

INSPECTION REPORT

KIRKHAM PEAR TREE SCHOOL

KIRKHAM

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119887

Headteacher: Mrs Jean Cook

Reporting inspector: Ian Naylor
20906

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 26th January 2001

Inspection number: 191181

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the school inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Community special

School category: Maintained

Age range of pupils: 3-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Beryl Rhodes

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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20906	Ian Naylor	<i>Registered inspector</i>	History.	Teaching; Progress; Staffing and accommodation.
9931	Margaret Kerry	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Leadership and management; Parents, attitudes and behaviour.
17260	Jenny Taylor	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Design and technology; ICT.	
7042	Keith Gutteridge	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art; Physical education; PSHE.	Curriculum; EAL.
20457	Brian Fletcher	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Mathematics; Religious education; Music.	SMSC; Equal Opportunities.
10782	Henry Moreton	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English; Geography; French.	Care.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Pear Tree is a community, special, all age school for boys and girls with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently 61 pupils on roll, four of whom attend on a part-time basis in the Reception Class. Only two pupils are from ethnic minorities. There is a wide range of learning difficulties, including thirty-seven with severe or complex learning needs, five with autism, and twenty with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A third of pupils have free school meals. For the majority of pupils, Pear Tree is the first school placement although many have previously attended the Child Development Centre. A significant number of pupils transfer to the school at 11. On entering the school all pupils are working significantly below age-related expectations and have a proposed or final Statement of Special Educational Needs. There are not enough children at the Foundation Stage to form reliable judgements as a group.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school with some excellent features, in which the high quality of leadership and management, teaching and care contribute significantly to good pupil achievements. The school gives very good value for money

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Leadership and management are excellent;
- Teaching is often excellent and very good overall;
- Achievement is good and often very good;
- Curriculum is very good overall;
- Inclusion for pupils is very good;
- Attitudes, behaviour relationships and personal development are excellent;
- The individual needs of all pupils are very well provided for and their overall welfare is excellent;
- There is an excellent partnership with parents who think very highly of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There are no major issues to be addressed

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. The majority of the issues raised at that time have now been addressed very well. The school has already done much to improve accommodation and has drawn up plans and identified funds to make further key improvements. The school has shown a very good capacity to improve across a wide number of areas and has very good systems for identifying and evaluating strengths and weaknesses

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 7	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key
speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	<i>Excellent</i> A*
reading	B	B	B	B	<i>very good</i> A
Writing	C	C	C	C	<i>good</i> B
mathematics	B	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i> C
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	A	<i>unsatisfactory</i> D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	A	<i>poor</i> E
					<i>very poor</i> E*

Achievement across the school is consistently good, and often very good or excellent. It is best at Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress over time is good. Achievement and progress is very good in the speaking and listening elements of English, history, physical education, and in personal and social education. It is good in all other subjects except in information and communications technology where it is satisfactory. At Post 16, there is national accreditation which strongly promotes improved standards in student achievement and progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils love coming to school. They respond in an excellent way to all that they are asked to do. They get a great deal of enjoyment from lessons and are enthusiastic participants.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are very well mannered and learn to be courteous and considerate of others. In class, they pay attention and work very hard. When in the local and wider community they have a reputation for being impeccably behaved and are very well thought of by local people.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. All take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school community. The more able show a caring response and often help those less able than themselves. Many learn to be responsible for themselves and, by the time they leave school, to act upon their own decisions. Relationships with staff and with one another are also excellent.
Attendance	Good. No unauthorised absence and most authorised absence is on medical grounds.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

A high proportion of lessons are simply inspirational. Teaching is often excellent and very good overall. Of the 72 lessons observed, 13 (18 per-cent) were excellent. 52 per-cent were very good, 27 per-cent were good and 2 per-cent were satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is of a high standard because it has so many strong features with rarely any weaker areas. There is excellent planning, organisation and presentation of lessons. Each pupil has learning outcomes, set out in the lesson plan. These are carefully matched to the next step of learning. Very effective use is made of a wide range of resources, many of which are created or provided by the teachers themselves. Pupils' imagination and attention is regularly captured by the well thought out activities provided. There is excellent teamwork. Special support assistants give exceptional personal and educational support to pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities. There is a suitable emphasis on literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education (PSHE), and on physical education. Regular very good use is made of visits to the local and wider community to support pupil learning. Since the school was last inspected significant progress has been made in curriculum development. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been very successfully introduced, These are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. The principles of inclusion are upheld for all pupils. A growing number of pupils are successfully engaged in integration activities in primary schools and opportunities for pupils from other schools to work alongside Pear Tree pupils in their own school are regularly and successfully made.
Partnership with parents	The very close relationship between the school and parents has been maintained. Parents have a very high opinion of the school. They feel they are provided with very good information about their children's progress and achievement and they appreciate the constant flow of information, approachability of staff, as well as the regular meetings for discussion. Parents enter into a home-school agreement and have clear understanding about homework.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. The school has a strong sense of community and shared purpose. Assemblies, PSHE, and religious education lessons and many other areas of teaching, provide excellent spiritual development for pupils. The uniqueness of each pupil is celebrated, and the contribution of each is highly valued. The school is an honest, fair and respectful place. Pupils are taught to share and care.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent support and guidance is given to pupils. There are very good procedures for Child Protection. Pupil achievement is very well measured and recorded. Parents are given very good information about their child's progress. The introduction of high quality individual education plans has been a significant improvement since the previous report. These are used to help teachers plan lessons. Parents are fully involved in deciding the next targets for learning for their child. Visiting professionals provide very good support and staff liase extremely well with them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has brought the school successfully through a challenging period. She provides analytical and clear-sighted vision, unwaveringly focused on inclusion and achievement for every pupil. All staff, including key staff, have similar commitment to the ideals and aims.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities.	The governing body is very well informed and active in carrying out its duties. Governors are closely involved in the daily life of the school, and have the same commitment as the headteacher and staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance.	The head teacher and governors have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They regularly check the quality of teaching and curriculum content, and of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources.	Strategic planning is very good, with resources targeted at clearly defined priorities. The school has husbanded its resources effectively to address deficiencies in its accommodation. Financial management is efficient, and the school applies the principles of best value well.
Staffing and accommodation.	The number of teaching and learning support staff is broadly in line with other similar special schools. Teachers are well qualified in special needs and have extensive relevant experience. Learning resources are satisfactory. Accommodation has been improved since the last inspection, and further major upgrades are finally moving towards fruition.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school ethos is excellent. Staff give praise to pupils for every achievement; • Pupils love coming to school; • All parents feel well informed about pupils' learning and expectations; • There is good liaison with parents, and very much an open door policy; • The school is very much part of the local community; • The school promotes dignity and inclusive activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are concerned about value of teaching French to pupils with complex and profound learning needs, but appreciate staff do their very best to make it relevant.

Inspectors agree with all the many favourable views of parents. They understand the views of parents about modern foreign language, but the school approaches the teaching of the subject in a balanced and practical way that aims to recognise pupils' abilities and support their achievements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainment against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement, progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and in annual reviews.
2. Analysis of pupils' work, individual education plans (IEPs), annual reviews, reports, teachers' records and evidence from lesson observations shows that achievement across the school is consistently good, and often very good or excellent. Progress over time is good. Progress is best in Key Stages 3 and 4: this was demonstrated both in the lessons seen and in the analysis of work. Achievement and progress is very good in the speaking and listening elements of English, history, physical education, and in personal and social education. It is good in all other subjects except in information and communications technology where it is satisfactory.
3. In English, by age seven, higher attaining pupils read flash cards for days of the week and say what the class does each day. They know key words and learn more for homework. Lower attaining pupils make marks on paper with physical prompts, holding a pen in a palmer grip, passing it from hand to hand. By age 11, higher attaining pupils read from the *Oxford Reading Tree Stage 2*, telling the story from the pictures. They use a *Language Master* to practice the sounds of words. Lower attaining pupils use a *Big Mac* communicator to say 'Hello'. By age 16, higher attaining pupils use word processing to type simple words for the day's menu. They discuss their work and know which is their best piece of writing. Lower attaining pupils follow a story about *Bubbles* from a big book, and respond confidently to the sensory experience. By age 19, higher attaining pupils discuss and write simple reports about their work experience placements, using a dictionary to find the words. Lower attaining pupils recognise their written name.
4. In mathematics by age seven, higher attaining pupils recognise and sort colours. They join in counting games and anticipate a number. Lower attaining pupils recognise the shapes that numbers make during arithmetics/numeracy. By age 11, higher attaining pupils recognise 1p and 2p coins and match coins. They count squares on the computer, and begin to understand 'one more than'. Lower attaining pupils use switches to show their preference for shapes and colours. By age 14, higher attaining pupils understand volume using non-standard and standard measures. They count in sequence from 1-20. Lower attaining pupils experience symmetric/non-symmetric numbers using light, colour and touch. By age 16 higher attaining pupils name two and three-dimensional shapes, count in fives and arrange the numbers 1-20 in ascending order. Lower attaining pupils follow a sensory story and count down from five. By age 19, higher attaining pupils use money to buy food and drinks at a local café, choosing from a menu, and know how much items cost. Lower attaining pupils count coins to 5p.

