

INSPECTION REPORT

FOXFIELD SCHOOL

Moreton

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105131

Headteacher: Mr A. Baird

Reporting inspector: Mrs F.D. Gander
21265

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th March 2002

Inspection number:191304

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Douglas Drive Moreton Wirral Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G. Stothard
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21265	Mrs F. Gander	Registered inspector	Post 16	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? How well is the school led and managed?
19342	Mr T. Heavey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16198	Mrs C. Etherington	Team inspector	English Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27429	Mrs M. Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Modern foreign language History	
8056	Mr H. Probert	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education	
2480	Mrs C. Gilder	Team inspector	Design and technology Religious education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
27960	Mrs J. Reed	Team Inspector	Science Art and design Personal, social and health education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Foxfield is a school for pupils and students who have complex learning difficulties, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are a significant number of pupils who, in addition to their severe learning difficulties have challenging behaviour, and therefore the school caters for a wide range of educational needs. There are a few pupils in the school with very challenging and sometimes violent behaviour, who, although the school endeavours to meet their needs, require very specialist provision and support. Pupils come from all areas of Wirral and are between the ages of 11 and 19. Since the last inspection the school has increased its number of places from 90 to 110. There are currently 121 pupils on roll and this number will increase next academic year, with the provision for post-16 students taking up a third of the places. The majority of the pupils in the school are male, and there are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils, in relation to the national average for similar schools, who are entitled to free school meals is very high at 62 per cent, and the socio-economic background of the pupils is overall well below the national average. Building work is presently taking place to provide the additional rooms which was indicated as a priority need in the last inspection. There are a high number of pupils and students who are included on work experience placements, and some pupils are taking part in inclusive educational links with other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school, where because of the overall good teaching, and the high percentage of very good teaching, the majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time students leave school at 19 they are very well prepared for the transition into the adult world. There is a positive ethos that ensures that pupils and students demonstrate very good behaviour and attitudes to school. This is also achieved with those who have the most challenging behaviour through the very good behaviour management techniques used by the majority of staff. The school is functioning under the difficulties of having too many pupils for the space available, a continuing lack of specialist rooms, and the continuing placement of pupils into the school by the Local Education Authority. Through good leadership and management, the school has responded positively to all these difficulties including the instigation of the building project, the training of staff to meet the increasing challenging demands of pupils admitted to the school, and the teaching of the curriculum without specialist rooms. However, because the school does not have any admission's criteria its resources are being stretched to the limit. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides very good educational support and guidance for pupils, and as a result the attitudes, behaviour and relationships pupils have with one another are very good.
- The provision for, and teaching of, post-16 students is very good and prepares them very well for leaving school.
- There is a very high percentage of good teaching and this results in the majority of pupils making good progress.
- The school provides very good care and welfare for all its pupils and students.
- The school provides very good opportunities for extra curricular activities, and these are further enhanced by the very good use it makes of the community and its links with other institutions.
- The partnership the school has developed with parents is very good.

What could be improved

- The accommodation, so that practical subjects can be taught in more specialist facilities, and so that there is adequate space to meet the special needs and increasing number of children.
- The expertise needed by some staff to meet the demands and needs of pupils with the most complex difficulties.
- The opportunities for pupils to become more aware of other cultures.

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. Since then there has been a significant number of new staff, including the headteacher. The school has continued to improve, but not all the key issues from the last inspection have been able to be achieved. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved, as there has been an increase in the percentage of good and very good teaching. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching. There has been an improvement for the provision of art and design. The role of the co-ordinators for developing subjects has been partly improved, but there is still a need for them to share good practice by observing teaching. All statutory requirements are now met. The Governors and the management of the school have addressed the key issue concerning the lack of space in relation to the number of pupils in the school and for teaching specialist subjects by building new accommodation that was intended to provide specialist rooms. However, this intention has not been realised due to the increase in number of pupils and students placed in the school. As a result the school is still in the same position as it was five years ago.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By Year 11	by Year 13
speaking and listening	B	A
Reading	B	A
writing	B	A
mathematics	B	A
personal, social and health education	B	A
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	A

Key	
very good	A
good	B
satisfactory	C
unsatisfactory	D
poor	E

Overall, pupils, in relation to their prior attainment, achieve well in Key Stages 3 and 4, and students at post 16 achieve very well. Due to the good teaching, the majority of pupils make at least good progress in all subjects, except design and technology, geography and information and communication technology where it is satisfactory. In the majority of subjects where teaching is very good, pupils also make very good progress, such as in religious education and in history. The lack of specialist accommodation for design and technology, and for information and communication technology effects the amount of progress pupils can make. Pupils with the greatest difficulties and more complex needs do not achieve as well as they might because in some classes there are too many pupils in relation to their needs. In addition, these pupils require a more specialised teaching environment, additional staff expertise, and the more use of specialised information and

communication technology to ensure that they consistently make good progress. Overall, pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual educational plans, and in personal, social and health education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and eager to take part in activities and show what they have learnt.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is very good and the result of the high expectations that the school has for pupils respecting one another. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact that their actions have on others.
Personal development and relationships	The relationships that pupils have with one another are very good. The higher attaining pupils are tolerant of, and help, pupils who have the greatest difficulties. The very good levels of personal development which pupils achieve by the time they leave school demonstrate the effectiveness of the curriculum.
Attendance	The attendance is very good with no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 - 11	Years 12-14
Quality of teaching	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.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is a high percentage of lessons where the teaching is very good and pupils achieve very well. Very good teaching occurs in all subjects, but consistently in religious education and history, and at post –16. Overall, teaching and learning is good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, physical education, and in personal, social and health education. Across the school communication, numeracy and literacy are also taught very well. Although the teaching of design and technology on the week of the inspection was very good, the lack of specialist accommodation and an imbalanced curriculum undermines this and over time pupils do not learn as well as they should. The teaching of information and communication technology and geography is satisfactory and varies according to the expertise of teachers. Teachers have very high expectations of both achievement and behaviour, and have developed a consistent approach to managing the challenging behaviour of some pupils and students. Teachers know the pupils very well, and as a result plan and organise a range of learning activities and outcomes that match the pupils' differing attainment. This provides well for the wide range of attainment in each class, but across the school, teachers do not assess or record these learning outcomes during lessons. The quality of teaching and learning are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 because there are fewer pupils in this key stage with complex learning needs or very challenging behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is overall very good. However, it is not as good at Key Stage 3 where the school is unable to provide a balanced curriculum due to the inadequate accommodation. The curriculum is very relevant to the needs of all the pupils and students, and through the very good extra curricular experiences and links with the community it ensures that all have experiences outside the classroom. The curriculum for the pupils with the greatest difficulties is good but the number of pupils in these classes curtails the opportunities that can take place. The provision for personal, social and health education is good, and the provision for careers and vocational education at post 16 is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is overall good. Spiritual, moral, and cultural development is promoted well throughout the whole curriculum, while there are very good opportunities for social development. However, the opportunities for pupils and students to develop an awareness of other countries and cultures are too few.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's monitoring of the academic and personal development of pupils is good, and they receive very good support and guidance so that they achieve well in their education and personal development. The school is a very safe and caring environment, where the well being of pupils and students is paramount.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	This is overall very good. The quality of the information the parents receive is good but this information in the pupils' annual report could be more precise in some subjects. Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is good. The management of the school, through the setting of appropriate priorities, has continued to develop and improve the educational provision and to cope with a constantly changing and more difficult school population. Performance management has been used very well to increase the expertise of staff and prepare them to take on new roles and responsibilities. However, co-ordinators do not yet evaluate the quality of teaching in their subjects.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The Governing Body fulfils its responsibilities well, and they are very aware of all the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the lack of admission criteria has allowed more pupils to be placed in the school than it can accommodate. The governors have played an active role in ensuring that the school has continued to develop and improve, and especially in the quest for improved buildings.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation by the management of the school of the quality of teaching, and the standards being achieved have been developed well. The information gathered from this is providing an accurate picture of the quality of the provision. The school compares and contrasts its provision well with other similar schools, and regularly seeks out the views of parents. It applies the principles of best value well.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all its resources, including its staff, its funding and any grants well. The priorities in the school development plan are appropriate, and are securely linked to the overall budget. Management of the budget has been effective and the surplus has been very well used to fund the building of new accommodation. However, because the majority of the funds have had to be generated from the school budget, the project has taken a long time to achieve, and because of the rise in the number of pupils it cannot be used for its intended purpose.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The number of teaching staff is inadequate to meet the range of needs of the pupils. The adequacy of the accommodation for the number of pupils and the curriculum is poor. The school has developed its resources but the range for design and technology remains unsatisfactory, and linked to the poor accommodation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the behaviour of pupils is good. • That the quality of teaching across the school is good. • That the school deals with problems promptly. • That the school expects the pupils to work hard. • That the school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework pupils are given. • The range of activities outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils, in relation to their prior attainment, achieve well in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students at post 16 achieve very well, and through the very appropriate curriculum experiences are well prepared for adulthood. Due to the good teaching, the majority of pupils make at least good progress in all subjects, except design and technology, geography and information and communication technology where it is satisfactory. In the majority of subjects where teaching is very good, pupils also make very good progress, such as in religious education and in history.

2. In English, pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, make good progress in all three areas of English: in speaking and listening, in reading and in writing. The majority of students at Post 16 make very good progress by the time they leave school. Where specialist subject teachers, or those who have particular skills in the development of basic literacy skills, teach, pupils make very good progress. Where pupils are taught by less experienced or non-specialist teachers, pupils make only satisfactory progress. There have been some recent good improvements in the subject through the successful introduction of the national literacy strategy and its structure of lessons. Resources have also been improved, but there has been deterioration in library provision due to the building alterations and a lack of space for teaching. The storage of the library resources on a landing area and in two areas in the staffroom, are inaccessible to many pupils as they are in the upstairs area that is not served by the lift.

3. The achievement and progress that pupils make in mathematics is good overall, and linked to the quality for teaching, and the emphasis that teachers place on it in other subjects, especially in design and technology, and independent living skills. Due to the relevant emphasis on using mathematical skills in everyday situations, students at post 16 make very good progress. Achievements have improved since the last inspection due to better quality planning of the subject across the school. It is now planned in detail to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and this has a positive impact on the pupils' achievements. The work the school has started on implementing the numeracy strategy is providing teachers with a clear structure to lessons. Pupils' achievements in science, and the progress they make, are good and have been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils' interest in learning and developing scientific knowledge is stimulated by practical investigations, and at post-16 students use their knowledge and understanding in everyday situations, such as in horticulture and when on work experience. However, the fact that the school does not have a specialist science room restricts the range of work that can be carried out safely, and this restricts the progress they can make.

4. This lack of specialist accommodation also occurs in design and technology, and has an adverse affect on pupils' achievement and progress, in this subject, as the school is unable to provide a balanced curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 3. This was also identified at the last Inspection. The current building programme will only improve facilities for food preparation, and no teaching base will be available for work in resistant materials. Teachers are restricted to using a small portable workbench and restricted hand tools, transported throughout the building for each lesson. As a result pupils have very limited opportunities to benefit from developing practical skills and working with a range of materials and components. Pupils and students make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology, but are once again hampered by the lack of specialist accommodation for this subject. There has been an improvement in this subject since the last inspection when it was not taught as a discrete subject. Pupils and students achieve well

when using the computer and a variety of applications in other subjects across the curriculum. This is especially evident in the post-16 classes where the majority of students confidently use it to record their ideas and thought when writing letters or diaries of experiences.

5. Achievement and progress in physical education has been improved since the last inspection and are good across the school. All pupils and students have access to the full range of opportunities and in addition they participate in inter-school competitive games and swimming galas. The progress pupils and students make is very well supported by the range of opportunities provided in residential experiences and daily lunchtime club activities, and include opportunities that develop social and personal skills. These contribute well to the personal, social and health education programme, which is taught in discrete lessons, but also permeates other areas of the curriculum, and in which they make good progress.

6. Pupils' achievements and the progress they make are satisfactory in art, geography and music. Achievement in French is also satisfactory but on the week of the inspection the same lesson was taught to all classes, regardless of pupils' levels of attainment and while it was effective for the lower attaining pupils who made good progress, it lacked challenge for higher attaining pupils who did not achieve as well as they should.

