessons. This is a shortcoming.

154. The teaching of information technology is good in lessons in the information technology room, particularly for pupils aged 11 to 16 and pupils learn well. Teachers plan

their lessons well, with clear targets for what they want the pupils to learn. They organise their lessons in a variety of ways to encourage pupils. For example, teachers allow pupils to choose their favourite programs when the lesson target is that pupils are to practice using the mouse. They select items from screen menus, change print styles, print their work, and save it. There are usually several members of staff to help the pupils. They are familiar with the programs, and they know their pupils well. In one good lesson, the pupils loaded their previous work from their own discs, and were able to correct some punctuation mistakes, put in some extra information, add a title and check the spellings. They then went on to look for information about the planets on the Internet. This part of the lesson would have been better if each pupil had confined their search for information to a particular planet instead of being free to explore all of the planets. However, the pupils reinforced their general skills well, and were strongly encouraged by the teacher, the technician and the support assistants.

155. Some lessons do not run smoothly. At times, the organisation of lessons is let down by computers that will not accept the programs or equipment failure. In these cases, pupils become frustrated and their learning is not so good.

156. The leadership and management of information technology are satisfactory, although the subject co-ordinator left recently and the replacement is absent on maternity leave. A member of the senior management team is looking after the subject for the time being, and is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. A manager has been appointed to look after information technology through the school, including all of the administration work, as well as a technician to look after the equipment, and to give valuable assistance in lessons. The school's overall plan of what should be taught is very good. It is detailed and practical, and it gives very good guidance what teachers should be teaching. This includes teaching courses for older pupils that are approved and checked by an official organisation outside the school. There are good forms on which staff can record pupils' progress, but staff tend not to use them regularly. This makes it difficult for them to change their planning for future teaching and it is unsatisfactory.

## **MUSIC**

157. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, although the subject has been through different phases of development. It is now a developing and improving subject in the school's curriculum. At the beginning of this term, the school recruited a specialist music teacher who is now teaching the subject to all pupils. This has resulted in a consistency of teaching styles, methods and approach. Consequently, pupils are responding well in lessons and making progress in their personal development, especially in their ability to work in groups, share and take turns.

158. Music is taught to all pupils, but partly due to the nature of the pupils' difficulties and the newness of the school's curriculum there is little evidence of pupils' ability to compose or appraise music. However, achievement and progress is satisfactory, although in the three lessons seen during the inspection the progress made was good. Pupils aged 7 to 14, of all abilities, sing rhyming and familiar songs, such as "We're all going to the Zoo tomorrow". All pupils try to use signing to accompany the words, and are beginning to understand about pitch and volume. They clap the long and short beats within words, such as, in their favourite foods. They name and recognise different instruments, know how they should be played, but are not yet at the stage of being aware of different types of music or how to indicate the emotions they feel when listening to music. Pupils play different instruments in such a way as to denote weather conditions, such as thunder or rain. They give a final performance as a whole group, listening carefully for their turn to perform when directed by the teacher.

159. A new teacher, who also co-ordinates the subject, has been appointed. On the week

of the inspection, teaching was very good. The lessons are planned well, with a variety of activities that pupils enjoy and which develop their listening and communication skills, as well as their personal development. Through the teacher's very calm approach, careful communication and insistence that they listen pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour. They try very hard to achieve the correct pitch or tone, and many pupils who do not communicate in other situations vocalise or sign along with the songs. They take delight in their achievements. The use of on-going recording of pupils' responses needs developing so assessment information can be gathered and there are opportunities where support assistants could be used more effectively for this.

160. The present curriculum is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has not been in the school long enough to develop an overall curriculum with an emphasis on composing and appraising, to which assessment could be linked. At present, assessment is unsatisfactory. Due to the very high level of the expertise of the teacher, the curriculum being taught now is very relevant to the pupils. However, the curriculum could be beneficially extended by regular visits by musicians for example, from other countries, and who perform different types of music. This would support pupils' cultural development. The co-ordinator a very good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum, is enthusiastic about raising the profile of the subject, and has made good progress in a short time in understanding the difficulties of these pupils. Improvements and developments have been identified and some of these, such as providing a specialist teaching room, collation of resources, and an audit of need has already taken place and has improved the quality of the provision.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

161. Achievement in physical education is good because of some excellent opportunities developed by the new co-ordinator and staff.

162. By the time that they are 11, pupils play simple games and understand rules. They pass and catch balls and improve their performance by watching the actions of the teachers and copying these. The appropriate words and symbols to describe their activities are learned. Pupils explore ways of moving. They perform movements involving rolling, climbing, stopping, crawling and running. A few are able to combine two movements in a sequence according to instructions.