5. In science, by age seven, higher attaining pupils know the properties of materials and use words such as *hard* and *soft*, to describe them. They understand the things that make plants grow best through simple investigations with beans they have grown in pots. Lower attaining pupils explore the texture and shape of different items. By age 11, higher attaining pupils compare photographs of babies and adults. They know that you get bigger from babyhood to adulthood. They recognise the difference between boys and girls. Lower attaining pupils use the *Big Mac* communicator to say which is a photograph of a baby and which an adult. By age 14, higher attaining pupils understand that animals are sub-divided in to groups or species, name a living / non-living thing, and know that plants and animals live and grow. During sensory massage, lower attaining pupils show awareness and operate a switch for cause and effect when using a hair drier. By age 16, higher attaining pupils understand about their home environment, and use correct words like *smooth, soft, sour, bitter, squeeze*, when describing breakfast cereals. Lower attaining pupils know how to press the switch to operate a toaster.

6. Many higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 make excellent progress in social relationships during integration sessions at local primary schools. Some are able to follow the curriculum of the receiving school, given extra adult support. Others have opportunities to mix socially and take part in lessons alongside pupils in mainstream classrooms. They do so very successfully.

7. Lower attaining pupils and those with sensory needs, make good progress in their communication skills and in their ability to accept and tolerate a variety of activities and situations alongside their peers. Some make distinct improvement in their independence.

8. Analysis of individual education plans and assessment records shows that these very effectively support the raising of each pupil's achievement. There has been a distinct improvement in the use of IEPs since the last inspection.

9. At Post 16, there is national accreditation through the ALL programme (Assessment for Life and Living) and OCR (Oxford and Cambridge Royal Society of Arts) National Skills Profiles, which strongly promotes improved standards in student achievement and progress. Higher attaining pupils at Post 16, make very good progress in a range of social skills and become more independent. Many are able to sustain supported work experience placements with local employers and also attend link courses at the local college of further education where they interact socially with other students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They delight in coming to school. Parents describe the excitement and pleasure shown by pupils when school transport arrives, and home-school books often say how pleased pupils have been to return after the holidays.

11. In their lessons, pupils are enthusiastic learners, and display pride and pleasure in their own and others' achievements. They show a very clear response to the quality of the teaching they are

experiencing, by trying their utmost and often winning through against great difficulty. Their interest is captured, perhaps through a sensory story, or by being able to use

high quality resources. These have been produced by teachers and have been painstakingly and imaginatively adapted to each need. On the occasions when individual pupils may be restless or distracted in themselves, this does not undermine the calm and purposeful atmosphere of the rest of the group.

12. Good manners, courtesy and respect are always evident in the daily life of the school. Pupils move around school sensibly and with consideration for others. Very good behaviour at lunchtimes produces a quiet, orderly atmosphere in which pupils are expected to show good manners – and do so. At break times and drinks sessions, behaviour is equally good, and pupils wait patiently for their turn.

13. At all times, pupils show a real care for, and appreciation of each other. They spontaneously applaud other's achievements with genuine pleasure. Pupils respect one another and the adults around them and quickly recognise and respond when another needs help.

14. The relationships between all members of the school community are excellent, and there is tremendous warmth and genuine affection. It really is a place where each and every individual matters. It is probably for this reason that a parent remarks in the visitors' book: *'I feel really proud to say that I send my special little boy to Pear Tree school'*.

15. The school is a close-knit community. Pupils showed a keen sense of belonging to this community in assemblies. They also demonstrated their capacity to understand spiritual experience, as in the inspirational assembly where they responded to the story of the miracle of calming the storm. Respect and reverence for the values and beliefs of others were powerfully expressed in a religious education lesson on Hindu sacred places for Post 16 students.

16. Pupils show enormous trust in their teachers. This enables them to attempt activities that require confidence: in swimming, for example, where reluctance to enter the water or to take part, has been overcome. If pupils find something difficult at first, they will often persevere with the experience and come to accept it with pleasure. There was a good example in a lesson on passive ankle movements, for a group with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

17. Progress in personal development is very good, with pupils making gains in their ability to be independent, according to individual need. Pupils take opportunities for responsibility: taking the register, for example, or being part of a rota for classroom jobs; making choices in their learning, or distributing milk to younger pupils. Post 16 pupils move with confidence into the wider world of work placements or College courses. They show themselves trustworthy and responsible.

18. All pupils take part in visits or in activities shared with the local community. They are well known within the local town, where they receive a warm welcome by local shopkeepers and café owners. Pupils, for their part, make visitors to school very welcome.

19. Attendance is good when compared to similar schools. There is no unauthorised absence. The vast majority of absence is due to medical conditions. Parents report that pupils are disappointed if they miss school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Of the 72 lessons observed, 13 (18 per-cent) were excellent and simply inspirational. Of the remainder, 52 per-cent were very good, 27 per-cent were good and 2 per-cent were satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Consequently teaching is very good overall. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, music, history, physical education and design and technology. In science, art, geography and religious education it is good, and it is satisfactory in information and communications technology. No lessons were seen in French.

21. Teaching is of a high standard because it has so many strong features with rarely any weaker areas at all. In the majority of lessons, planning, organisation and presentation of lessons was excellent or very good. Teachers have great enthusiasm for what they do and this is communicated to other staff and to pupils. They have very high but realistic expectations of what pupils can achieve, and use a multitude of creative ways to ensure that they meet these expectations. Lesson plans identify learning outcomes for each pupil and these are carefully matched to the next step of learning. Very effective use is made of a wide range of resources, many of which are created or provided by the teachers themselves. Pupils' imagination and attention is regularly captured by the well thought out activities. There is excellent teamwork. Special support assistants give exceptional personal and educational support to pupils' learning. They are very experienced and knowledgeable, and operate both alongside teachers and independently as required. They offer excellent support to pupils and work in close harmony with teachers at all times.

22. During a lesson in numeracy, a superb sensory experience was created in the school hall for non-ambulant, lower attaining pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4. A musical story was used to present counting and sequencing numbers from 1 to 5. Teachers and special support assistants worked in seamless partnership to create the right atmosphere for the story using a variety of equipment and resources, but the main resource was them-selves. They had a superb relationship with pupils, and used visual, auditory and tactile materials to communicate with them. This was a vital and stimulating session in which each pupil was engaged; showing interest and enjoyment via facial expression, vocalisation and actions. Learning through experience was very high. Hence, learning outcomes in planning such as, '*will show tolerance to movement in wheelchair*' and '*will give eye contact to adult, slides, artefacts,*' and '*will handle numbers in countdown,*' were - along with many other targets - all met.

23. Teaching is also of a high quality because of the enthusiasm of staff, and the high standard of relationships that are established with pupils. Pupils are challenged by very interesting activities so that their attitude to learning is very good. This was demonstrated in an excellent lesson in literacy at Key Stage 1. There was a tremendous sense of harmony between staff and pupils. Good use was made of high quality, home made resources related to the story of 'Mr Happy'. Planning was succinct and very well targeted at individuals. Pupils were clearly having fun in their learning through a variety of teaching approaches presented to them, including the use of tactile pictures. In this lesson - and in most others - the way that staff communicated with pupils using Makaton signing, pictures, tactile and sensory stimulation, created an excellent environment for learning.

24. All staff are very aware of pupils' needs and this supports excellent management of behaviour. This was observed in a science lesson at Key Stage 1 on conditions for plant growth. Pupils had grown their own beans and were encouraged to predict differences in growth between those kept in a fridge and those in a dark cupboard. The interest generated in the activities was used very effectively to re-direct attention in a firm but non-confrontational manner, so that difficult pupils conformed well and participated fully.