7. The achievements and progress of pupils and students with the greatest difficulties and more complex needs is a balance of strengths - in the quality of provision made for many individual pupils -and weaknesses – in the school's capacity, accommodation or resources – to support some of these pupils effectively. They do not achieve as well as they might because in some classes there are too many pupils in relation to their needs. In addition, these pupils require a more specialised teaching environment and additional staff expertise. The targets set in individual educational plans are precise and relevant to pupils' needs, both personally and educationally, and they make good progress towards them. Students at post-16 make very good progress, due to the in depth knowledge of staff and the support and guidance they receive. Pupils who are taking part in inclusive experiences at other schools and colleges are monitored well to ensure that the experiences are meaningful and support their learning as well as their personal and social development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' and students' very positive attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships make a substantial contribution to their education, and are one of the school's major strengths. The parents, who attended the meeting with inspectors, and those responding to the questionnaire, unanimously support the team's judgement that their children like coming to school. Many pupils and students show great enthusiasm for school as they make their way to their classrooms in a morning, greeting their friends and school staff as they arrive. This enthusiasm is also reflected in the very good attendance record, and ensuring, that with the support and cooperation of their carers, they make maximum gains from their educational opportunities. Such positive attitudes are also seen in lessons where the majority of pupils and students concentrate well and become deeply involved in the activity, such as in the horticulture sessions taken by a visiting lecturer with post 16 students, and in which they take great pride in their finished displays. Pupils with the greatest learning difficulties show excitement and positive responses to activities, such as work in the sensory room, and especially when they are working with an adult. However, this sustained concentration and response only takes place when pupils and students are in small groups with a high level of support. Where the sessions have more than six pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in them, pupils are not always engaged in activities because they have to wait for someone to work with them. This situation, over a period of time, has a negative impact on their progress.

9. The behaviour of pupils and students is very good. This is due to their enthusiasm for the activities and the work covered in lessons, the relationships that they have with adults in the school, and the expectations set by the school. For example, pupils who are included for some lessons in a mainstream school demonstrated that their very good behaviour made them stand out from the other pupils in their classroom, and helped to enhance their learning experience. Pupils respond readily to instructions from staff, work hard at their tasks, and help one another when in difficulty. They show high levels of tolerance and understanding for those who have outbursts of challenging behaviour. This very good behaviour extends to the playground, the dining hall and communal areas of the school where the good order and politeness create a warm and friendly atmosphere conducive to learning. There have been no exclusions. Pupils and students who have the most challenging behaviour are, by the very nature of their difficulties, sometimes unpredictable and can cause harm to staff and themselves. However, there is evidence that over time the number of incidents reduce as the school responds to these needs and puts into place behaviour management strategies.

10. The relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils' and students' respect for one another is evident around the school and is modelled by adults working with them. There is a warm and friendly atmosphere in the school, and especially in the post-16 classes where students take an interest in each other's work. The majority of pupils and students feel secure, have firm friendships within their class groups, and show care and empathy for those who have the most difficulties. For example, during an extra curricular indoor football session, pupils gave opportunities for those who were included as spectators to throw the ball in from the sideline. Pupils and students share and celebrate their successes with spontaneity; for example, in work experience students congratulated their friends on the completion of a project.

11. Pupils and students achieve very good levels of personal development by the time they leave the school at the age of 19, and this is the result of a relevant, balanced and effective curriculum that gives equal regard to the education in life skills and the academic progress of pupils and students. Pupils and students show great pride and eagerness in accepting responsibilities, such as stacking chairs in the hall after assembly, taking completed registers back to the office, or clearing away utensils after lunch. Students take great pride and demonstrate a mature attitude towards their work experience placements. They also show good manners and self-discipline. For example, at meal times pupils show that they have acquired social graces and politely wait for all pupils to be served before they start their meal. They greet one another and visitors politely, hold open a door for adults, and remember to say thank you.

12. The very good attendance of 94 per cent with no unauthorised absence, shows an improvement since the last Inspection, and gives pupils increased access to the curriculum. It reflects the efforts of parents in ensuring that their children attend regularly and punctually, and of the school in setting such high expectations with regard to attendance. The registration process at both morning and afternoon sessions now complies fully with legal requirements, and there is an orderly transition between activities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is very good, teachers have very high expectations of both achievement and behaviour, and have developed a consistent approach to managing the challenging behaviour of some pupils and students. Teachers know the pupils and students very well, and plan and organise a range of learning activities and outcomes that match the pupils' differing levels of attainment. Learning support assistants are used well to enable pupils to learn and information and communications technology plays a part in the activities. In the best lessons teachers are enthusiastic, there is a well-planned and lively start. Learning is reinforced at the end of the lesson by a summing up session where pupils are praised and rewarded for their efforts. In religious education the teaching was excellent in over half of the lessons seen. Here teachers work closely with learning support assistants, show very good knowledge of pupils' learning styles and support needs, and there is excellent management of individuals and group learning. All teachers use questioning well and their explanations and answers to pupils are easy to understand and helps pupils learn. Teachers' personal enthusiasm and commitment to the subject is evident and infectious, and pupils are often disappointed when lessons finish.

14. The quality of teaching and learning is better in some Key Stage 4 and post 16 classes than in some Key Stage 3 classes and this is connected to the number of pupils in this key stage with complex learning needs or very challenging behaviour and who need very specialist teaching strategies. Not all teachers have the depth of knowledge or expertise required to manage the learning activities especially in the classes where there are too many pupils or students. However, there is some very sensitive and skilled teaching by a number of staff who work with pupils with complex needs and multi-sensory impairments and this enables them to make good progress. Effective use is made of information and communication technology support for their learning and communication, but additional equipment to provide a more explicitly sensory environment for learning in each class base would be of benefit for these pupils. A feature of all lessons was the way the learning support assistants enable pupils to learn, are very good at helping teachers to calm some pupils and work with them closely on their behaviour as well as with their work. This is seen in science when pupils work in small groups on investigation activities.

15. Although the teaching of design and technology on the week of the inspection was very good, the difficulties with the accommodation does not allow all aspects of the subject to be taught and therefore overtime the pupils do not learn as well as they should. There is very good teaching by non-specialist teachers. Care is taken to match the activity to pupils' abilities, skills and understanding and as a result, pupils are engaged, attentive and contribute well. There is excellent management of individual pupils and of group activities, notably under very difficult circumstances for pupils with severely challenging behaviour. The pupils, of all attainment levels, were hypothesising, experimenting, drawing conclusions and then testing and debating them. Throughout, they were developing their use of mathematics, understanding of science, and developing their literacy skills.

16. In the less effective, but satisfactory lessons, there was less focus upon the pupils' individual targets in the planning, the tasks had not been adjusted to take in account of differing levels of attainment of pupils, and information and communication technology was not used to support the learning. The main area for development in teaching is the practice of recording pupils' responses to activities, tasks or questioning so that the evidence can be used as assessment information and informs planning.

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

17. It is difficult to gauge exactly how much improvement has been made since the last inspection as no definite judgements were given in the previous report. However, from the description of the situation at the time of the last inspection, it is clear that there have been many improvements in the curriculum provided by the school, and in the quality and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils and students, which is now very good overall. It is good at Key Stage 3, and very good at Key Stage 4 and for students at Post-16. Within this, there are many strengths, including the provision that the school makes for extra-curricular activities, with excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in residential activities, and the very good contribution the community makes to pupils' learning and very good relationships with partner institutions. However, there are also some areas where the school is not as effective in the provision offered to pupils, including the balance of the curriculum at Key Stage 3, which is just satisfactory, and the equality of access and opportunity, which has an adverse impact on certain groups of pupils.

18. At Key Stage 3, there are many factors affecting the curriculum that the school provides. The curriculum had good breadth, and religious education and all subjects of the National Curriculum, including art, missing at the time of the last inspection, are now in place. Pupils have access to an independent living skills programme, designed to help them to function effectively in the home and in the community now and in later life. This has good relevance for pupils. However, the balance of the curriculum is barely satisfactory due to the following factors. The poor accommodation is limiting the way in which many subjects are taught. Because of the pressure of numbers of pupils, all available teaching space has been used for classroom bases. There are no specialist rooms available for the teaching of science, art, design technology, including food technology, and music. Resources for these subjects must be wheeled round on trolleys by teachers, preventing the full programmes of study from being taught in these subjects.

19. There are also some difficulties caused by the curriculum planning model that the school has chosen in order to implement all statutory subjects. Although timetable time appears balanced, and English and mathematics are well represented, some foundation subjects are taught on a half-yearly basis; for example technology, art, music, modern foreign languages, history and geography. Although pupils can make progress in gaining subject knowledge, skills and understanding whilst these subjects are being taught, in the half-year's gap when they are not studied, pupils can forget what they have learned, and consistent progression of learning in these subjects cannot be guaranteed. This applies to a lesser extent at Key Stage 4, where design technology and information and communications technology are also taught half-yearly. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is good. It remains broad and relevant, preparing pupils well for the next stage of education, and building successfully on the curriculum at Key Stage 3, with improved planning for transition between the two key stages. Pupils have opportunities to follow accredited courses at Key Stage 4 and gain national recognition of their achievements. There are plans to extend these opportunities to Key Stage 3.

20. The curriculum at post-16 is very good. It has been very well developed to provide students with the necessary basic skills, knowledge and understanding that they will need as adults. This includes using and developing numeracy and literacy skills in everyday situations, interpreting the world around them, and enhancing their personal and social skills through work related experiences, and use of the community. There is an appropriate emphasis on independent living skills, which is well supported through a nationally accredited scheme and provides students with accreditation on which they can build in the future placements. Opportunities, at this present time, to complete practical assignments are restricted due to the building work in the school. However, the school links very well with a

horticultural college to provide opportunities for students to relate their knowledge of plants to more work orientated situations. The school has given careful thought as to how it can provide an appropriate post-16 curriculum for the wide range of needs students have, and through grouping students together by attainment and need have successfully achieved this, so that some students have a more sensory approach to their activities, while those with extremely challenging behaviour have carefully engineered opportunities to activities which are well linked to their personal targets. For example, these students take part in highly supervised work related activities in the community, in which an emphasis is placed on coping with change and learning what is socially accepted.

21. The school has developed good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills to pupils of all ages. The National Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks have been adopted and are starting to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning and on the standards that pupils achieve. For example, pupils are given opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in registration sessions, and write to record their work in mathematics and science and learn to read key words in design technology. Pupils have opportunity to develop practical numeracy skills through science, geography, technology and independence work in the home and community, for example when weighing out ingredients, costing meals and shopping.

22. Provision for pupils with additional special needs is good overall. There is a range of relevant therapies available to pupils, including speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and hydrotherapy. Riding for the disabled, active education, drama and music therapy are timetabled for those pupils who most benefit from these activities. However, the curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for those with particularly challenging behaviour and for some pupils with autism is adversely affected by pressure of pupil numbers, the poor accommodation, and lack of expertise in some staff. This has the effect of reducing access to a suitable curriculum for these groups of pupils, and therefore the equality of access and opportunity provided by the school is only satisfactory. Some pupils' curriculum entitlement is also adversely affected when they are regularly withdrawn from the same subject each week. For example, although the school has made the decision to protect time allocated to English and mathematics by not allowing therapists to withdraw pupils at these times, the same protection is not extended to science as a core subject and some pupils lose access to this subject.

23. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness, is good. Careers and vocational education is available for all pupils and students and is also of good quality. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a range of activities and clubs available at lunchtimes, including guides and scout packs, sports clubs and teams, and quieter activities for those who prefer to read or use computers. The school has recently been successful in a bid for funding for after school activities, with transport costs included, to enable the introduction of study support and homework clubs, and music and movement sessions tailored to those pupils with more profound and multiple difficulties. These activities provide opportunities for pupils to integrate with peers other than those in their curriculum groups. Opportunities for residential education are excellent and make a significant contribution to the quality and range of opportunities that the school provides for its pupils. Every pupil of all age groups is offered a residential opportunity in every school year. These are appropriately staffed to meet pupils' physical and medical needs, and have relevant activities for all levels of attainment, including outdoor pursuits, independence skills and fieldwork. Opportunities to integrate with mainstream school groups are provided at a range of venues, including outdoor centres, ski resorts and converted barges.