163. Up to the age of 14, pupils continue to make good progress in following instructions. They participate in a range of activities. In their practice of basketball skills, they learn to persevere. One pupil was heard to enquire as he tried and tried again to shoot a basket, if the school was trying for an entry in "The Guinness Book of Records". Every pupil is aware of the need for a schedule in the gymnasium, and for the need to warm up and cool down. They enjoy working in groups and move safely between activities. They also work well against their own standards and targets. Each pupil is able to answer questions about the activity and the effect it has on their body. They develop rhythm.

164. By the time they are 14, pupils have taken part in health related fitness programmes. Their response is very good indeed and they watch very carefully when the teacher gives them good examples to copy. They understand the sequences of the lessons and take part in clearing up at the end. Every pupil is able to identify his or her favourite apparatus and choose an activity on the equipment. Pupils move with more confidence and gain in basic skills. They show understanding of their own bodies and how they might improve performance.

165. By the time they are 16, the pupils identify muscles. They know the apparatus to use

for health related work. They carry out star jumps and practice with ropes trampettes and boxes. They are quite mature and always come ready to work.

166. By the time pupils and students leave school, they have participated in a variety of games and sports, including football, basketball and hockey. They have the opportunity to join clubs for activities and many have taken part in climbing and vaulting. Some of the older pupils use symbols to record their own circuits and put their work to music. Pupils take part in swimming and some have won awards. The therapy that is provided by the horse riding group is invaluable. The provision of occupational therapy adds to the excellent provision and opportunities for pupils.

167. Most of the pupils in the school enjoy their lessons in physical education because the teaching is always good and on occasions, very good. A feature of the very best lessons is the planning to meet pupils' individual needs. The lesson objectives are clearly explained and the teacher and support staff work well together to manage behaviour. Teamwork is a vital element that pupils learn well when every adult in class delivers the message of the lesson. Pupils work hard with interest and concentration, and want to succeed. They listen carefully to instructions, co-operate well with their teachers and with one another and try their best. They encourage and help each other and applaud success. Their behaviour is very good and their effort is widely appreciated by both staff and peers.

168. Planning is good and refers to the individual abilities of the pupils. Lessons develop skills in small steps. Pupils are given achievable goals. Most lessons are presented in an enthusiastic manner, with teaching and excellent support staff having high expectations.

169. The curriculum is broad and balanced, enriched by a selection of outside activities. The range is limited. Assessment procedures are good and many of the results obtained are used to guide teaching and planning. The co-ordination of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator is a specialist teacher with a clear vision for the development of the subject and the enrichment of the pupils. The policies and schemes of work are good. Learning resources are sufficient at present but there is nowhere to store any more. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The gymnasium is sometimes cold. There is no further indoor area for the subject, the outside play areas are limited, especially the playing field which has a severe slope. Changing areas and shower facilities have not been improved since the last inspection. However, overall development of the subject since the last inspection is good.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

170. Pupils' rate of progress and achievement is satisfactory, which is similar to the finding of the last inspection. Pupils up to the age of 11, have shown imagination in their work on bible stories and have produced some exciting pictures of 'Daniel in the lions' den'. They have also produced work on 'The Ten Commandments' which is illustrated by pictures and incorporates symbols showing their understanding and knowledge of the work. Pupils give opinions and answer questions on the significance of birthdays and show understanding of the specialness of occasions. They know why we give presents at Christmas and are aware that this too is a special time.

171. Pupils aged 11 to 14 make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding of the festival of 'Diwali' and are able to imaginatively describe some of the Hindu gods associated with the festival. They show good progress in their ability to draw and model their own conception of the deities and in their knowledge of basic facts about the religion. Other pupils in this age group answer questions about relationships within families and listen attentively to stories about the birth of Jesus.

172. Pupils aged 14 to 16 has developed their knowledge of The Bible. They know that there are different books within it.

173. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils show a good attitude to their learning particularly in the lower part of the school. They work with concentration and enjoy answering questions. When pupils are challenged by the work, they respond enthusiastically. Their behaviour is good and they are able to listen quietly and to support each other when engaged in questions and talking about issues.