25. Teachers use very good assessment, recording and analysis of pupils' work to inform IEPs and this effectively promotes learning. Learning is very good and the majority of pupils know what they have to do to succeed. This was exemplified in another mathematics lesson, at Key Stage 3. Pupils were grouped according to ability for specific teaching on volume and, in particular, the use of standard and non-standard measures. Clear and precise use was made of questioning to check pupils' understanding. Pupils were presented with choices 'which way do you want to count?' that encouraged independent learning. Everything that the pupils did was noted and formed part of the assessment by teachers and special support assistants in a thorough, thoughtful and committed way. This was then used to plan the next step and to present pupils with further stimulating activities to extend their learning and achievement.

26. Teachers extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, with good emphasis on the communication needs. All staff use appropriate language and Makaton signing. Teachers liaise extremely well with the speech and language therapists and pool resources to create the best environment to encourage pupils' speaking and listening skills.

27. A good rapport is maintained with parents so that tasks for pupils to complete at home are understood, frequently form part of pupils' IEPs and often relate to personal and social skills. Sometimes they involve reading and writing tasks as appropriate to the learning need.

28. Teachers place great emphasis on extending the learning opportunities and challenges open to pupils. Very good use is made of a variety of local community resources through visits out of school or by inviting people into school. The integration of pupils into local first and primary schools is an example of this, as is the use of local employers to provide work experience placements for students at Post 16. An example of excellent liaison and teacher co-operation between schools was seen in a physical education lesson taken at a local primary school by a teacher from Pear Tree. The lesson, on relationship play, involved the integration of several pupils from Pear Tree into a class of reception pupils from the receiving school in which additional support was given to all the younger pupils by pupils from Year 5 at that school. The teaching was skilfully planned and executed with combined activities and guided support by adults that created an excellent learning environment in which pupils of various abilities and backgrounds could achieve confidence with one another and recognise and accept similarities and differences between themselves.

29. Teaching on pupil integration visits is not exclusive to teachers. There was an example of excellent teaching by a special support assistant - while accompanying a pupil to a weekly placement in a primary school reception class. Here, the main qualities were excellent knowledge and

understanding of the pupil's social and academic needs and the ability to liaise, support and advise both the teacher and classroom assistant of the receiving school.

30. There was very skilful individual teaching observed during an introductory work experience placement for a student at a local garden centre. After only a few visits, the student, with the careful and thoughtful tuition by the teacher, was rapidly growing in confidence in her relationship with the garden centre staff and moving towards achieving her IEP targets of greater personal independence.

31. An area of teaching which is satisfactory, but which could be improved is in the use of information and communications technology. Insufficient use is made of software programmes to support teaching across the subjects. There is good use of some resources such as *Big Mac* communicators and of audio and video-recorders. The use of digital photography is just being recognised and used by staff as a great potential aid to pupils' learning experiences.

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

32. Overall, the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities. There is a suitable emphasis on literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education (PSHE), and on physical education. Regular use is made of visits to the local and wider community. These visits are well planned to support pupil learning. Since the school was last inspected, significant progress has been made in curriculum development and the breadth of the curriculum has improved. All subjects, with the exception of information and communications technology, now have policies and schemes of work in place which include clear learning outcomes for pupils. Policies are written to an agreed format. Planning is very good because of the way in which teachers allow for pupils of different abilities and disabilities. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been very successfully implemented and these are having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make.

33. Provision for PSHE is very good. Not only are there specific taught sessions, but the principles of PSHE permeate all aspects of school life. Sex education and elements of drugs education are taught. Plans are made for further developments in this area next academic year. All pupils have PSHE targets in their individual educational plans (IEPs). These targets are closely related to pupils' individual needs, as identified at annual review meetings.

34. The curriculum at all key stages is very good in literacy, numeracy, history, geography, music, PE and PSHE. It is good in all other areas with the exception of ICT where it is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has increased the length of taught time to improve the balance of the curriculum. The school now needs to review the time allocation of subjects in the light of new curriculum guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils have access to all aspects of the curriculum and the principle of inclusion is well established.

35. The curriculum at Post 16 is very good. There is a broad and relevant range of learning experiences. Students follow programmes in 'Life and Living Skills' and the 'National Skills Profile'

both of which are accredited by the Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) examinations board. Students also follow a range of courses at college, including a course on construction, with accreditation by the Construction Industries Training Board (CITB), and 'Healthy Living' which includes first aid. Students attend work experience placements where they are well supported by both school and local employers.

36. Links with the community are excellent and make an important contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils make regular visits into the community. Some collect natural materials to be used in art. Older pupils visit shops and restaurants to develop their social skills. These links are used extensively as part of the inclusion and integration programme that has been developed since the last inspection, so that it is now an excellent feature of the school's provision. An appointment of an inclusion co-ordinator had led to advice and support being available to mainstream schools on the integration and inclusion of pupils with severe learning difficulties. There are now twenty-eight separate opportunities for pupils to be included in external provision, with sessions lasting from a few hours to two days. Every pupil at Pear Tree has an Annual Review target on inclusion. The School Development Plan also has a target of 70 per-cent of pupils sharing learning experiences alongside mainstream peers by the end of 2001. Pear Tree hosts meetings of mainstream special educational needs co-ordinators and there is a growing family of schools that have links to Pear Tree: 14 at present. There are already plans, made possible by New Opportunities funding, for staff from special and mainstream schools to take training together. Information and communication technology is one area of focus. Staff of Pear Tree will provide certain parts of the training. This activity is aimed at further extending the learning opportunities available to pupils. Local Education Authority curriculum advisers already use the school as an exemplar of good practice in special educational needs.

37. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Scouts, guides, cubs and brownies meet on a Friday afternoon. Pupils take part in residential experiences at the Boys Brigade centre and have visited London. All pupils are taken on ambitious school trips: camping under canvas and residential trips to Paris. A residential trip for the lower attaining pupils is planned.

38. The provision for personal development is excellent and is a strength of the school and better than at the last inspection. It is the foundation upon which the strong sense of community and shared purpose is built. All who work at the school follow the school's aims that each pupil, irrespective of the nature of the learning disability, has high potential for personal development. All work tirelessly to ensure that these aims are realised.

39. Provision for spiritual development is excellent and is achieved through high quality assemblies, personal, social and health education and religious education lessons. Pupils assemble each morning with their teachers to the accompaniment of music that provides for moments for reflection. Readings are carefully chosen to reflect the needs of the pupils: *Christ Stilling the Storm*, for example. They are dramatically illustrated, so that pupils develop a greater awareness through seeing, hearing and touching. They sing 'With Jesus in the boat you can smile at the storm', and it has meaning for them. Pupils use community churches to celebrate Harvest and Christingle festivals. In school, they marvel at the display of light as they celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali. In religious education lessons, pupils are encouraged to think of others and to be tolerant and understanding. There are many moments of awe and wonder, for example, when live chicks are

brought into a religious education lesson to illustrate the meaning of new life. Prayers are often spoken: in these lessons, before lunch and at the end of the day.

40. The provision for moral development is excellent. The school is unsentimental but compassionate. It is unequivocal in what it expects of the pupils: to be polite, courteous and considerate. No-one's agenda is more important than any other. All are equally valued. Pupils are clear about what is right and what is wrong. Their very good behaviour is evidence that they know and understand the difference. The rules of the school are clear and are promoted instinctively by all who work there. Rewards are plentiful and used to confirm good behaviour and work.

41. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and provide a first class model for social development. Anti-social behaviour, of which there is very little indeed, is promptly dealt with, and better ways of behaving are demonstrated by staff. The school builds confidence in its pupils and creates a social environment in which pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils hurry into the school at the start of the day because they enjoy school so much.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school promotes excellent standards of care for pupils. Procedures for health and safety are excellent. The very good teamwork of all staff within a very supportive and positive environment ensures that every pupil is encouraged to develop as fully as possible.