24. The quality and range of learning opportunities that the school provides is also enhanced by very good use of the community for learning independence skills and for work experience for older students, and by very good relationships with partner institutions,

including other special schools, mainstream schools and local colleges. These provide pupils with opportunities for integration with peers, inclusion in mainstream where appropriate, taster courses at colleges that prepare older students for the next stage of education and provide opportunities for vocational education such as horticulture, and also staff development through links with industry and commerce. Consortium links with other special schools allow joint training opportunities for staff and the sharing of resources and good practice in curriculum development, for example subject co-ordinators' days. Parents, as part of the community, also support the curriculum through helping pupils with their homework, fundraising activities and the making of resources.

25. The school makes good provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. At the time of the previous inspection no overall judgement was made about the quality of provision, therefore, it is not possible to comment on any improvements made.

26. The social development of the pupils is a very good feature of the school and it is an integral part of the school day. This is supported further by an extensive programme for personal, social and health education. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic about responsibilities they have, and wait eagerly at circle time for the announcement of the job's rota. The staff take every opportunity to extend and re-inforce these skills during the school day. In lessons pupils and students are encouraged and expected to listen, take turns, share and take responsibility for some of their learning. At Key Stage 3 pupils give out resources, such as pencils and worksheets, and tidy away afterwards. Older students put chairs away after assembly and work co-operatively during group tasks, for example in a science lesson when they make predictions and carry out experiments together. There are some good opportunities at breaktimes for pupils to play together, such as sessions on the adventure playground, but these are limited because of present upheaval during building works. The school provides good opportunities for pupils with more profound difficulties to be included and mix with their peers during a pastoral break session. At lunchtimes some pupils prepare the dining tables for the school with minimal adult support. Pupils sit in their class group for their meals; there is a lively atmosphere with many examples of social conversations. The impressive range of extra-curricular and residential experiences make a good contribution to their social development.

27. The school promotes the moral development of the pupils well and it permeates areas of the curriculum, as well as being part of the school's ethos to care and support others and ourselves. Assemblies provide opportunities for moral issues to be explored, such as bullying and helping others. There is a consistent approach of managing behaviour and some pupils are able to understand when their actions have been unkind and they apologise. A merit system is used to reward good effort and work and is used consistently throughout the school; for example the school nurse gave a pupil a merit for being very co-operative during a medical examination. The school regularly raises funds for charities and they have been involved in Red Nose Day, collecting pencils and pens for a school in Albania, and a disco for Cancer Relief. At harvest time pupils talk about people who are homeless and collect tins of fruit to distribute to others who are less fortunate than themselves. In recognition of its efforts to empower disabled people the school was presented with an award from the Wirral Association for the Disabled.

28. The provision for spiritual development is good, and there are planned and spontaneous examples throughout the school. During assemblies pupils say a prayer together, however, it is difficult to have a moment of quiet reflection because of the high noise levels. However, in some classes a period of reflection is created before a religious education lesson, through the use of incense, candles and scented tea lights. This very good practice which enable pupils to remain calm, still and appreciate the relationships between themselves and others by waiting for the teacher to place the tea light carefully by their face. In some lessons pupils experience a sense of awe and wonder, for example, in an English

lesson when a painted balloon is popped to create a splatter pattern on paper. Religious education lessons make a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual development, for example, pupils are fully engaged during lessons, which explore and reflect on how Muslims pray and behave in a Mosque.

29. Overall, the pupils' cultural development is good. However, as at the time of the previous inspection the provision for developing an awareness of other cultures remains unsatisfactory, despite notable efforts within the religious education curriculum. The school plans to carry out an audit on Citizenship throughout the curriculum and this will be a good opportunity to develop an appreciation of the diversity of cultures. Cultural development is promoted through a range of subjects, such as English, where a good range of text books are used, and in art through the works of artists, such as Van Gogh and Seurat who are appreciated and used as a stimulus for projects. Some pupils visit the Lady Lever Museum, and a range of religious buildings, such as the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool, and Birkenhead Priory. The school has worked with a number of outside groups including the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Ludas Dance Company, which make a good contribution to the pupils' development in this area.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. A major strength of this school lies in the effectiveness of its procedures for monitoring and promoting the health, safety and personal development of pupils and students. The sense of orderliness, security and well-being provides a firm base for supporting pupils' and students' learning. These very high standards constitute an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, and bear testimony to the energy and commitment of the staff.

31. The procedures for child protection are very good. They are updated in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Area Child Protection Committee, and when used in collaboration with the Area Social Work Team has proved effective. Both the headteacher who is the designated person, and his deputy have attended formal training, and they provide regular in-service training to all adults in the school in order to maintain a high level of alertness. The guidance in the staff handbook includes helpful diagrams, and the school's arrangements for the storage of relevant files ensure confidentiality. The very good provision for health and safety is fully supported by a range of detailed and well-directed policies relating to fire safety, control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) regulations, gas and electricity safety checks, and the reporting and recording of hazards monitored on a day-to-day basis by an efficient site manager. The well-equipped kitchen serves a varied menu of healthy food, attractively presented, substantial and warm.

32. The careful provision for the security, personal care and respect for these vulnerable pupils and students starts with the strict arrangements for their arrival, and the segregation of pedestrians and vehicles at the drop-off point. The very efficient first aid arrangements include a nominated person supported by a full time school nurse whose calming presence and warm professionalism enhance this provision. Most other adults on the staff team have attended relevant training. In addition, the work of the physiotherapist and occupational therapist provides an important contribution to the school's caring ethos and are valued by school staff and parents alike. Great care and commitment are provided by the learning support assistants, which helps pupils learn and behave. They are especially skilled in managing the pupils and students with challenging behaviour, and thus reducing the number of incidents and enabling them to become calm. The combined efforts of all ensure that the individual education plans, personal targets and reviews are pursued effectively in line with the school's main aims.

33. The school has devised effective systems to support and extend as best it can the limited amount of specialist therapeutic input made available for pupils. Efforts to increase the amount of therapist time in line with the rising numbers of pupils have been unsuccessful. The school's response has been pragmatic and effective, particularly so for speech and language therapy. An experienced and very well qualified learning support assistant co-ordinates the school's extension of the speech and language therapist's work. The service, she and her colleagues, provide is valued and respected by class teachers, pupils and parents and makes a significant contribution to meeting pupils' stated needs.

34. Throughout the school, effective and appropriate individual behaviour and management plans are in place, monitored by a senior teacher with considerable expertise in managing behaviour and in autism. Detailed recording and analysis of incidents takes place and is reviewed regularly for pupils causing concern. However, a small number of pupils whose behaviour is extremely challenging absorb a disproportionate amount of staff time to meet their needs and keep them safe. The combination of severe learning and communication difficulties with self-harming or aggressive and violent behaviour is particularly demanding to manage in a building with the evident limitations. Apart from the circulation and access spaces, the school is rightly concerned to protect other vulnerable pupils from harm, and the emergency alarm system was seen to operate most effectively during the inspection, providing immediate support from senior staff.

35. The effectiveness of the school's very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance is reflected in the nil rate of unauthorised absence, giving pupils full access to the curriculum. The high standards set by the school includes a telephone call to the parent or carer of a child who is reported as not being there when the escort called at the home. The Education Welfare Service follows up any protracted absences. These arrangements are very well supported by parents and carers, and by the taxi firms who provide a useful link between school and home, ensuring that the school's punctuality requirements are properly met.

36. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, as part of its strategy to promote the personal development of its pupils. The merit system and individual behaviour management strategies have helped the school to achieve its 2000/2001 Development Plan Targets relating to the improvement of behaviour and good order around the school. The introduction of an incident record sheet is helping to analyse patterns and types of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, and is addressed within the behaviour management strategy. Adults work hard to promote good behaviour not only by applying the positive behaviour techniques, but also by their consistent modelling of the good behaviour they require from their pupils.

37. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is good, and linked very well with the monitoring of behaviour. The high profile pastoral system works effectively with the Independent Living Skills (ILS) and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) elements of the curriculum to promote the development of citizenship in the school. There is a high priority given to the exercise of choice, decision-making and personal responsibility, and this equips pupils and students with skills for adulthood. In its efforts to promote a sense of citizenship and membership of a wider community the school arranges activities that take its pupils into the community, including residential placements, integration initiatives with mainstream schools, and work placements for its students.

38. Overall there are good procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and the information is used to record and track the progress they are making. This has improved since the previous inspection, and is the result of focussed development by the management of the school and the hard work of a new assessment co-ordinator. Until recently, the school used its own assessment system, but it was felt that this was too complex, and did not

provide the information needed to move on to the next step. The school now bases its assessment procedures on nationally recognised 'P' levels, and is confident that this is a more effective system. The procedures are good, but not yet fully embedded into the daily life of the school, resulting in some inconsistency between subjects. It is particularly good in mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education, and in post-16, and is satisfactory in all other subjects. The co-ordinator monitors assessment throughout the school, and evaluates its effectiveness, adapting it to suit the wide range of pupils' needs as necessary. Recording of achievement is colour coded by key stage, so the progress can be monitored more easily. However, because the classes contain pupils of different year groups it does not yet provide information of pupils' progress year-by-year.

39. Class teachers know their pupils very well, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and recognise small gains. Due to this much of the assessment of pupils' and students' responses to the planned learning and the targets they are working towards is informal. There is no regular practice of recording individual progress during lessons, except in one Key Stage 4 class where the support assistant recorded individual response and progress, and where the information was effectively providing information for planning the next stage of learning and contributed towards the profile of pupils' progress. This lack of information means that some teachers cannot accurately plan for individuals within the lesson. Digital photography is used very well to record progress in pupil's Record of Achievement. There is a very good comprehensive marking policy, but analysis of work suggests this is not applied consistently in all subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Parents report that this is a very good school. Those parents attending the meeting with the inspector, and those responding to the questionnaire expressed very positive views about the school, saying that the school works closely with them. The great majority declare that it is a good school that their children like attending, where the behaviour and teaching are good, and where their children make good progress. A very high percentage of parents report that they are kept well informed about their children's progress, and all of them agreed that they would find it easy to approach the school with any concerns about their children. They also declared unanimously that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve of their best, and that the school is well led and managed. A significant minority thought that their children did not get the right amount of homework, some saying that they get too much, others that they are not given sufficient homework. The view of the inspection team is that the quality and amount of homework is well suited to pupils' and students' individual needs, often being based on their individual educational plans.

41. The school has established very effective links with parents, providing them with a good range of information that helps to promote their children's education and personal development. The well used 'chat book' provides a vital link between home and school, but a more consistent use, by school and parents, would provide more information for those pupils and students who have little or no communication. The school now has its own colourful and informative newsletter, supplemented by its web site. The Governors' Annual Report, and prospectus, provides parents with very useful information, but the inclusion of attendance data would make them fully compliant. The school involves parents in setting pupils' targets in the individual education plans and in reviews. The regular parents' evenings, and the school's 'open door' policy offer parents further opportunities for close involvement in their children's education. The school has canvassed parents more formally for their views through a questionnaire and has taken account of their views.

42. Many parents have taken up the challenge, not only by helping their children with their work at home, but also by directly involving themselves in the daily life of the school as volunteers, and by supporting the activities of the Parents' Association. There are

approximately eighteen parents who listen to children read in school, help to prepare materials for lessons, help with swimming activities, or accompany classes on their educational into the community. This has a very positive impact on the life of the school and on their children's education. The Parents' Association are active fundraisers, and make effective contributions to the pupils' education, for example, in paying for the maintenance and insurance of the school bus, or for the purchase of extra equipment. The recently formed Parents' Support Group is an initiative that helps parents deal with the problems facing them as their children develop.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The school is well led and managed, and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The new headteacher, along with the senior management team, and in conjunction with the Governing Body, have systematically evaluated the school so that the strengths and areas for improvement have been clearly identified. These have formed, over the last four years, appropriate priorities for continuing development and improvement to the educational provision, such as in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and religious education. However, the number of pupils being placed in the school is rising, and there is also an increase in the number of those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe challenging behaviour. These pupils sometimes present challenges for which the school is not well-equipped, and so the management have had to constantly revise their priorities and use of resources in order to meet these pupils' needs as far as possible. This situation is on-going which makes it extremely difficult for the school to plan for long-term developments, and intentions for improvement, such as the building of specialist rooms are not always realised. As the school is not the admissions authority it does not have an admissions policy, but there is a need for the school managers to work together with the LEA to draw up clear admission criteria. These should have consideration of the adequacy of the accommodation in order that groupings of pupils and students are safe and effective, and a balanced curriculum can be delivered.