174. In one lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory for older pupils because of the lack of subject knowledge by the teacher. However, teachers generally show adequate understanding of the subject and lessons are usually effectively prepared and delivered. This promotes a satisfactory degree of motivation and interest by the pupils. Where the teaching is lively and well-paced, pupils show enthusiasm and they produce their best work. Teaching in junior classes and in the 11 to 14 age range is characterised by patient and careful teaching of key issues. This enables pupils to make effective progress. In the best lessons the work is adapted for different ability levels and efficient use is made of support staff, who are well briefed on the activities and who are able to provide a high standard of individual tuition for members of the group.

175. Overall, the school's planned work for religious education is satisfactory. Work is planned for each age group from national schemes of study. It covers a wide range of issues in the major religions of the world. The work of younger pupils concentrates on Christianity and covers elements of Judaism while older pupils appropriately study the monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Older pupils study a variety of faiths including Buddhism and Sikhism as well as investigating the richness of religious faiths in the local community. The planning of specific units of work is good. Teachers demonstrate imagination and thoroughness in their planning and prepare lesson plans which clearly identify learning outcomes for pupils and which efficiently adapt learning experiences for the ability range of pupils.

176. The subject is managed satisfactorily. Schemes of work are in place and the co-ordinator monitors planning throughout the school. Resources for the subject are adequate and are efficiently stored and retrievable. The co-ordinator has not yet established productive links with other subjects such as geography where Indian customs and religion are part of the curriculum. The subject, however, is developing satisfactorily and makes a worthwhile contribution to the spiritual and moral education of the pupils.

## **POST-16 PROVISION**

177. The very good provision that the school makes for students aged 16 to 19 enables them to continue to develop their communication, literacy and numeracy skills in a context that introduces them to the world beyond school. Students are offered work experience placements with a level of support that suits their needs. Opportunities are given for students to attend a local college where they take courses tailored to their individual requirements.

178. The post-16 centre is well supported by the services of the school speech and language therapists. It offers vocational training in catering and horticulture and has successfully established a "Young Enterprise" which involves students operating a company that conducts market research, designs and manufactures products, and operates as a commercial venture.

179. Students achieve very well. This is an improvement on the standards reported at the last inspection. They continue to develop and extend their communication skills, making use

of sign, symbols or pictures, where necessary. Progress in literacy is good and is strongly enhanced by the good use of vocational training to give purpose and meaning to work. Vocabulary is extended as technical terms related to horticulture, catering or the Young Enterprise are introduced.

180. Students develop their reading and writing skills in a practical context. They explore broader usage of language. For example, they enjoy the film versions of “Romeo and Juliet” by Franco Zeffirelli and Baz Luhrmann in their continuing encounter with literature.

181. Numeracy is extended very effectively by its use in the context of horticulture, catering and the Young Enterprise. Students achieve well. Learning in both literacy and numeracy is good. They try hard to remember and use correct terms. They take care with their recording.

182. Classroom sessions take practical work forward and serve to continue to develop students’ ability to concentrate on their tasks, to communicate effectively and gain a fuller understanding of what they do. Good use is made of IT to support learning.

183. In a very good classroom session for lower attaining students, their learning about the ecosystem of the garden was reinforced. They designed a board game in which insect pests that they knew about were sited as “traps” on the track around the board. It was notable that students showed good precision in illustrating the garden pests and excellent recall of the names and damaging characteristics of a number of garden pests. More able students with adult help and good use of computer software, design and go on to build real gardens.

184. The outstanding achievement of pupils aged 16 to 19, is in their personal and social development. They take full advantage of the very high quality of residential care that they receive. In the comfortable surroundings of their residential units they undertake a range of domestic tasks, make choices about their use of leisure, and they develop their independence. All these developments may lead to certificates of accreditation.

185. Teaching in the post-16 centre is of high quality. Most teachers are qualified as teachers of further education and have a range of practical skills and experience that suits the needs of the students very well. They know and understand their students’ needs and adapt their teaching accordingly. Lessons in the classrooms are well planned and groups are well managed. In most cases, good support is given by non-teaching assistants, where these are established staff members. Those new to the setting make a satisfactory contribution.

186. The planning that underpins the vocational activities is very good and is very well judged to broaden and deepen students’ learning. Students report that they enjoy the practical vocational activities very much and they clearly increase their confidence and independence. Teaching and learning are much improved since the last inspection.

187. The centre is well managed and led. A good training programme has been put in place. This enables instructors who work with the post-16 students to gain qualifications as teachers in further education and possibly qualified teacher status. Others are training to become assessors of accredited courses in English and mathematics. The performance of teachers is assessed as part of a performance management strategy.

188. Accommodation for the post-16 students is well suited to their needs. It provides a greenhouse, workshop, kitchen accommodation and an ICT suite. There is sufficient classroom space.