43. All staff have worked very hard since the last inspection to improve procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' academic performance. Each pupil's records and assessments provide a detailed picture for parents and other carers. Teachers routinely identify what learning outcomes they expect for pupils of all abilities. Very good records are kept of pupils' personal progress, their attitudes to school and their likes and dislikes. Staff are fully conversant with the pupils' needs. The pupil assessment records show good progress in learning in relation to the comprehensive targets set in the individual education plans. Teachers identify how pupils respond to the experiences they are offered, carefully recording gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. They share this with pupils when it is appropriate. Individual education plans are well prepared, giving good information about progress towards targets within them. This helps parents to understand the progress their child is making and also aids staff in planning the pupils' next steps in learning. The senior management team monitors targets set for all pupils on a regular basis. Feedback is given to teachers, and this has resulted in continuing improvement in the compilation and writing of the individual education plans. The monitoring of pupils' personal development and behaviour is excellent, with the support staff making an excellent contribution throughout the school.

44. The monitoring and promotion of attendance is very good. The keenness of the pupils to come to school, and the very good relationships between school and parents result in limited absence.

45. Arrangements for child protection are excellent, with all staff conversant with procedures. The school benefits from the support of a good number of visiting specialists, who value the way in which staff embrace their ideas and suggestions. The level of support for the visually impaired has

improved since the last inspection, when it was unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory. Similarly, provision for physiotherapy is much improved, and is no

longer weak. It is now good. Many visiting specialists attend annual reviews or provide reports and supporting information. The exchange of information, such as individual pupil targets, between teachers and supporting professionals, is very good. There is a secure system for recording the administration of medicines.

46. The quality of daily care and supervision offered to pupils is excellent. Pupils are treated with respect and given an appropriate level of privacy. Staff are caring and sensitive, consider pupils' feelings, and encourage them to help themselves whenever possible at lunch time, for example. Most staff are trained in first aid. Special support assistants, whose work is invaluable, benefit from extensive opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding. The premises officer and cleaning staff maintain a very high standard. The cleanliness of the whole school is striking.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Parents strongly support the school and have enormous confidence in it. There is strong evidence that parents are very satisfied with all that happens at the school. Parents' questionnaires, the parents' meeting and spontaneous written comments, were united in their praise of the work of staff with their children.

48. At the parents' meetings examples were given of a number of very significant strengths in the school, especially its approachability and very good communication; the quality of information parents receive about progress; the close partnership with parents and support of whole families; the quality of the headteacher's leadership. These are all, in their view, of a high quality. The high expectations by teachers of pupils and their belief in pupils' capacity to achieve were especially appreciated. To quote one parent: 'Pupils here achieve more than you ever thought possible'.

49. Inspection evidence supported all the positive views of parents. The school has a highly effective partnership in place. Attendance at annual reviews is very good and parents receive very good quality information about their child's progress. The use of home-school books is especially good, with regular and informative entries from both staff and parents. There was some exemplary practice in home-school books, on how parents could support progress at home.

50. Communication through informal channels is excellent. All staff are approachable and parents can receive home visits if they wish. A home-school agreement is in place. Parents see the school as extremely approachable. It is also highly supportive of parents and, indeed whole families. Parents praise the care offered by the school, and appreciate the sensitive handling of issues such as sex education, or the skilled management of transition between classes.

51. The quality of annual reports is good, and parents have a clear picture of what their child is learning. In some classes reports are very good, with crisply detailed comments about pupils. Some reports are more descriptive in style, and are less clear about what pupils can do. Routine

information is provided through attractive regular newsletters, and the prospectus and governors annual report are welcoming, clear, and informative.

52. This is a school that has won the confidence of its parents, stands high in their esteem, and takes every opportunity to involve, inform and work with parents in supporting pupils' learning. This results in parents being able to have the greatest possible impact on their child's progress in school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has brought the school successfully through a challenging period. She provides analytical and clear-sighted vision, unwaveringly focussed on inclusion and achievement for every pupil. All staff have similar commitment to the ideals and aims embodied in the school's practice, and are unstinting and imaginative in their search to enable all pupils to enjoy a high quality of learning experience.

54. The key issues from the last inspection have been systematically and carefully addressed. The current school development plan (SDP) is ambitious but achievable. It challenges the school to make progress across a broad front, and to achieve specific targets. The planning horizon now stretches well beyond the current year. Resources of all kinds are directed towards clearly defined priorities, and are identified within the plan. Often there are specific and challenging targets attached, such as increasing attendance at annual reviews by five percentage points, or achieving inclusive placements for 70 per-cent of pupils. Strategic planning is now very good.

55. The governing body is very well informed through detailed and balanced reporting, closely linked to the objectives of the SDP. It is active and effective in carrying out its duties. Governors are closely involved in the daily life of the school, and share the commitment of the headteacher and staff to achieving the very best for every pupil.

56. Governors are beginning to come and see the work of the school for themselves, during the school day, but these occasions are not yet a formal part of governors' routines. Opportunities to explore and evaluate the work of the school by direct observation are not yet realised sufficiently.

57. The number of teachers and special support assistants is in line those of similar schools, and all staff are well qualified and experienced. The role of subject co-ordinator has been successfully established since last inspection. Induction for the recently appointed deputy headteacher has begun, and she has a clear view of her role within school. Arrangements for professional development are very good, and the school is well placed to move with ease into performance management. Pear Tree School is a strong training ground for staff, (who often move elsewhere to promoted posts), and for local nursing and nursery nurse students. The school is also very well placed to share its considerable pool of expertise with other schools, and has already taken some steps in this direction.

58. Curriculum resources are good in most subjects, satisfactory in the rest, and have been successfully matched to improved schemes of work since the last inspection. Accommodation has also been improved, and further major upgrades are finally moving towards fruition. Staff do their utmost with the space at their disposal and use it well. Although at present, there are too few specialist facilities, the planned improvements will go a long way towards rectifying the situation, and the school is pursuing them as quickly as possible. There are some very good features of the current accommodation, particularly the hydrotherapy pool, the well-equipped sensory room and the sensory garden.

59. Financial management is efficient, allowing the school to husband its resources effectively to address the deficiencies in its accommodation. Good housekeeping procedures are in place, and there is sound financial control. The most recent Local Education Authority financial audit made some minor recommendations: all have been addressed. Administrative staff give extremely effective support to work in classrooms, making good use of information technology. Pupil records for annual reviews are meticulously assembled and kept, giving teaching staff a well-ordered set of information to work with. There is careful accounting for specific grants, and spending is identified through professional development reviews. Such grants are well used to support school objectives.

60. The principles of best value are well applied. The headteacher constantly encourages staff to question and reflect on what they are providing and its impact. The school has been active in considering its role within wider special needs provision, and has put forward well-formulated ideas. Comparisons of pupil progress with other similar schools are at an early stage, but the headteacher has been at the forefront of developing the means to do this.

61. It is not easy to make direct cost comparisons with other schools, due to lack of data, but there is evaluation of how much services cost, and whether they provide value for money. Procedures for competitive quotes and tenders are in place. Effective use of resources is promoted by such mechanisms as subject leaders bidding for funds for their subject.

62. There is good consultation with parents, for example on the home-school agreement, where a sample of questionnaire replies taken across the key stages showed a good return rate. The school will also consult parents on specific needs, such as the format of the parent support group. Now that building plans are advanced, the school intends to invite parental comments on this major area of expenditure.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. There are no major issues to address

Minor issues for development:

64. *In order to further enhance very good provision overall, the following minor points should be considered by the staff and governors :*

- Raise cultural awareness about the full range of ethnic diversity, so that pupils are better prepared for life in contemporary Britain.
- Ensure consistency of approach in the reporting of progress in annual reports and records of achievement in subjects to match that in English, mathematics and science.
- Provide structured opportunities for governors to see and evaluate the work of the school for themselves.
- Raise the attainment in information and communications technology to match that in other areas of the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed.	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils.	90

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15	52	30	3	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	61
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

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

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	per-cent
School data	8.3

Unauthorised absence

	per-cent
School data	0

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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	60
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YN – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.6:1
Average class size	8

Education support staff:

YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	501

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	674200.00
Total expenditure	655482.00
Expenditure per pupil	10925.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	133473.00
Balance carried forward to next year	152191.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	61
Number of questionnaires returned	19

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84.0	16.0	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68.0	26.0	5.0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	68.0	32.0	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	73.0	20.0	0	0	7.0
The teaching is good.	79.0	21.0	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	84.0	16.0	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89.0	11.0	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83.0	17.0	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	84.0	16.0	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	89.0	11.0	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	82.0	12.0	6.0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68.0	26.0	0	0	5.0

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

ENGLISH

65. Pupils of all ages make good progress overall in English. Throughout the school pupils of all levels of attainment make very good progress in speaking and listening skills. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress in reading. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in reading. Attainment is what would be expected in relation to pupils' abilities in writing and recording work. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Some pupils are working at National Curriculum Level 3 in speaking and listening; at Level 2 in reading; and at Level 1 in writing. The progress made by pupils, against targets set by their teachers, is good and sometimes very good in relation to prior attainments.