44. The school has made satisfactory progress on improving the co-ordination of subjects by agreeing a clear remit for subject co-ordinators, providing an annual budget for resource development and linking training needs clearly into the development and training plans. Subject co-ordinators have worked hard to provide short and medium-term lesson plans, supporting materials and resources for their colleagues, who value this advice highly. Co-ordinators have conducted audits of each subject, drawn appropriate conclusions and developed action plans to meet shortcomings they have identified, such as the further development of assessment procedures in several subjects. However, the complexity of the timetable does not enable all of co-coordinators to monitor the quality of teaching and learning by their non-specialist colleagues. The lack of a planned programme of subject team meetings limits the opportunity for co-ordinators to evaluate the impact of lesson planning termly, and provide in-house training and support for teachers teaching subjects for which they have had no specialist training. A number of them would benefit from further advice and support in differentiating the lesson-planning materials to meet the needs of the pupils with the most complex disabilities and multi-sensory impairments and the group of young people whose behaviour can be particularly challenging.

45. The Governing Body fulfils its responsibilities well, and they are very aware of all the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The finance committee of the governors regularly monitors expenditure and the headteacher provides regular updates on all spending to the full Governing Body. The school plans its spending carefully with clear priorities that are well linked to staffing costs, the development of the building programme and the replacement and development of subject resources. As a volunteer body they have worked hard to manage the budget, plan for development and react to any unforeseen circumstances in the best interests of the pupils. The school makes effective use of new technologies for both

administrative and curriculum purposes, and has through the appointment this year of a technician improved the existing systems for administration, curriculum development and are beginning to use information and communication technology to monitor pupils' progress. The appointment of additional office staff has also ensured the systems are up to date, used to maintain information about pupils and students, as well as providing up to date financial information. At the time of the last inspection it was found that the day-to-day financial procedures were clear and understood, and that the recommendations of the audit fully implemented. This situation continues to be the case.

46. Specific grants made to the school, such as for school improvement, inclusion, Literacy and Numeracy, development of Citizenship and performance management training are used well for these purposes. All these grants are related to the school development plan and governors have regular updates from the finance committee. The school applies the principles of best value well. As contracts become renewable they are brought before the governors and scrutinised. For example, the information and communication technology support contract is currently being considered because of a significant increase in costs. The school is considering whether they need this support in the light of their decision to appoint their own technician, and by doing this, the governors are evaluating the cost effectiveness of their spending.

47. As the number of pupils in the school has risen sharply since the last inspection, good appointments of additional experienced teachers and skilled, trained learning support staff have been made. The match between qualifications, experience and the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, although not all subjects are co-ordinated by specialist teachers. The number of teaching and support staff is increasingly inadequate to meet the range of needs of the pupils. The headteacher and governors can identify resources to appoint additional staff but recognise that the accommodation is stretched to its limit by the current establishment.

48. At the last inspection, the school's supervision and support for staff was commended, and further developments to this system have improved it further. Overall, the school's induction and development of its staff is very good, with some excellent features. The recent re-accreditation for Investors in People (IIP) identified the quality of the approach taken and its impact. All class-based members of staff receive an equally extensive and rigorous programme of staff development and review interviews. Targets are now set for all staff in three areas – improving pupils' performance, individual responsibility areas and a third, broader target related to personal and professional development. This strong foundation has enabled the school to complete the first performance management cycle efficiently, and peer observation is being developed across the school. Procedures for induction have also been developed and teachers and support staff recently appointed to the school value the individual interviews with a senior colleague throughout their first term in post, and the ongoing support they receive. Funds for in-service training are well used, and the staff participate in and value the annual Merseyside Special Schools' In-Service provision, attended by all teachers and learning support assistants.

49. The accommodation available to the school is poor. At the last inspection, the provision of specialist facilities for art, science, technology and showering facilities was a key issue for action. Showering facilities are available but the siting of these means that for some pupils, changing facilities are at a considerable remove from their class base. A building programme is now underway, to be completed by September 2002, by which time the school will have an estimated number of between 125 and 129 pupils on roll, compared to 92 at the last inspection, an increase of almost 40 per cent. The LEA plans to develop the accommodation further. The standard admission number has been raised to 110, and further pupils have been placed up to the maximum excess permitted of 10 per cent over this, making 121 pupils. There is a possibility that up to seven further pupils may be placed at the

school in September 2002. Some of these require highly specialised accommodation to ensure their safety and that of others, which the school currently cannot provide.

50. The school's response to meeting the needs of a small number of these challenging pupils has been to create a parallel timetable for them in which activities and environments in which they can be calmed are used extensively. Whilst this keeps others safe, inevitably the pupils are accompanied predominantly by learning support assistants during these sessions, or supervised at a distance by teachers. This is having an adverse impact on the attention available for other less demanding pupils in the three groups affected. It also means that these pupils' needs are so great that they are unable to access the curriculum and learning opportunities available within the school and to which they are entitled. This situation is unsatisfactory.

51. In addition, the new buildings will not provide the specialist subject accommodation required in 1997, as the increase in pupil population by September will prevent the school deploying the additional classrooms as specialist areas. This is having an adverse effect on standards of achievements in some subjects, notably design and technology. Science and art materials have to be moved from classroom to classroom using trolleys, and two class bases are only accessible via two flights of stairs. It also impacts on the school's efforts to position class bases, deploy staff and teaching resources effectively. When the accommodation constraints, subject teaching and timetable requirements, class sizes and the complex additional needs of certain pupils are factored in together, no combination of these can be found that does not disadvantage at least one group of students or the teaching of some aspects of the statutory curriculum.

52. The building itself – previously a middle school with some of its accommodation on two floors – is unsuitable for pupils who are wheelchair users, and staff have considerable difficulty manoeuvring some of these pupils' wheelchairs through doorways and into the changing areas. Several classrooms are too cramped for these pupils to use, and several other rooms, used by able-bodied pupils and students at post 16 are so restricted in size that teachers' flexibility is limited in terms of arranging and moving furniture to promote small group and whole class activities. Some teaching rooms remain accessible only by stairs, and some pupils find this difficult. New requirements to prevent disability discrimination in education come into force in September 2002 and the school's layout; circulation space, access and services currently restrict the opportunities available to pupils with physical disabilities. Some small improvements in the deployment of the available teaching spaces could be made, particularly to position some pupils closer to the changing facilities, but these will not address the major outstanding issues. The position has therefore deteriorated markedly from the previous inspection, and urgent action is now needed to address these shortcomings.

53. The school has invested in developing its learning resources and good progress overall has been made. The range of resources for design and technology remains unsatisfactory, linked clearly to the lack of suitable space to house and use tools and equipment. The required improvements in learning resources have been made in modern foreign languages, humanities and science, all of which are now satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to fully meet the need of all pupils

1. The school should provide:

- Smaller, more specialised classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties;
- Specialist rooms for the teaching of design and technology, science and art, as indicated in a key issue arising from the previous inspection;
- Specialist facilities for teaching information and communication technology, and library facilities;
- Adequate space for the increasing number of pupils at post-16

(Paragraphs: 2,3,4,15,18,34,43,45,47,49,50,51,52,53,55,66,76,82,91,93,94,96,142).

2. Increase the expertise needed by some staff to meet the demands and needs of pupils with the most complex difficulties.

(Paragraphs: 14,22,44,47,86,100).

3. Increase and develop the opportunities for pupils to become more aware of other cultures.

(Paragraphs: 29,64,68,122).

In addition, the Governing Body and headteacher as part of school development planning should give consideration to the following minor issues:

- A more consistent use of the 'chat book'.
- The recording individual progress during lessons.
- Consistency in marking.
- More opportunities for teachers to observe good practice in teaching.
- The withdrawing of pupils from the same subjects each week for therapy.

(Paragraphs: 16,39,41,44,68,74,87,102,104,105,111,122,133).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	22	21	14	0	0	0
Percentage	16	32	31	21	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	121
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	75

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	6.00	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	121
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.9:1
Average class size	8.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	42
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1154.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1225016
Total expenditure	1163903
Expenditure per pupil	10210
Balance brought forward from previous year	204663*
Balance carried forward to next year	265776*
* These figures include the amount for the building project.	

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	121
Number of questionnaires returned	43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	21	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	26	12	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	42	7	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	32	30	3	0
The teaching is good.	72	26	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	28	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	30	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	70	25	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	21	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	33	5	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	15	12	0	10

Other issues raised by parents

- The inconsistencies in the amount of information in the Home/ School 'chat books'.

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

55. As pupils or students in each key stage are grouped and taught in classes according to their level of attainment, and each class contains a mixture of years from that key stage, it is not appropriate to judge what they know, understand and can do by the end of a key stage. Judgements on achievement and progress focus on pupils or students within specific key stages.

ENGLISH

56. There have been some recent good improvements in the subject provision, for example the successful introduction of the literacy strategy with associated improvement in the structure of English lessons. Resources have also been improved, and are good overall, but there has been a deterioration in library provision. At the time of the last inspection, there was a room allocated as a student library, and this was well used by pupils undertaking research and independent study. Due to the pressures on the school's accommodation, the library has had to be converted into a teaching space, and resources are now stored on a landing area and in two areas in the staffroom. Many pupils are unable to access this facility, as it is upstairs in an area of the school that is not served by the lift, and pupils can no longer use the library resources independently.

57. Since the last inspection, there has been a satisfactory improvement in pupils' and students' achievements. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 now make good progress overall in all three areas of English; in speaking and listening, in reading and in writing. Some groups of pupils are starting to make very good progress in English, but other groups make only satisfactory progress. There is a direct link between the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning. Where pupils are taught by specialist subject teachers, or those who have particular skills in the development of basic literacy skills, pupils make very good progress. Where pupils are taught by less experienced or non-specialist teachers, pupils make only satisfactory progress. The higher attaining students at post 16, by the time they leave school, have made very good progress and are able to take up further education courses.

58. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress overall in speaking and listening. They learn to greet staff and fellow pupils politely, to listen carefully to instructions and questions, and to take turns in group activities, conversations and discussions. They share their news with their peers when reporting what they have done over the weekend. In plenary sessions at the end of lessons, pupils share what they have learned with each other and higher attaining pupils reflect on how well they have done and how their work could have been improved. Pupils with communication difficulties requiring speech therapy receive high quality support from the speech and language therapists allocated to the school by the local health trust. This support is extended by a learning support assistant qualified in speech and language development and a small team of assistants who deliver specially devised individual and small group programmes.

59. Key Stage 3 pupils also make good progress overall in their reading. In the development of their individual reading skills, they learn to recognise by sight the most frequently used words and learn the sounds that individual and groups of letters make, through work on phonics and spelling. Pupils of higher attainment read books from a graded reading scheme. Lower attaining pupils learn to read with the support of signs and symbols, often working with specially made books that have photographs of familiar things and people to help in their learning. In response to literature, pupils study a range of texts through a variety of ways, including shared reading with the class teacher, through use of extracts of texts or simplified versions and through watching videos of television or film productions.

Pupils of all levels of attainment enjoy the literature they study and indicate their preferences as to favourite characters and events. Higher attaining pupils read for information, and can use a range of non-fiction texts in their research, for example in a lesson where they found out information about favourite television programmes from TV guides. When reading aloud, they use some expression to make the story more interesting.