66. By the time they are seven, most pupils sit and listen to stories in class and in assembly. They respond with enthusiasm and some are beginning to talk to each other and to the staff. Some non-verbal pupils use aids or signing to do so. Some pupils hold a pencil and make marks. Pupils are becoming familiar with their favourite books. Good use is made of pupil's interests, and efforts are made to introduce new and different activities and texts such as the big book '*City Storm*', where the pupils are animated through the visual and oral stimulation, and role-play activities.

67. By the age of 11, many pupils are keen to communicate. Some use language in the form of odd words and short recognisable sentences. Many copy over an adult's writing, and some copy from letters and words written on a page. Most look at books and are interested in the pictures, with some recognising a few letters and words. They express their own views by completing book reviews, sometimes with help.

68. By the age of 14, some pupils are keen to join in discussion. They make progress in the formation of letters and letter sounds. Some are beginning to learn strategies to become more independent in writing. Some pupils have reading books that they read with assistance. During their weekly poetry sessions they enjoy the rhyming couplets, especially from the "noisy" poems!

69. By the age of 16, most pupils listen for significant periods and take in information. Many read a significant number of useful words that they would find in everyday life. Some understand and follow on screen instructions for a computer activity. They enjoy listening to tapes, such as '*Winnie's Winter Magic*'. Some write simple words and short sentences. Using home made materials, lower attaining pupils respond to the different textures, looking and feeling, showing clear preferences for the furry coats.

70. By the time they leave school, students have sound keyboard skills in relation to their abilities. Higher attaining pupils use dictionaries to find and match words, without using pictures as prompts. They write simple words and sentences, becoming increasingly independent. They enjoy listening to and reading stories and poems.

71. Learning is very good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good throughout the school. They are often excellent. Pupils are happy and settled in lessons. They work hard for significant periods of time, co-operate very well and take turns, and listen to stories with enthusiasm. Pupils with complex difficulties are fully involved in all lessons and show good awareness of others.

72. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is very good and often excellent. Expectations of pupils are high. Teaching is very well planned, has clear aims and is appropriate for the age and abilities of all pupils. Lesson time is used well and a good variety of activities are provided. All staff are involved in the teaching. Distractions are minimised. Several staff have very good signing skills and use these effectively. They know pupils well and their management of pupils' behaviour is very good. Resources are imaginatively chosen and well used. The multi-sensory resources that they make are creative and useful. Teachers are skilled in presenting the work done by pupils. They are careful to share with pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. They also place a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' listening and speaking skills in all other subjects of the curriculum. Above all, teachers work exceptionally well with the many support assistants who offer much, working in complete harmony with teachers and pupils.

73. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced successfully. Teacher's planning is usually scrupulous in matching the strategy to the needs of all pupils. Many lessons have a clear literacy focus. Teachers are adept at adapting their work to the specific needs of both the lower and the higher attaining pupils. Additionally, targets set in pupils' individual education plans invariably give explicit attention to communication issues, principally listening, and speaking skills. Reading and writing are also addressed at the appropriate stages.

74. The subject is led well, with a clear implementation of the subject policy throughout the school. This brings cohesion to the work done by all the teachers. Information and communications technology (ICT) is well used by teachers. It is helping them to effectively relate what pupils achieve to the targets in their individual education and care plans, as well as to parents and carers. Teachers also benefit from the advice they get from visiting professionals - in particular the team of speech and language therapists - and they are quick to use and adapt new ideas. Resources are satisfactory, including in the library, but storage is a problem. The mobile library service is well used to supplement the school's resources. Overall, good progress has been made in widening the curriculum since the last inspection. Poetry is now a significant feature of teaching, as is the development of pupils' self-expression and personal writing. Additionally, teachers use a number of reading books, no longer dependent on one reading scheme. The learning that takes place in English is significant in contributing to the quality of communications throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

75. Achievement in mathematics at all key stages is good in relation to pupils' ages and abilities. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and at all stages are shown how to apply what they know to everyday living. This enhances the quality and the relevance of learning. It also enables pupils to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. By the time pupils leave the school they have, supported by their teachers, practised the use of number in familiar situations many times. This has increased the likelihood of leading an independent life. Achievement is more consistent than it was at the previous inspection.

76. By the age of seven, most pupils count to five and back to zero. They use number rhymes such as the *Speckled Frogs* to help them. In one class, number work is effectively taught through the tranquil atmosphere of aromatherapy. Pupils recognise and name numbers and make good progress in writing them. They recognise simple shapes and indicate which is a circle or square. Pupils look at a set of objects and indicate how many there are. They make and wear triangular hats, counting the corners and the sides. Pupils distinguish between light and heavy and use simple scales to show the difference.

77. By the age of 11, pupils extend their knowledge of number to include a chart to illustrate the number of pupils in the class. They recognise and name coins, for example, 1p and 5p, and begin to understand how money is used to make purchases. Pupils sing *Ten Green Bottles* to confirm and extend their knowledge of number and shape. They walk on paving stones numbered 1 to 5 and match numbers and shapes on the classroom computer. Pupils roll dice and are encouraged to count the spots and call the numbers. At morning break, pupils count the biscuits and make sure that all have an equal share. Pupils become more familiar with 2D shapes and complete the unfinished shapes of a triangle and rectangle.

78. By the age of 14, pupils confidently count to 20, matching the name to the numerals. They fold paper to explore the symmetry of regular shapes. Pupils with the greatest needs experience the shape of letters by feel and colour. Pupils roll dice and illustrate the results on a bar chart. They respond confidently to the question, how many? They add and subtract one from numbers between 1 and 20. Two pupils count in twos from 2 to 20. Pupils experiment with capacity, pouring sand and water from one container to another. Higher attaining pupils write the word *litre* and take great delight in finding the word on a carton in the fridge.

79. By the age of 16, pupils count to 50 in fives, some using their hands and feet to help them. They recognise a range of three-dimensional shapes, from the *cube* to the *sphere* and, to add emphasis, the teacher has provided a *cone*: a party popper that explodes when the string is pulled! Pupils gather round the table and accurately group similar shapes. They draw the net of a cube, which they later construct in card and paper. Pupils conduct a simple experiment to assess the rate of evaporation and illustrate their conclusions on a bar chart.

80. At Post 16, pupils put their number knowledge to a practical test when they travel to the local café for a cup of coffee or a glass of orange. They order their drinks independently and are encouraged to check the change. On return to the classroom they discuss and record the details of

the experience. Pupils extend their knowledge of money by deciding how to pay for items on a menu.

81. Pupils are learning how to use number in other areas of the curriculum. In music, they use it to sing action songs and to beat time. The school band has a pupil guest conductor. In information technology, pupils use programs for addition and subtraction and matching numbers to objects. In art, pupils use their knowledge of shape to draw patterns and in history, counting skills enable pupils to answer the question, *how long ago?*

82. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. Teaching is more consistent than it was at the previous inspection. All pupils are taught equally well. Of all the lessons seen, almost seven out of ten were very good or excellent. The rest were good. All lessons have outstanding features. Pupils are expertly managed and individual needs are taken into account when planning the work. This allows pupils to work at-their-own-pace and to make the best possible progress. Lesson planning is meticulous and separate lesson objectives are set for each pupil. This enables pupils to succeed and to build up confidence in their own abilities. All number and shape work is well supported by the skilled use of resources that increase the visual and tactile experiences for the pupils and enhance learning. For example, pupils with complex needs are encouraged to feel around the perimeter of a number. They are encouraged to complete puzzles matching number to shape. Learning is very good and pupils work very hard, enjoy activities and concentrate for significant periods. They know what they have to do to succeed and their basic skills are increasingly good.

83. Relationships are uniformly excellent. Teachers are compassionate but not sentimental. They have a total commitment to the welfare and progress of each child. They are generous in praise and encouragement and instinctively know when it is right to be firm in matters of behaviour. Expectations are high and this increases the motivation and the confidence of the pupils. Pupils' work and progress is regularly assessed and teachers know the level of understanding of each pupil. Assessment is much more consistent than at the previous inspection.