60. In writing, pupils in Key Stage 3 make good progress overall. Those who are able to hold and manipulate a pencil or pen learn to form letters correctly, to write their own name, address and contact details, and to write in a range of styles for a variety of purposes. For example, they write their own news, reports about visits they have been on, answer questions about what they have read, and write letters, lists, poems and stories. Lower attaining pupils overwrite or copy words and sentences they have dictated to staff. Higher attaining pupils can write independently in full sentences, using a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end. Most of these pupils have neat handwriting and some can write in a joined up script.

61. In Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress, and some groups make very good or excellent progress in some lessons. At post 16, students make very good progress. In speaking and listening, those who require additional support continue to make good or very good progress in speech and language development sessions. Pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to make their feelings, needs and wants clear to others and to convey choices that they have made between given options. Higher attaining pupils and students continue to develop their speaking and listening skills in wider contexts, including when they go out on trips into the community, and through work experience placements. They suggest appropriate vocabulary to describe a given situation, for example when brainstorming ideas for writing a prose poem about 'Winter Sunshine'.

62. Pupils and students in these key stages also make good progress in reading. Pupils continue to develop their individual reading skills by following a commercial reading scheme, supplemented by other books and teacher-made reading materials, including pictorial sentences printed out from the computer. Some higher attaining pupils and students become fluent readers of simple texts such as graded reading books, magazines and everyday print such as forms, recipes and instructions. Those who are unable to become independent readers learn by sight words to help them use community facilities successfully, such as those appearing on signs and in shops. All pupils study a wide range of literature, including myths and legends, and modern and older fiction, for example *Stig of the Dump*, *The Iron Man* and *Wuthering Heights*.

63. In writing, pupils and students continue to learn phonics and spellings to support their writing, and many higher attaining pupils can use word books, dictionaries and personal spell-checkers when drafting their work. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils write longer pieces of work, including descriptive writing, themed poetry, and family anecdotes. Pupils and students at post 16 have further opportunities to write letters, reviews of activities they have undertaken and their own version of a book through the ASDAN accredited course. Some higher attaining pupils and students use paragraphs to structure their work, while the lower attaining pupils still use staff modelled sentences, or use the computer to type up pictorial sentences using a 'Clicker' program.

64. Teaching is good overall, and there are examples of very good teaching at Key Stage 3, and very good and excellent teaching at Key Stage 4, and at post 16. Some teaching at Key Stage 3 is only satisfactory. The quality of learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is very good, teachers have high expectations for what pupils will achieve and very good pupil management. Learning support assistants are well deployed to support pupils and students learning, and the use of information and communications technology is integral to the planned activities. For example, in a lesson with higher attaining

pupils at Key Stage 4, pupils were expected to know the full alphabet and there was an appropriately differentiated spelling test closely linked to pupils' attainment. Pupils were moved from task to task with good pace and pupils reluctant to participate were well managed and encouraged to rejoin the lesson as soon as possible. A member of the support staff prepared vocabulary suggested by pupils brainstorming ideas with the teacher on the computer so that all was ready for pupils' own writing. In consequence, pupils were fully motivated to complete their work and produced some very imaginative writing – not always easy for pupils with severe learning difficulties. In a very good lesson at Key Stage 3, the teacher's secure knowledge and understanding of the teaching of English, of the National Literacy Strategy and of her pupils ensured very good planning of activities across all areas of English. Pupils, therefore, had opportunities to develop skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing in a series of linked tasks, with a balance of whole group, independent and guided one-to-one work with staff. Because of this, pupils of all levels of attainment made very good progress. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers manage their pupils well but their lack of subject knowledge and understanding and limited experience of the teaching of basic literacy skills limits pupils' progress to satisfactory.

65. The subject co-ordinator only took over managing the subject at the beginning of this academic year, but has already begun to have a significant impact on the school's provision for English and Literacy. Working together with the curriculum co-ordinator for Key Stages 3 and 4, she has implemented a rolling programme of study units that cover a very good range of literature texts. This includes fiction, poetry, non-fiction, and Shakespeare, although there is too little multi-cultural literature included in the range. The co-ordinator has ensured that this range is accessible to all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, through the use of 'props' related to the text, and innovative art activities and relevant music. For example, during the inspection, these pupils were highly motivated to respond to a poem about a parrot trapped in captivity by the use of wooden and soft toy parrots, and the chance to make their own collage parrot with real feathers and appropriate fabrics, as part of a multi-sensory session including music and drama. The teacher's high expectations for how the pupils would empathise with the plight of the parrot and her spirited reading and singing resulted in all pupils vocalising with the poem and songs and demonstrating appropriate actions and facial expressions as they obviously enjoyed responding to the text.

66. The co-ordinator has also worked with senior staff to ensure the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy lesson structure across the school, resulting in teachers using clear introductory whole-group activities, independent and group work tasks and good quality plenary sessions at the end of lessons to consolidate pupils' learning, reflect on pupils' successes and celebrate their achievements. This makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development, and the very good range of literature studied supports pupils' cultural development. The opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively, for example at the computer or in small groups, make a good contribution to pupils' social development as they learn to share and take turns.

67. The curriculum also makes a good contribution to careers education. Pupils are encouraged to learn to say and write their personal details for use in later life, for example full name, address, telephone number and other information required for application forms and other social situations. These are not always just taught in isolation. For example, in a very good lesson at Key Stage 3, the teacher used a role-play of an interview to reinforce pupils' knowledge of their personal details and to give them experience of selecting the right pieces of information for each question. Resources for English and literacy have been improved, and there are sets of texts and big books to support all genres studied. The co-ordinator, with the help of a parents group, is developing resource boxes to support the teaching of each text, and teachers can share planning ideas, worksheets, artefacts related to the text and video and audio tapes each time the book is studied. Though the resources are very well organised

and available to all staff and there is a small class library book collection in each class base, the poor accommodation has resulted in the loss of a school library that is accessible to students and this has limited the progress pupils can make in independent research and study and in browsing books for reading for pleasure.

68. The curriculum is enriched by trips to the theatre, visits from theatre groups to give productions and drama workshops and opportunities for pupils to take part in musical productions that are held each year. Many pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem through taking part in such activities.

69. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Pupils have individual education plans with literacy skills targets. In some classes, these are more detailed and focused than in others. Pupils' written work is well marked and annotated to show any staff support given. The work is also given assessed levels and staff work together to moderate their marking to ensure that they are all applying the criteria consistently. Some teachers test pupils regularly in phonics, spelling and the reading of high frequency vocabulary, but there is as yet no consistent use of a range of tests that includes a diagnostic reading test to assess pupils' progress in reading accuracy and comprehension and to monitor pupils' overall progress in reading. The current assessment procedures record the progress of higher attaining pupils more effectively and allow teachers to plan the next steps in learning for these pupils. However, for those pupils with more complex learning and communication difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, assessment and recording steps are too broad and do not always allow staff to record accurately the progress which these pupils make.

MATHEMATICS

70. The achievement and progress that pupils make in mathematics is good overall and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Clear and well considered planning of the subject across the school has underpinned this improvement. The curriculum is planned in detail to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school has started to put the Numeracy Strategy in place and all lessons have a clear structure which includes class work, group activities and the main part of the lesson to provide for the needs of pupils of different attainment and the plenary is used to assess progress and knowledge achieved. Pupils make good progress against the targets set in their individual education plans though occasionally the targets could be more specific.

71. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils are able to understand place value in terms of 10s, 100s and up to 1000s. They can count in 10s and add on 10s unaided or with the use of a number square. When given a number like 5,121 they are able to break the number down as a group. They work enthusiastically as a class and each pupil is given opportunities to explain and check their numbers using their work boards. Pupils show confidence and self esteem in the work and are encouraged to self-correct as their knowledge of place value and addition improves. In another lesson in Key Stage 3 pupils were counting in 10s and some counted back from 20, in 2s up to 100 before completing a money recognition task with coins up to the value of £1 in preparation for a visit to a café later in the week. In connection with this visit they also considered time. A number of the pupils were able to recognise, using their clocks, half past the hour and quarter to the hour. Several of the pupils completed their worksheets showing what time they arrived at school, the time they arrived at the café, and the time they return to school. In another lesson observed, pupils were learning to count the hours around the clock face, learning the days of the week, months of the year and the different seasons. By the end of the lesson they had made good gains in their sense of time and they were able to practice their counting skills up to 60. Pupils make gains in their knowledge and experience of place value, measurements, time, use of money, developed their ideas of shapes and started to make block graphs to

represent their work in lessons. For example, one block graph was developed to record their shoe sizes.

72. During Key Stage 4 pupils develop their previous knowledge and use of number, money, measurement and time. As part of their accreditation course they use kitchen measures, spoons, balances to measure while cooking or making a drink. They budget for daily living, develop their knowledge of fractions. As part of the topic shopping, they find out how much money they need to fill their shopping baskets and they increase their awareness of time from a minute to a year. Their work on block graphs is related to where they live on the Wirral. In one lesson observed during the inspection, higher attaining pupils were classifying measurement vocabulary into time, height, distance and capacity. Pupils were able to classify minutes, hours, grams, metres and litres. They were able to name the ingredients to measure small sponge cakes. In another lesson they were using a number square to 40. The higher attaining pupils recognise the pattern and sequence in numbers, recognise and correct their mistakes as they developed their ability to concentrate. The work also provided good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to and anticipate during counting activities. They learn to recognise how many pupils are in class by counting the number of coats on the class washing line. During their individual activities, pupils took part in individual finger and toe counting activities. Use was made of the sensory room to count ultra-violet objects, while another pupil used a touch pad to access a 'switch' on an original computer programme. All the pupils were making good progress against their individual education targets.

73. Students at post 16 make very good progress in their understanding and use of numeracy skills to solve everyday problems, and to complete their work for their ASDAN projects. Higher attaining students build on their previous understanding of money, time and measurement. They continue developing their ability to work out amounts and solve simple problems, such as shopping surveys. Some students use their measurement skills well in work experience placements, especially those who are designing and making artefacts in a workshop situation. Lower attaining students, through playing a game using dice can find and match numbers between one and ten.

74. The quality of the teaching and learning at Key Stages 3 and 4, and at post 16 is good and at times it is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the teaching was judged to be satisfactory to good. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the teaching is consistently good over time. In the best lessons observed teachers are enthusiastic, there is a lively prompt start with a well planned and executed mental exercise to focus pupils on the subjects, and activities that help them to learn. Learning is reinforced at the end of the lesson by the plenary session where pupils are praised and rewarded for their efforts. In these lessons there are good practical resources and equipment to help learning for example clocks, worksheets and number boards and teachers have high expectations of all the pupils in the class so that the pupils feel challenged and excited by the work. Also information and communication technology is used to support the learning. In the less effective lessons, there was less focus upon the pupils' individual targets in the planning; and information and communication technology was not used to support the learning. However, a feature of all lessons was the way the learning support assistants enable pupils to learn, are very good at helping teachers to calm some pupils and work with them closely on their behaviour as well as with their work.

75. The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers the main areas of number, shape, space and measures. Higher attaining pupils learn to handle data in basic forms. There is a whole school recording sheet for the subject and there are half term reviews to assess progress that is used to inform future planning. However, assessment is not consistently used to inform the planning of lessons across the school. There is also a need to enhance

the use of information and communications technology to support the learning in mathematics lessons now that all classrooms have this resource available.

76. The co-ordinator has recently retired and the subject is being co-ordinated temporarily by another co-ordinator. However, it can be seen that a great deal of work and effort has gone into developing the subject in the past and leadership and management of the subject are good. Training for staff has been organised and a further day planned to examine whole school developments in numeracy and the developing skills and practice in information and communication technology. A particular focus is also being placed upon the development of materials to support the learning of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in number, shape, space and measures. This multi-sensory approach has been trialled and its extension will help to promote the quality of learning for these pupils. There has been some monitoring of planning and teaching by the co-ordinator. On these occasions the co-ordinator has identified focus areas like money and time for scrutiny. Overall the resources for the subject are good. Since the last inspection the school developed a 'Mathematics Discovery Unit' for teaching and learning resources. This is well linked to the soft play area for pupils with complex learning difficulties.

SCIENCE

77. At the time of the previous inspection pupils made good progress in science and this continues to be the case. However, the lack of a specialist science room restricts the range of work that can be carried out safely, and this restricts the progress they can make.

78. The pupils' achievements in science are good throughout the school. The pupils' interest in learning and developing scientific knowledge is stimulated by practical investigations. From looking at a range of work, the pupils at both key stages make progress over time and are taught a range of facts about living things, materials and physical processes.

79. During Key Stage 3, pupils study plants as part of a project on living things. They compare and label flower and tree parts and understand that these things need water and light to grow. Pupils know that plants have roots to hold them to the ground and stems to hold the leaves. Pupils are able to categorise living and non-living things and can name and label the key organs in a body. Work is extended further by a study of cells and pupils use a microscope to look at the formation of a cell, pupils know that the body is made up of millions of cells and they are able to label a diagram clearly. In a project on 'materials', pupils learn that the main groups are 'wood', 'metal' and 'plastic'. They are able to compare them and describe how they feel, for example, that metal is hard and wood can be rough or smooth. Investigations are carried out to test, which materials are waterproof and pupil discovered that tissue was not a good material for making an umbrella when they got wet during the experiment. Pupils with more complex learning needs also extend their scientific knowledge by investigating sounds through vibrations and by comparing reflective and non-reflective materials. Walks, which involve sensory experiences, enable them to look at living things and they enjoy finding seeds in fruits such as plums and oranges.

80. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have developed their understanding of science further, for example in a project on 'Living Things', they are now able to extend previous learning by sorting animals into groups such as mammals, insects, birds, and reptiles. Pupils are beginning to make predictions and then drawing a conclusion, for example they took part in an experiment to show what would happen to a plant if it was not given water or light and these results were recorded through the use of digital photographs. They take part in activity, which involves taking temperatures around the school, such as classroom, the Hydrotherapy pool, and outside. They are able to compare and record the results and explain that it is warmer in the hydrotherapy pool because it is heated. Pupils' work on mixing materials and

the effect they have on each other, for example they are able to observe and describe that cereals go soft when milk is poured on them. They are able to compare reversible and irreversible changes such as freezing and thawing water and cooking an egg. Pupils, and students at post 16, complete science modules as part of their ASDAN work and this has included a project on 'Horticulture' where they have identified and learnt the use of a range of tools, and then used these to prepare soil for planting. Pupils and students have grown a range of plants and understand that plants have different uses, for example that herbs can be used for cooking.

81. Overall the teaching and learning is good. The main strength of the teaching is the planning and support given by the staff to enable the pupils to become independent learners. This is seen when pupils worked in small groups to investigate how materials could be separated. Some pupils were able to predict whether materials, such as flour and rice, could be separated by a filter or a sieve, and were able to record the result on a worksheet. There were good introductions to lessons, and the use of artefacts and equipment which pupils could identify as using electricity brought the lesson alive and enabled pupils to concentrate well. The teacher demonstrated a range of potential dangers and they understood that you should not touch electrical items when your hands are wet and that you should not touch a light bulb after it has been on because it will burn you. Pupils were also asked to re-call previous learning which was a good way of recording progress and they were able to say that salt and sugar had dissolved when mixing them with water. Teachers prepared a good range of relevant resources, which supported the learning activities; these included a video and workshop relating to electrical dangers in the kitchen. In several lessons the very good level of support the pupils receive from the learning support assistants, results in them displaying long periods of concentration and good behaviour. In one very good lesson the use of information and communication technology extended learning when pupils logged onto the Internet to play an interactive game about dangers in the home. Literacy skills are also developed well by expecting pupils to follow simple instructions and report, describe and explain ideas.

82. The subject is co-ordinated by an enthusiastic science specialist and since the last inspection there has been a marked improvement in planning documents which now incorporate revised National Curriculum guidelines and units of accreditation from the ASDAN Working Towards Independence Scheme. The co-ordinator has provided teachers with detailed planning documents and recording sheets to enable them to deliver the curriculum. It is not possible to make a judgement on the effectiveness of these documents as they have only been in place for a short time. During this inspection, two lessons of science were observed with pupils with complex and profound needs and whilst the lessons were both satisfactory, the content had not been sufficiently differentiated to meet their needs and therefore it would be appropriate to develop the planning further to incorporate their specific needs.

83. The outstanding issue for development is the lack of specialist accommodation for the delivery of this core subject. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and despite efforts by the management team and governors this has yet to be resolved. Therefore, there is a cumbersome system in place, which involves teachers taking boxes of materials to individual classes and this is inefficient as it does not allow pupils to develop scientific skills in an appropriate environment. For health and safety reasons it is not possible to offer the breadth of learning opportunities within classrooms and therefore this restricts pupils' achievements and progress. There is now a satisfactory range of resources to support the subject, which is an improvement from the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

84. There has been very good progress in the subject since the last inspection when the school was failing to meet statutory requirements and there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the progress of pupils. Standards of achievement in art are now satisfactory throughout the school. This judgement has been based on an analysis of a limited amount pupils' work, discussions with the co-ordinator and a small number of lessons observed. From the small amount of work seen pupils are making satisfactory progress across both key stages.

85. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have been experimenting with colour and have put the same colour on different coloured paper and they have been able to decide which colours stand out better than others. Colours have been mixed using paints but also by using other materials such as netting, tissue paper and by layering them, pupils have been able to observe the changes that have taken place. Pupils have painted simple patterns and their initial letters on silk from their draft design work. A project on pizzas enabled pupils to make designs using pictures, prints and paints. Some good designs have been produced from the study of Indian art and fashion and the pupils have drawn intricate colour patterns from their observations.

86. During Key Stage 4 pupils explore the concept of Cubism and design pictures of their own faces using digital photographs. In another project a range of images have been created to represent symmetry and shapes. Pupils have taken black and white photographs, which depict seasons, colour and shape. Pupils have observed the colours of nature and constructed wall hangings by weaving natural materials together.

87. In the small number of lessons seen the teaching and learning is good. At Key Stage 3, two lessons were observed which both focussed on the topic of colour. The content of the lesson had been planned from the medium term plans devised by the co-ordinator but had not been appropriately adjusted for the differing abilities of individual pupils. There were good introductions to the lessons and the teacher reminded pupils about the previous lesson when they had been mixing colours. Pupils were able to state that yellow and blue makes green and that red and yellow makes orange. In one lesson the teacher demonstrated the activity, which was a good way of informing both pupils and support staff of the learning outcomes. Lessons were well organised and pupils were immediately engaged in the activities because they were well supported by the staff who allowed them to complete their own work. This is an improvement from the last inspection when the teacher directed pupils' work in art. Relationships within the groups are good and staff praise and encouragement, including merits for good work have a positive impact on learning.

88. The co-ordinator is a well-qualified art specialist who has worked hard to improve the art policy and planning documents. She supports her colleagues well and has given a range of training including detailed advice on displays. This has been effective because subject displays around the school are attractive, well organised and clearly labelled. However, at the time of the inspection there was a very limited amount of artwork on display because of the school's chosen model of delivery of art, which is for 18 weeks of the school year. The school should revise its practice of sending work home and establish a system of individual portfolios of art work which will not only enable the school to evaluate pupils' progress over time, but it will also provide them with a bank of materials to display. The co-ordinator does not monitor the teaching of art in other classes but there are plans to put this in place.

89. The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory, due to increases to school roll, the dedicated art room is now used as a class base and this was an issue at the time of the previous inspection. Therefore, there is a system in place that involves teachers taking a trolley of resources to individual classes; this is inefficient because it wastes teaching time. There is now a satisfactory range of resources to support the subject, which is an improvement from the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. Pupils study design and technology for six months of each year and during their time in school, and undertake a range of projects that develop their practical skills using simple hand tools and materials such as paper, card and balsa wood. During the inspection, the pupils in Key Stage 4 had just begun their course, and all were following a project about kites. Pupils achieve very well in the activities designed for them in lessons. Those who have complex learning difficulties benefit greatly from a sensory approach to the topic that focuses on the different experiences of air and wind moving, and those with visual impairments are supported to identify different kinds of air movement, use switches effectively to control equipment and communicate their preferences between different stimuli such as feathers, balloons and warm air. Higher attaining pupils begin to make a kite using polythene, dowel rods and tape and show good organisation of their time, careful cutting and accurate measuring, and understand the importance of safety when using equipment. In another group, pupils are challenged to consider the importance of modelling before making, generate hypotheses about cause and effect and experiment to test out each of these before agreeing their conclusions.

91. Work using food takes place for all pupils and students within the 'Independent Living in the Home and Community' lessons. The building work taking place has restricted opportunities this year as some kitchen equipment has been temporarily removed. Activities are planned to develop pupils' abilities to prepare food, including shopping and cooking, and a group of pupils who have severe difficulties managing their behaviour were able to choose and prepare simple snacks in their classroom with support. Other subjects contribute to these developing skills, and in mathematics lessons pupils show that they can name foodstuffs needed for small cakes, weigh ingredients using scales, using an egg as counterbalance and understand how liquids and solids are measured and weighed.

92. Despite these good examples of pupils' progress, standards of achievement are unsatisfactory for pupils in Key Stage 3 where the subject is mandatory. This is because the school has not been able to resolve the key issue of appropriate specialist accommodation for technology work. At the last Inspection, this was identified as limiting the activities offered, and resources for learning were found to be inadequate. The current building programme will only improve facilities for food preparation, and no teaching base will be available for work in resistant materials. Teachers are restricted to using a small portable workbench and restricted hand tools, transported throughout the building for each lesson. As a result pupils able to benefit from developing practical skills and working with a range of materials and components have very limited opportunities to do so, and valuable time is lost while they wait their turn to cut dowel rods, for example. The co-ordinator has used his budget effectively, but cannot develop the range of skills and opportunities pupils need.

93. Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent features. The co-ordinator is not a specialist in the subject but has worked hard to master information and provide colleagues with a resource collection to support their teaching of each of the projects. There is very good teaching by non-specialist teachers. Care is taken to match the activity to pupils' levels of attainment, skills and understanding, and as a result, pupils are engaged, attentive and contribute well. In all the lessons observed there is excellent management of individual pupils and of group activities, notably under very difficult circumstances for pupils with severely challenging behaviour. In all the lessons seen, the adults' excellent relationships with pupils were founded on very good knowledge and understanding of their individual needs, including in the lessons taught to groups that are not their own. In an outstanding lesson which included an experiment in kite flying, including testing the prototype the pupils were about to make, there was excellent challenge, pace, and use of specialist vocabulary. The pupils, of all abilities, were hypothesising, experimenting, drawing conclusions then testing and debating them. Throughout, they were developing their use of mathematics, understanding of

science, developing their vocabulary and accuracy when describing their findings or reasoning.

94. Very effective use is made of information and communication technology with pupils with complex additional needs. As well as a well-organised range of switches, and software showing balloons flying, an interactive whiteboard was used in a lesson about the effects of air, and the majority of pupils were able to 'pop' the balloons themselves, to their evident delight. The pace of lessons maintains pupils' interest and teachers make effective use of the very limited equipment and resources, doing their best to engage pupils in cramped and often inappropriate accommodation.

95. These restrictions affect pupils' learning and achievement. The scheme of work is designed around the limitations and pupils are not able to work with a suitable range of tools, equipment, materials or components. Older pupils were observed trying to cut dowel rods on a bench that is too small for them to use comfortably, and as only one can work at a time, the overall pace of the project is slowed considerably. Although they are developing skills in preparing food, the opportunities to design products, evaluate, compare and assess alternative products and processes has been limited. They have few opportunities to work with textiles. More attention is needed to the design and improvement of products. Activities planned sometimes rely too heavily on pupils following a pre-determined design and make sequence without sufficient opportunities for interpretation and experiment.

96. Further work is now needed to update the scheme of work to incorporate the requirements of Curriculum 2000 and ensure that pupils experience the breadth of study required. Recent work on assessing progress needs development to ensure that the many teachers who teach the subject become more consistent in their approach to judging progress, and to indicating the standards of achievement of pupils in the portfolios of work that are kept.