84. The mathematics department is very well managed and organised. There is complete unity of purpose and a tangible will to succeed. The National Numeracy Strategy has been very successfully introduced and forms the backbone to the scheme of work. Teachers share ideas and good practice and this has very significant impact upon learning. Information technology is well used to support learning although new programs are being sought. While individual needs are well provided for, the occasional grouping of higher attaining pupils for extra numeracy lessons would be beneficial. The school is keenly interested in external accreditation which, when existing plans are implemented, will broaden the curriculum still further and provide an additional spur to the progress of senior pupils.

SCIENCE

85. Achievement in science is good throughout the school. Pupils of all abilities make good progress over time through a well-planned scheme of work. This gives them good experiences and learning opportunities across the four areas of science. Where Key Stage 1 pupils are taught by a

teacher with mainstream experience, higher attaining pupils are making excellent progress and reach standards only just below what is expected for their age. This represents good progress in the subject since the last inspection.

86. All the youngest pupils begin to explore and compare the properties of different materials, encouraged by the selection of interesting and contrasting objects, such as a house brick and a furry teddy. Some can say which is hard and which is soft. By the age of seven, higher attaining pupils have a good vocabulary to describe parts of plants and understand simple conditions for growth. Pupils who need high levels of support experience a similar programme of activities: this is used appropriately to develop individual skills, such as communication and mobility. By the age of 11, pupils know that babies grow into children and then into adults. They continue to develop their vocabulary, learning to describe animals and plants around them. Pupils with high support needs learn about forces in their sensory lesson, enjoying gentle pushes and pulls during massage and relaxation.

87. By the age of 14, pupils experiment with magnets and make sensible predictions about what will and will not be attracted. They learn about the earth in space, and they learn words connected with planets, light and shadow, day and night. By the age of 16, they understand that animals can be subdivided into groups and species. They are able to classify them using criteria such as '*covered in fur, have live babies*', '*lives in water – has fins*'. Pupils are well motivated in these activities by exciting resources, such as live animals and birds borrowed from the local pet shop. Pupils in the further education department do not have a formal programme of science, but topics such as healthy eating and growth are covered as part of their work in other subjects.

88. The quality of teaching is good with some very good and excellent lessons seen during the inspection. In the best lessons there is a shared excitement in learning and finding out. Information and communications technology is used very well and in a variety of ways, such as illustrating growth with a multimedia resource or giving pupils a yes / no switch to demonstrate their understanding. All lessons are well planned, with activities based on good knowledge of the scheme of work and of individual pupils. Hence, pupils are challenged and have opportunities to develop skills and concepts appropriately. Teachers clearly enjoy finding interesting and imaginative resources and new ways of presenting ideas to pupils: through song, photographs and first-hand sensory experience, for example. Activities relate directly to things that pupils are familiar with. This helps them practice and use new skills. Learning is also good: pupils concentrate for extended periods, understand the routine of the lessons and what they have to do and, consequently, behave appropriately.

89. The management of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator has taken it on with enthusiasm, developing connections and knowledge. She has a clear vision of how to develop the subject and works closely with colleagues. This results in knowledge and expertise being shared effectively. The recent scheme provides a broad, rich experience of science for all pupils. Setting for science lessons is also helping teachers give more emphasis to concepts at an appropriate level for all pupils. Monitoring of teaching and planning is part of regular practice and has a very positive impact on provision. There are good day-to-day records of what pupils know and can do, and records of achievement are helpful and detailed. However, there is not yet a whole-school system for tracking the progress of pupils as they move through the school.

90. Learning resources are satisfactory, well organised and accessible. The very good collaborative approach to working in the school ensures that resources are well looked after. Each time a topic is taught, material, such as a new video or worksheet, or idea for a visit is added to the box. There is no specialist science area which somewhat limits the syllabus for the older pupils, although the creative and enthusiastic use of what is currently available compensates effectively.

ART

91. Due to timetable arrangements, and the modular approach to the teaching of art in some classes, only three lessons of art were observed. There were only a limited number of examples of pupils' art work available for scrutiny. In the lessons that were observed, achievement was good, and pupils made good progress.

92. By age seven, pupils explore a range of materials and techniques. They use their fingers for painting and know how to create print patterns. They learn to paint using broad bristled brushes. They show progress in combining techniques to create patterns, such as painting and dripping paint from a brush. By age 11, pupils consolidate and extend their skills. They paint with brushes in the style of *Mondrian*. Using computers they experiment with a range of paint programs. Pupils enjoy visits to art galleries and study the work of local artists.

93. By age 14, pupils extend their work on three-dimensional sculpture, make tiles, use textiles, print, and create large-scale collages. By age 16, pupils extend their knowledge of sculptures and artists such as *Claus Oldenburg* and *Seurat*, use clay to make coil pots, demonstrate an ability to select and use different tools with which to paint, and make prints. They practice their printing and drawing skills using a sketch book.

94. At Post 16, students use their artistic skills as part of mini-enterprise activities to make Christmas cards and decorated plant pots for sale. The products they create are of a very good quality and much in demand. They extend their art work by creating images in response to stimuli such as stories of *Dracula*.

95. The quality of teaching in art is good. Of the three lessons observed, one was very good and two were good. Teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of all pupils. They encourage pupils to make choices and to offer ideas in selecting colours and techniques. Teachers use support staff, resources and time effectively to sustain pupils' learning and progress. Learning is also good, and pupils concentrate well and know the safety rules they have to follow when using dangerous equipment.

96. Since the last inspection the scheme of work has been completed and teachers' planning includes learning objectives. Teachers record individual pupil progress after each lesson and use this to help them plan the next session. Pupils' progress in art is reported annually to parents. As yet these reports do not consistently report what pupils know, can do and understand in art. Leadership is satisfactory, but awaits the appointment of a subject co-ordinator: the former post-holder has left the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Standards of achievement in design and technology are above those in similar schools. Pupils make good progress in both design and making skills as they participate in an interesting and broad programme of activities.

98. By the time that they are seven, almost all pupils show that they are aware of various materials by the way that they explore changes in texture. They play with toys in different ways. For example, developing their knowledge of the way that wheeled toys roll and how bricks stack. Some pupils begin to use conventional classroom equipment independently, such as scissors and glue, and learn about different ways of fixing things together. They all enjoy food technology lessons, experimenting and developing their own tastes and preferences. By the time that they are 11 they also use tools such as glue guns and saws, and are learning to take more care with their work. They draw pictures to show what they are going to make. They work successfully with a range of materials including food, textiles, wood, card and plastic.

99. By the time that they are 14 they make a variety of models with moving parts, becoming aware of ways of creating motion such as axles and pneumatics. They learn more about finishing techniques – such as different ways of decorating puppets. They become more accurate when measuring and marking out materials. Some independently cut wood with a saw to the correct length: when making the sub-structure for a wooden vehicle, for example. In food technology, they prepare a variety of meals and snacks. In particular they enjoy religious festivals and European days when they make food from different countries and cultures. By the time that they leave school they apply their craft skills to work in mini-enterprise projects, such as making Christmas cards and wall hangings. They experience a variety of activities at college that range from aspects of interior decorating to bricklaying.

100. Teaching is very good. Specialist teaching has been particularly effective in raising standards. There are high expectations of what pupils will achieve and all adults work together to help pupils to attain these standards. Creative use is made of talking switches and switch operated equipment in order to include pupils with high support needs in activities – developing their concepts and skills too at an appropriate level. Behaviour, safety and personal hygiene are very well managed so that pupils work with real tools and materials to create good quality products. Very good lesson planning skilfully ensures that work builds on what has gone before. Key skills to be covered are identified at each stage in the good scheme of work. This uses photographs of pupils and their work to show teachers how they might approach an activity. Time is very well used so that pupils have opportunities to practice their developing skills. A good balance is struck between teaching theory, such as the names and appropriate selection of tools, and practical work. Very good cross-curricular links are made so that pupils work with textiles when they do a science experiment about curtains and make puppets to help them work on their communication skills. Day-to-day recording is very good and is used well to plan and adapt lessons.

101. Learning is also very good. Pupils enjoy design and technology. They work hard and concentrate well on what they are doing. They watch what other people are doing and learn by

example. They are sensible with real tools and work safely. They manage their own workspace and are very helpful when it is time to tidy up.

102. Management is very good and this is reflected in the very good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. There are already plans to develop whole-school methods for tracking the progress that pupils make in a more systematic way. The school has very good links with local mainstream primary and secondary schools. These have been used to help develop provision, in terms of the curriculum and to help raise teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements still further. These links have also led to very good, regular opportunities for pupils to work alongside mainstream peers. The co-ordinator also has developed good connections with the local community, which has led to the donation of resources to the school by local businesses.

GEOGRAPHY

103. Achievement in geography is satisfactory for pupils of all ages. Pupils have a broad range of learning experiences as they move through each key stage.

104. Teaching and learning is good overall. All pupils develop an awareness of their local environment by visits out of school with teachers and special support assistants. For example, younger pupils study the patterns of the weather, enjoy a 'rainy weather' experience, and visit shopping and market areas. They develop an understanding of the effects of hot and cold weather, by observing, and suggesting, appropriate clothes. Visits, to places of interest, are recorded in photographs and these have captions so that pupils can later recall what they have seen. Pupils recognise the different signs and symbols about weather. They note the changing of the seasons. They link their work with art, as when making 'splash rain' pictures. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully involved in lessons: each has a turn at touching things. Teachers and special support assistants work very well together to ensure that all pupils are well cared for. Pupils enjoy the subject because they fully participate in all the different activities.

105. By the age of 16, pupils explore a number of artefacts from Japan, including clothing and food. They know the types of games Japanese children play, and recognise everyday Japanese items such as watches with their flower adornments. They note how they differ from European ones. They use maps to find out where Japan is and they meet a Japanese person.

106. Management is good and planning for the subject has been reviewed: schemes of work have been revised and improved since the last inspection. Assessment is good, and the progress each pupil makes is easily tracked over time. Teachers pay attention to detail and ensure that pupils' skills in speaking and listening are well developed. The time given to the teaching of geography is now adequate, but resources although satisfactory, are still limited.

HISTORY

107. Due to the modular approach to the subject, it was only possible to see two lessons. Analysis of pupils work, scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' records of achievement, annual reports, wall displays, and video tapes of special events, all point to high quality provision in history across the school. There have been very significant improvements since the last report: in pupils' achievements, which are now very good, and particularly in teaching. This is very good overall and often has excellent features.

108. At each key stage, pupils are achieving very well and making very good progress over time. In one of the lessons, teaching was excellent and in the other it was good. In both lessons, teachers' planning was excellent. Both lessons had well thought out learning objectives for each pupil, links to previous learning and to individual education plan targets. Assessment of pupils' progress had clear statements of what pupils could do. In the excellent lesson, the preparation and organisation was simply outstanding. In both lessons, the enthusiasm of the teacher for the subject and the close work with special support assistants, stimulated interest. Together with the creative use of resource materials, this captured pupils' imaginations. Consequently, learning was very good. Pupils concentrated for long periods and attitude and behaviour were very good. Teachers offered pupils a variety of practical experiences to reinforce their learning and sensory experiences: these included watching a video tape, handling and making artefacts, and recording what they had seen or discussed - through writing or through drawing pictures. Pupils understood the differences between present day methods of transport and those of earlier times. They saw, touched and smelled a car wheel and tyre and compared this with a cart wheel, or felt the leather of an old horses' bridle. Higher attaining pupils remembered the names for these objects and teachers checked their understanding by the skilful use of questioning. Special support assistants encouraged the use of language, for example, by the use of language boards. Lower attaining pupils shared the sensory experience of touching and smelling, of texture and colour in the artefacts presented.

109. Analysis of work, photographs, and videotapes of school events show that pupils learn a great deal from very practical activities. There are many visits to museums and the local history of Kirkham is explored thoroughly. During the summer term, the whole school takes part in '*living history lessons*' in which particular themes are explored and presented through drama, art displays, and dressing up in period costumes by pupils and staff. In this way pupils learn. For example, from a poem about '*Olaf the Viking*' they act and dress up as Vikings. They write their names in Viking runes, know the difference between their gods, and write and draw about a Viking long ship. There is good management by the subject leader whose own tremendous enthusiasm inspires other teachers. She monitors regularly to ensure quality of teaching and a consistent approach to the curriculum. The range of satisfactory resources in school is augmented through the very good use of the local authority library services, particularly for books and artefacts. Staff are also particularly inventive in creating their own resources. The scheme of work is satisfactory, as is the time allocation for the subject.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Achievement and progress in information and communications technology (ICT) are at least satisfactory throughout the school. Progress for pupils with the most complex needs is good, due to careful attention to individual needs and the imaginative development of switch activities that help pupils to communicate and gain access to subject materials.

111. By age 11, many pupils have good mouse skills and have their favourite programs. They are proficient with programs that support work in numeracy and literacy, and they use simple art programs. Pupils use the keyboard editing keys to correct their work. One pupil followed the teacher's instructions to print his work, then, with great delight, consolidated this learning by printing another copy quickly while she wasn't looking! Pupils use multimedia software to support work in other subjects. In science, a CD ROM program helps them to understand what a seed needs in order to grow. Some lower attaining pupils successfully use switches to join in activities, for example in music, by singing choruses through having a pre-recording. All pupils learn that there are different ways of making things happen on a computer, and change from using switches to a *touch screen* without difficulty.

112. By the time that they leave school the highest attaining pupils are familiar with a *Windows* program and use the basic facilities of a word processor, making good use of symbol software. They enjoy art programs, editing and improving their pictures as they work. They use a programmable robot and make it move in a straight line to knock over pictures of their favourite teachers, and increase their ability to estimate distance. A number of pupils use digital cameras and tape recorders confidently, and become aware of other technology around them. However, several of the oldest and highest attaining pupils still need encouragement and help to complete many of these activities successfully. Pupils with complex needs understand that they create effects by their own efforts. They use switches to operate electric gadgets: electric scissors and food mixers, for example.

113. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good and very good teaching seen during the inspection. There is great variety in each teacher's confidence and knowledge of computers. In the best lessons, interesting activities lead to pupils' great excitement in the outcomes, for example, when pupils use digital cameras. This motivates pupils and helps them remember what they have done. Teachers take time to help pupils understand what they are doing, for example, when making the link between what they have produced on the screen and the resulting work printed out. The feedback that adults give makes pupils aware of what they have learned, and how well they have done. Many members of staff are expert at positioning less mobile pupils, and ensuring that they are able to work comfortably. In a few lessons, pupils have limited opportunities to practice what they are being taught and expectations of what they can achieve are not sufficiently high.

114. Learning is satisfactory. Pupils clearly enjoy using computers and behave responsibly with expensive equipment. Many pupils, who have difficulty behaving in other situations, focus happily for long periods and occupy themselves constructively when on a computer. For younger pupils it often gives a very good focus for discussion and the development of communication: they are eager to share what they have done with other people, and they learn to share and take their turn when working on a favourite program with a friend.

115. Management is satisfactory but there is still more to be done. This is identified in the school development plan. ICT is used effectively across the school to foster inclusion of the pupils with the highest support needs. Some documentation is in place, but the scheme of work is embryonic and does not yet give teachers sufficient detail to ensure that work builds on what has gone before. Some teachers have developed their own ways of tracking pupil progress, but there is not yet a whole school system for this.

116. The development of hardware and software resources and good use of technical support has led to satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection. There is a shared commitment by all staff to improve their ICT skills. Teachers are making good use of digital photography, symbol software and word processors for their own work and for developing learning materials. There are advanced plans for staff training under National Grid for Learning funding.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

117. French was not taught during the last inspection and no written evidence of the work done was available. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements on the standards achieved or progress made. Provision has improved since then. Discussion with teachers and analysis of planning documents, videos of earlier lessons and pupils' work, indicate that all pupils are making satisfactory progress and the provision is of value socially and culturally, and offers some preparation for pupils' life experiences.

118. Pupils in the statutory age range (11 to 14 years) are taught French on a weekly basis. Additionally most pupils between the ages 14 to 16 are taught French, also on a weekly basis. All pupils between 11 and 16 are able to access French experiences, through for example, the French experience in the summer term 2000. Some visit France with the school.

119. Higher attaining pupils are able to exchange greetings: '*bonjour*' and '*au revoir*'. They know the vocabulary for many colours. They know about some French food, and are able to recognise the French national flag, contrasting it to the British flag. They compare pictures of life in France, for example, sporting activities, with pictures of life in England. Lower attaining pupils taste French food and touch and feel artefacts.