97. Throughout the inspection, teachers' enthusiasm, energy and commitment were fully reflected in the pupils' enjoyment and interest and excellent attitudes towards the subject. They worked as productively as the circumstances could afford. The significant increase in numbers of pupils since the last inspection, and in the proportion of these pupils whose needs are complex in terms of learning or very challenging behaviour, has taken place without an appropriate parallel development of the accommodation and resources. This has led to deterioration in the school's provision and outcomes for pupils in this subject. Until the school can be provided with a dedicated, accessible space in which to provide appropriate furniture, equipment, storage of materials and tools that enables all pupils, including those with challenging behaviour, to use equipment safely, standards for pupils aged 11-14 will remain unsatisfactory as will the range of opportunities available for older pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

98. At the time of the last inspection, geography was taught as part of the Humanities Project on a five-year cycle to mixed groups of Key Stages 3 and 4. No judgements were made about coverage and progress. Geography is now taught to pupils in Key Stage 3 through a three-year plan that covers 18 weeks each year. The work covers 'Passport to the World' when pupils are introduced to 'Trevor' and his travels, a local study, a field study, a selection of significant places and environments alongside some basic geographic processes, for example, to studies of maps and plans. There is now evidence of a clear plan for teaching and learning in the subject, which has helped teachers in the planning of lessons.

99. The scrutiny of work and the observation of three lessons during the inspection show that by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' achievements and the progress they make overall are satisfactory, although progress in one class is better and is connected to the quality of teaching, which is also of a higher standard.

100. By the end of the Key Stage 3 pupils have completed a study of Foxfield School and its location and specific characteristics in the environment of Moreton. They have gained some knowledge of the British Isles and a country of Europe and one part of the world, for example, India. They also carry out a simple survey of Moreton and make simple maps of the classroom and school, as well, as being introduced to the compass points. In all three lessons observed pupils were studying maps and plans and learning to understand grids as well as developing their understanding of 'a birds eye view'. In the highly successful lesson with higher attaining pupils, the teacher was using the computer programme 'Smudge Discovers the World' to help the pupils to understand the concept of a map and plan and the idea of a grid and co-ordinates. There was a carefully planned sequence of activities developing via worksheets and discussion. Pupils were successfully learning to identify a table, desk and sink from a plan or 'birds eye view' before looking at a grid and writing down given co-ordinates and relating this activity to a map of the Wirral and identifying the co-ordinates for specified places.

101. The knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher challenged and inspired the pupils, which enabled them to make very good progress with their understanding. In the second lesson observed pupils were learning about left and right and to draw simple plans and maps. They were beginning to make accurate observations about physical features and to find out about North, South, East and West and marking these directions in relation to their classroom. Pupils also developed their knowledge of the globe and improved their ideas about direction. They listen carefully and developed their speaking and listening skills. In a lesson involving pupils with more profound and multiple learning difficulties they were using footsteps to enable them to find specific places in the classroom before following a trail of footsteps around the school. They identified particular rooms by the pictures of staff who work in the rooms. Most of the pupils found it difficult to understand the ideas behind the lesson and the overall quality of learning was adversely affected by their lack of attention. Both the teacher and the support staff found it difficult to keep the group on their tasks because the ideas were difficult for them to access.

102. The quality of the teaching and learning on the week of the inspection varied from very good to satisfactory, and overall it is satisfactory. It was most effective when the level of the work and the quality of the resources matched the needs and abilities of the pupils. When the lesson content is adapted to the needs of the pupils and when the teacher and support staff have high expectations of the pupils participation, involvement and behaviour, then very good progress is achieved. Above all, when good subject knowledge is combined with an awareness of pupils' needs and levels of attainment, pupils' progress is good. When these conditions are not present the learning is no better than satisfactory.

103. The co-ordination of the subject is at an early stage of development and the co-ordinator had only been in post for six weeks at the time of the inspection. There is an urgent need to enhance the resources available to support work in some lessons. For example, more maps, visual aids, compasses, atlases and other visual materials. There is a challenge to ensure that the geographical content of some lessons is modified to enable pupils with more profound and multiple learning difficulties to access the ideas. Similarly, assessment and recording of pupil progress is inconsistent across the key stage and there is little evidence to show that assessment is used consistently to inform the planning of future lessons. Because pupils' work and progress is not consistently assessed on a regular basis it is difficult to set appropriate targets. This is particularly necessary for pupils with challenging behaviour.

HISTORY

104. Pupils spend three half terms a year studying history, and the other three on geography, and as a result there was only lesson during the inspection where it was possible to observe this subject being taught. In this one lesson, pupils made very good progress as result of very good, and appropriate teaching strategies. Analysis of pupils' work indicates that pupils' achievements and the progress they make in this subject is at least good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

105. History is only taught to Key Stage 3, and, as pupils are grouped by attainment rather than age, all classes are taught the same lesson. Work scrutiny shows that, though the topic is the same, higher attaining pupils study at greater depth. Presentation is good, very good for the higher attaining pupils, indicating that pupils take pride in their work. Though each item is dated, and is marked with encouraging comments, there is no indication of the level of help given, making the judgement of individual progress difficult. Pupils grow in understanding of history through the experience of handling artefacts, comparing them with what is used today, and making their own copies of what they have seen. They also learn about what is good evidence.

106. The well-planned, practical, sensory approach to history, is very relevant to the needs of the pupils, and resulted in very good learning in the one lesson observed. Pupils were fascinated by the hornbook, quill pen, bellows, and candlestick, and especially by the action of the snuffer. Elizabethan music helps to create an atmosphere. The making of a quill pen was well organised, and it was sufficiently simple so that the emphasis of the lesson was still on history and not on the process of making it. When they had finished, pupils wrote their names with the pen they had made, which gave them first hand experiences. Relationships are very good, and learning support assistants who know the pupils well, make a good contribution. Behaviour is good because the teacher has a firm, calm manner with a touch of humour, and pupils are interested and involved. Analysis of past work, including pupil-made artefacts such as hieroglyphs on papyrus, a ship's log, a Victorian jigsaw puzzle, and a pressed flower bookmark, indicates that teaching and learning, are of a similar standard to the lesson observed. There is no ongoing assessment and recording of individual progress, only of curriculum coverage. Curriculum content is good, on a three year rolling programme, with good links to National Curriculum programmes of study. However, lack of detailed assessment means that planning is not tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils. As a result, the tasks planned for pupils do not differ according to the attainment levels of pupils. Annual review reports tell only what pupils have experienced, not what they have achieved as individuals.

107. The co-ordinator, who is also the only teacher of the subject, is not a history specialist, but shows good knowledge and understanding, and the ability to present information at an appropriate level. Provision and use of resources, including information technology, is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Pupils and students make satisfactory progress overall in knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology. Their achievement is overall satisfactory, and many achieve well when using information and communication technology in other subjects across the curriculum. This is because the emphasis on training teachers to understand and use the new technology to enhance their teaching has been very successful. There has been an improvement in this subject since the previous inspection when it was not taught as a discrete subject, and cross-curricular use was judged to be satisfactory.

109. During Key Stage 3, pupils recognise characteristics of familiar items, both by appearance and by purpose. However, they are less successful in sorting these objects into groups with common attributes. During one lesson observed, pupils achieved better in the practical activity of labelling objects, than in the similar computer exercise, where their reading difficulties and speed of the scan mode disadvantaged them. Pupils, across the key stage, gave little indication that they understood the purpose of the activity. However, these were early lessons in the series, and planning indicates that knowledge and understanding will develop.

110. The higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3, use the mouse and keyboard independently to access programmes, while some need verbal prompting, and the lower attaining pupils have individual support from learning support assistants. In English, pupils explore an interactive book, write news using a symbol programme, create sentences using a 'Clicker' grid word bank, and are learning to use the 'webcam'. Pupils access mathematics programmes with minimal support to reinforce learning, and very good use of the computer was made in a geography lesson where pupils were given the opportunity to investigate and record. In science, pupils log on to the internet, use an interactive programme about 'Dangers in the Home', and printed a resulting certificate of achievement.

111. Although Key Stage 4 pupils, and students at post 16, do not have weekly lessons in information and communication technology, they continue to develop skills through use of the computer in subjects across the curriculum. Information and communication technology also forms part of the work undertaken for ASDAN accreditation, providing them with experience in each of the National Curriculum programme of study areas. Pupils and students work independently on reading and comprehension programmes, and in one lesson pupils understood and communicated that there was a need for the technician when there was a problem with the sound. Lower attaining pupils use a word/picture bank to write sentences, enabling them to participate fully in the lesson. The learning support assistant was used effectively to help pupils learn by creating a grid of appropriate words so that the necessary vocabulary was available.

112. At Key Stage 3, teaching and learning is satisfactory. When appropriate use of the good resources is backed up by good specialist knowledge pupils learn well. Lessons are usually well planned, but teachers do not sufficiently emphasise the lesson objectives, missing opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the use of information and communication technology. Some teachers, who are non-specialist teachers lack detailed knowledge of the subject which effects learning, as lessons do not have a sharp focus. Assessment of pupils' individual progress during lessons is not recorded, and therefore does not provide ongoing information for individual targets. The co-ordinator is aware that training is needed to improve the knowledge and understanding of those who teach this subject. The school is currently undergoing national training, which should include provision in this area.

113. The curriculum provision is broad, balanced and relevant, based on nationally recognised 'P' levels and the National Curriculum. Pupils are assessed regularly to determine, not only computer skills and levels achieved, but the best position and equipment needed. In other subjects across the curriculum, teachers use information and communication technology well for planning, recording, research, illustrating lessons, and providing pupils and students with opportunities to reinforce learning. The use of the 'Power Point' application with the data projector, digital cameras, the webcam, scanners and roamers, enhance classroom teaching and assemblies. As a result of extensive training the co-ordinator understands the requirements of this subject well, and is enthusiastic to develop it. The addition of a technician to the staff to maintain, move and set up equipment around the school makes a very significant contribution to the smooth running of lessons. Resources are very good, and have recently included the provision of laptops for all staff. There is a good

range of switches, and variety of software that ensures access for pupils and students of all abilities. The in-service training provided by the co-ordinator is good, is ensuring that all staff know how to use the equipment and is impacting well on learning across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

114. Good improvements have been made to this area of the curriculum since the last inspection. Pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils, really enjoy learning French, and are proud of their achievements, using the phrases they have learned, out of lessons. This contributes to their self-esteem, social skills and cultural development.

115. French is taught once a week to all Key Stage 3 pupils, and achievements are satisfactory. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, taught by a non-specialist temporary supply teacher. The same lesson was taught to both classes, and while it was effective for the lower attaining pupils who made good progress, it lacked challenge for higher attaining pupils who did not achieve as well as they should.

116. All pupils greet the teacher with "bonjour". The current topic, in a five-year cycle, is food and drink. Lower attaining pupils can name some drinks, and copy others. They are learning to use "je voudrais" and "merci". The higher attaining pupils can put several words together to ask for a specific drink, or to give their names. They learn about French culture and tradition, and could recall information from the previous lesson. Written work involves copying the names of drinks in the correct place. Pupils work hard and show enthusiasm and pride in their work. Analysis of work gives evidence of a range of topics covered over time. Pupils learned about body parts, numbers, days of the week and months of the year. Good comprehension is indicated by the ability to follow instructions on the worksheet. However, there is no annotation to say how much assistance was given to complete the tasks.

117. Teaching, in one lesson observed, was good, and in the other, satisfactory. This was solely because the teacher did not know the pupils well enough to judge the level of challenge required by the higher attaining pupils class. Both lessons were well planned and resourced. The teacher is not a fluent French speaker, so there was insufficient use of spontaneous French for greetings, comments and instructions, but the formal input was very well structured and pupils learned the vocabulary well. Role-play was used effectively, in a cafe setting, and pupils showed interest and enthusiasm. Relationships are good, and support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils respond well to the calm, quiet manner of the teacher, and behave well.

118. The curriculum aims to provide linguistic development, social development, and cultural awareness, with opportunities to listen and respond, read and write. For the lower attaining pupils, the emphasis is on a multicultural and sensory approach, giving pupils the opportunity to experience sights, sounds and tastes from other countries. The co-ordinator of the subject is not a French specialist, and does not teach French. Medium term planning is very good, but is difficult to implement in the present situation. The policy is under review and discussions are taking place about possible alternatives to the present system, for example, replacing weekly lessons with a French week, and studying the culture of a range of countries.