120. The school has formally evaluated provision in the subject. The planning covers a broad range of areas, giving an appropriate experience of the language and life in France. There is satisfactory use of computers to enable the pupils to access the subject and to find information about France and the French. Records of what pupils can do, show that they make satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding over time. The leadership of the subject is good. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MUSIC

121. Achievement in music at all key stages is good in relation to pupils' ages and abilities. Pupils make good progress through the music curriculum and enjoy a wide range of musical experiences. Pupils and staff have a flair for making music and the senior school percussion band is excellent. The music curriculum is strengthened by the high musical content in assembly where pupils sing and join in action songs with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. The school's *Millennium Song*, composed especially for the school by the bursar, and a parent of a past pupil, was a highlight of the inspection week and demonstrated the commitment to music for all. Achievement in music is more consistent than at the previous inspection.

122. By the age of seven, pupils exchange greetings in song. They clap a simple rhythm and stamp their feet to the beat of the music. They whistle and sing in tune. Pupils know the difference between long and short sounds and improvise their own sounds. They pass instruments around the group and note the different sounds made by bells and castanets. Pupils listen to the music of a train and each pupil makes a unique contribution to the sound effects as they march around the room.

123. By the age of 11, pupils recognise and name percussion instruments such as the tambourine, cymbal and cowbell. Pupils begin to develop an understanding of how different sounds are made and experiment with loud and soft sounds. The teacher walked round the group singing '*Listen, listen, here I come, someone special gets the drum*'. Pupils took it in turn to play. They were given a chance to handle a guitar and to pluck the strings. Some pupils had made a guitar from cardboard and elastic bands and were eager to demonstrate the sounds it makes. Pupils listened well to classical music, such as *The Hall of the Mountain King* and were clearly affected by its rhythms and moods.

124. By the age of 14, pupils are becoming expert in clapping the beat: *1,2,3,4, someone's knocking at my door!* They clap their own names and show an understanding of long and short notes. Pupils practised making sounds individually and then put them together in an illustration of *sounds from space*. The result was a cacophony of sound that all pupils enjoyed immensely. By contrast, they listened and taped out the time to a big band version of *Little Brown Jug*.

125. By the age of 16, pupils recognise and name the saxophone, trumpet and trombone, piano and double bass. They identified the instruments correctly when listening to *Take the A Train* and they responded well to the jazz rhythms. They examined the trumpet and all managed to make a sound. One pupil played a good range of notes. Pupils held the baton in turn and conducted the class percussion band. This lesson ended with rhythmic dancing to *Rock around the Clock*.

126. The quality of teaching is very good and better than at the previous inspection. It has several excellent features. Lessons are planned very well and the abilities of each pupil are taken carefully into account. Each pupil has an individual target so that all may experience a sense of achievement. Pupils are very well managed and are encouraged to take a full part in the lessons. They are invariably praised for their contribution. Lessons are taught at a good pace and include a wide range of musical experiences so that pupils are continually stimulated to join in. Very good use is made of the available resources and excellent emphasis is placed upon making music. Learning is very good and pupils respond very well and clearly enjoy the lessons. Through music they are able to express their feelings and release a high level of physical energy. All adults take a part in the school band in

which all senior pupils play percussion instruments. Together they make a joyful sound and demonstrate the school's sense of community.

127. A part-time teacher, who is a skilled musician and enthusiast, ably leads the music department. She is well supported by her colleagues and together they ensure that music is a strength of the school. Since the previous inspection, a scheme of work has been established that provides for a good variety in musical styles. Assessment of pupils' work has improved but it still being developed. There is no specialist room for music. This sets a limit on what can be achieved, although very good use is made of the existing accommodation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. Achievement is good and pupils make very good progress over time at all key stages. The curriculum provides the pupils with a broad range of learning experiences and is particularly strong in the area of swimming. By age seven, pupils learn to move in time to music in '*contact dance*'. Lower attaining pupils move with adult support. Higher attaining pupils learn to control their own movements and, as they gain confidence, become more proficient in imitating the teacher's movements.

129. By age 11, pupils extend skills in dance and learn to send and receive a ball in a variety of ways. In gymnastics, they balance and travel on different parts of the body; demonstrate skills acquired to their peers, and help to put out equipment.

130. By age 16, higher attaining pupils extend their ball skills. They learn to control, send, receive, and move with a ball using a hockey stick. They work co-operatively in pairs. Lower attaining pupils respond to warm up exercises and the rules of turn taking. They roll a ball towards skittles.

131. In swimming, at each key stage and at Post 16, pupils gradually develop high levels of confidence in water and the skills of water safety. They move around in the water, skull, use front crawl, breast-stroke and back stroke, and dive to the bottom of the pool to collect an object. The school sets targets for improvement in swimming and awards its own certificates. In addition, pupils are awarded certificates accredited by the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA). Currently, over one half of the school population has a certificate for some level of water skills, and over one-third have a distance award ranging from five to four hundred metres.

132. The quality of teaching is very good. Of the seven lessons seen, six were very good and one was good. Where teaching is very good, teachers plan carefully with clear learning objectives. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They give clear instructions and a small steps approach to tasks set, with carefully graded challenges. Learning is very good. Pupils rise to these challenges and make good progress over time. Teachers use bubble wrap as a buoyancy support to encourage pupils to adopt a good swimming position. This helps the development of pupil confidence in water. They also make use of the pupils' natural movements in water, gradually developing them into a swimming action. The school hall is too small for physical education. However, staff make very good use of facilities at a local primary school as well as the local

swimming school, the Boys Brigade and the local leisure centre, in addition to the school's own pool. These help to promote pupils' learning.

133. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to share, follow rules, and help others.

134. Since the school was last inspected there has been good improvement in the subject. The quality of teaching has improved, a new subject policy and scheme of work has been introduced. Levels of staff expertise have been enhanced: in particular the training of a special support assistant as a qualified swimming teacher. The subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership and is identifying priorities related to the development of a new school hall. The assessment of the subject is very good. Teachers keep detailed records of pupil progress in each lesson and use these for planning the next session. Pupil annual reports note what pupils know, can do, and understand in the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

135. Achievement at all key stages is good in relation to pupils' ages and abilities. Pupils make good progress over time throughout the school. There is a strong emphasis upon applying what is learnt in religious education to every day life and this is strengthened by the stories read in the daily assembly. Together, religious education lessons and assemblies provide a good basis for moral and social development. Many lessons have stories of Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Pupils also celebrate the various religious festivals and in this way they begin to understand the importance of religion in peoples' lives throughout the world.

136. By the age of seven, pupils have begun to understand that all life has a beginning and an ending. There are classroom photographs that illustrate their early childhood and family life. They are encouraged to develop a sense of self and their uniqueness in the world. New life is dramatically illustrated by the arrival in the classroom of new chicks, which the pupils handle gently.

137. By the age of 11, pupils know to whom we go for help. They know how to value friendship. They have heard the story of the *Good Samaritan*. They sit in a circle and are encouraged to 'pass the parcel'. They learn how to take turns and how to share. As pupils leave and join the group they talk about who is missing. They develop an awareness of others and the importance of friends.

138. By the age of 14, pupils have heard the story of the '*Prodigal Son*' and '*Jonah and The Whale*'. They know about saying sorry and what it means to forgive. Teachers help the pupils to look at situations in which they feel vulnerable or hurt. They model ways in which situations can be changed. The Easter story is used to illustrate loyalty, friendship and betrayal.

139. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 4, as these take place every other half term. Teachers' lesson plans show that pupils continue to study the stories of the Bible - such as Zaccheus and St Paul - and the effect that Jesus had on their lives. Pupils are also encouraged, through role-play and drama, to look at their own attitudes towards other people and to explore ways of changing them. In the Post 16 class, pupils set out and use a sacred area, taking turns to make and hang Hindu mosaic patterns. This lesson promotes a respect for the Hindu faith and emphasises the universal ethic of kindness to others.

140. The teaching in all lessons observed was at least good and in one it was excellent. Pupils are managed very well and great care is taken to ensure that the work set is at the appropriate level. Wherever possible, pupils are given practical experiences that bring the subject alive and help to secure knowledge and understanding. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods to stimulate and retain the pupils' interests. Formal assessment is at an early stage of development although teachers are keenly aware of what pupils know, understand and can do.

141. The subject is sensitively managed and the multi-cultural approach is developing well. There is a good scheme of work: this enables pupils to progress securely through the curriculum. Pupils celebrate festivals such as Harvest and Christingle in local Churches and earn school 'golden opinions awards' for their performance and behaviour.