MUSIC

119. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its standards in music, and pupils continue to make satisfactory progress overall. Some aspects of provision have been improved, including the fact that the National Curriculum programmes of study for music are

now taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3, with music forming an element of a combined arts programme at Key Stage 4 where it is not a compulsory subject. However, the decision to operate a half-yearly timetable, where the subject is taught for 18 weeks of the year and is absent from the timetable for the remainder of the year, means that pupils need to revise all knowledge, skills and understanding gained in the last year after a half-year's gap before anything new can be taught.

120. Due to the timetabling arrangements described above, no discrete music lessons were taught at Key Stage 3 during the inspection, and few lessons had any musical content. Therefore, judgements about pupils' progress have been made from analysis of pupils' work, their records of achievement, teachers' planning and other documentation, and records kept of assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and musical understanding. Photographic records and video evidence of pupils of all ages performing in annual school concerts and shows were also provided.

121. Pupils during Key Stage 3 have many opportunities to sing and vocalise to many types of songs, including seasonal ones such as Christmas music, and traditional ballads and sea shanties. Pupils learn to clap, beat and move in time to the music. Basic non-tuned percussion instruments are used to accompany these songs. Higher attaining pupils use untuned and tuned percussion to compose their own music on given themes or to represent feelings and emotions. They have limited opportunities to listen to and appraise different types of music, due to the pressure of timetabled time. Pupils during Key Stage 4 continue to develop their skills through the combined arts programme, and some can successfully sing a 'part' song such as a round. Higher attaining pupils can compose a short piece of music related to a personal interest, and record this using standard musical notation.

122. It was not possible to observe any teaching of music at Key Stage 3 during the inspection, but scrutiny of available evidence and the school's own monitoring suggest that it would be at least satisfactory. The scheme of work has been rewritten by the subject co-ordinator, who took over management of the subject after the last inspection, but was absent from school through illness at the time of the inspection. The new scheme of work is satisfactory. It contains all required elements of the National Curriculum, and music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through the opportunities provided for pupils to listen to and sing a range of music from their own cultural heritage. However, music makes only a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural development, as there are too few opportunities to study popular music and the music of other cultures. A good quality audit of music undertaken by the co-ordinator appropriately identifies the need for music to appear more regularly on the timetable in order to prevent 'fallback' of skills during the period of the year without formal music sessions. Resources for music are satisfactory, and include some that facilitate the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning. However, there are insufficient instruments from other cultures. Assessment procedures for music are satisfactory, but learning steps are too broad to allow lower attaining pupils' progress to be properly monitored, and to allow assessment data to inform curriculum planning or to allow for individual learning targets to be set. Again, this situation has been identified in the subject co-ordinator's audit and action plan.

123. The music curriculum is enhanced by regular opportunities to hear high quality music from a group of musicians from the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, who visit annually to play for pupils and on occasions run practical workshops, for example on how music can affect the emotions. Pupils also have opportunities to participate in dance workshops with a professional company, and can take part in an annual show, recent examples of which have included *Joseph*, *Cats* and *The Story of the Wild West*.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

124. The very good range of work and provision in the subject have been maintained and improved since the time of the last inspection. More equipment has been purchased including more trampolines, parachutes, slide mats and new hoists and slings, and resources are now very good. There are new and improved changing facilities although there is still no shower room in the boys' changing room. There is now a detailed assessment and recording system in place that is related to nationally recognised 'P' levels.

125. Standards of achievement and progress in physical education are good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and at post 16. At Key Stage 3, pupils learn to develop their strength and stamina through warm up activities before practicing catching and throwing balls, bowling at targets, and throwing over nets. They fully enjoy the competitive elements of the team work, and as well as developing their skills and understanding of the meaning of fair play. Learning support staff perform a vital role in supporting pupils with more complex learning difficulties, by helping them to concentrate and participate in the full range of activities. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties follow the same lesson pattern, and the teachers' good knowledge of each pupil's level of co-ordination and physical ability enabled all the pupils to participate at an appropriately challenging level. Higher attaining pupils plan and perform tasks before playing 'kwik-cricket' and choosing activities for the final part of the lesson. In all lessons pupils participate eagerly in the tasks and work hard throughout the lessons.

126. At Key Stage 4, and post 16, pupils and students take part in 'Rebound Therapy' and are encouraged to use the equipment and the trampoline. All pupils and students participate eagerly in activities, which are planned so that individuals make progress in their co-ordination and development of physical skills. Pupils and students participate fully in 'Short Tennis' and in a game of 'Skittles', improving the accuracy of their throwing. During the swimming lessons pupils and students are provided with very good opportunities to develop swimming strokes, breathing and stamina. They acknowledge the rules of health and safety in the pool, follow instructions carefully, are eager to develop his/her strokes and participate with enthusiasm and confidence. All are able to swim the width of the pool and most can swim four widths.

127. The quality of the teaching and learning is good and there are examples of very good teaching in some lessons. This is due to the teachers' knowledge of the subject, and understanding of pupil's and students' individual needs and physical abilities. The learning support assistants, through their enthusiasm make a valuable contribution to the lessons and this motivates the pupils and students to succeed and do well. There are high expectations for achievement and behaviour, and this leads to pupils and students concentrating well and putting in considerable effort. Teachers plan their lessons very carefully to ensure that each element is understood and that pupils and students build their skills effectively. There is good discipline and management of pupils, with safety always being a key issue, but improvements could be made to the amount of opportunities for pupils and students to evaluate their work and progress.

128. All pupils and students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, experience the full range of opportunities including gymnastics, games, athletics, and swimming. Dance is offered as an extra curricular activity. In addition, the school participates in inter-school competitive games and swimming galas. An excellent feature of the work is the opportunities for residential experiences at the Ozanam Centre, the Barnstondale Camp and other centres. These occasions include experiences in rock climbing, canoeing, horse riding, as well as opportunities for pupils to develop their social and personal skills. Of particular merit are the daily lunchtime club activities that are greatly valued by the pupils. The rich experiences enjoyed by the pupils does much to promote not only their physical development but also their personal and social skills and their sense of well being. The pupils and students benefit from the commitment of the teachers and

support staff that contributes significantly to the pupils' enjoyment of the subject and the success they achieve.

129. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management of the subject. His knowledge and experience of the work combined with his enthusiasm for the subject is widely respected and appreciated by pupils across the school. His personal qualifications as Trampolining Coach, First Aid and Outdoor Pursuits ensure he has the ability to provide leadership and on matters of health and safety.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

130. At the last inspection, pupils were making good progress. Improvements made to strengthen the co-ordination of subject teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and progress, which is now very good overall, with some excellent features. Studying Islam during Key Stage 4, the lower attaining pupils' understanding of prayers and worship in a mosque is enhanced by the use of music, the teacher's explanation and the chance to touch and explore artefacts. Higher attaining pupils discuss the differences between attending a mosque and a church, and follow a film made by the teacher attentively, asking thoughtful questions. In Key Stage 3 pupils are studying Judaism, and lower attaining pupils who often exhibit severely challenging behaviour enjoy looking at examples of yarmulkes and then making and colouring their own, with support. Higher attaining pupils who have been exploring the importance of the Bar Mitzvah show very good recall of the key elements of preparation and the ceremony itself and are able to identify important symbols and artefacts correctly.

131. Improvement in the subject since the last Inspection is good. Developments to the scheme of work link it effectively to the locally agreed syllabus and imaginative approaches are found to engage the interest of pupils in the major world religions as well as in Christianity, greatly enriching their understanding. The adoption of the ASDAN course for pupils in Key Stage 4 has led to revisions in the scheme of work throughout the school to ensure that when topics are returned to, knowledge and understanding gained in previous years is reinforced and built upon. Detailed resource packs are provided for all non-specialist teachers, and the collection of audio-visual materials, CD-ROMS, books and artefacts greatly enriches the activities offered.

132. The teaching and learning observed in Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good overall. Half of the lessons seen were excellent and the consistently very good work is observed across in all classes. Teachers work closely with learning support assistants; show very good knowledge of pupils' learning styles and support needs and excellent management of individual and group learning. Pace and challenge in lessons is appropriate to pupils' levels of attainment and learning difficulties. It is steady but demanding for pupils with complex needs, crisp and exhilarating for higher attaining pupils and focused on securing calm and effective group work for pupils whose behaviour is challenging. Teachers use questioning well and their explanations and answers to pupils are well-judged and effective. Their personal enthusiasm and commitment to teaching the subject well is evident and infectious, and pupils are often disappointed when lessons finish.

133. As a result, they gain knowledge and understanding, evidenced in their written work and lesson performance, and built up progressively within each unit of work. They sustain concentration, work hard productively and respond extremely positively to the lively and imaginative approaches teachers take, such as using singing and drama to emphasise their presentation of important information, such as the story of Moses. The dramatic production of a doll in a basket at a key moment is so realistic that a concerned pupil asked others to whisper so as not to wake the baby. Information and communication technology is used well – projecting CD-ROM video material onto a large screen and, in a particularly imaginative

example, the teacher designed a quiz based on 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' using a 'PowerPoint' presentation to produce revision questions about Judaism and four possible answers to each. The interactive whiteboard was used to enable the pupil in the chair to select his answers by touching the screen and asking the audience, or phoning a friend in the class, when he was stuck.

134. Where elements of lessons are occasionally less successful, some teachers' lack of detailed subject knowledge is a major factor. This can cause them to miss opportunities to extend pupils' understanding through discussion and debate and forge links in pupils' understanding of the common features as well as the diversity of different faith traditions. On occasion, some lack confidence in explanation and in answering pupils' questions. This can also lead to non-specialist teachers setting insufficiently challenging learning objectives that are not linked to the subject content, identifying instead practical skills, group or individual behaviour as intended outcomes. Assessing pupils' progress needs to be more consistent, but is made more difficult by the combination of a rolling programme across three years, and the mixed age and attainment grouped classes. Tracking and ensuring rising attainment over time is made very difficult in these circumstances.

135. The leadership of the subject is excellent, and the practical and professional support provided for colleagues leads to very effective teaching in almost all lessons. Resources are well chosen, materials are of good quality and teachers receive support, advice and evaluation of their planning. There are at present insufficient opportunities to develop non-specialist teachers' knowledge and skills through discussion and classroom observation, and the teachers would benefit from of a programme of subject department meetings to enable the most effective strategies to be shared and to provide further support and training that would extend subject knowledge and increase teachers' confidence.

136. One of the greatest strengths of the school's work in the subject is the provision made for pupils of all attainment levels to begin and end every lesson with a sustained period of reflection, managed skilfully in a range of ways. Teachers and support staff have worked systematically, building up the importance and meaning of these periods of silence and calm. These are undoubtedly recognisable, especially for pupils with the most complex disabilities and those with a history of severely challenging behaviour. The contrast between their behaviour during lesson changeovers and when the period of reflection begins is stark. Many who were restless, vocalising or engaged in aggressive or patterned movements recognise the darkening of the room and the lighting of votive candles and scented tea lights. For the pupils with challenging behaviour, incense sticks and music are used.

137. Striking responses from pupils reward the importance all teachers attach to this aspect of their work. All of them have learned in their own ways to recognise the meaning of the period of quietness. Pupils with visually impairments respond with delight to the heat and scent as the lit candles are gently passed across their faces, and other pupils, who have been engaged in low-level disruption, respond immediately to the music and fall silent, remaining lost in thought for a period of several minutes. For the pupils with the most severely challenging behaviour breathing in the incense creates an atmosphere of calm and the whole group settles together. For all these pupils in a range of settings and with vastly differing attainment levels and needs, these moments are clearly important and provide a genuine respite from the difficulties they face making sense of their experiences.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

138. At the time of the previous inspection pupils made good progress in personal, social and health education and this continues to be the situation, although through the evidence gathered during this inspection the breadth of this provision has improved. The school is currently under going building work, which restricted the observation of some elements of the

extensive programme, offered by the school. As part of the personal, social and health education programme the school also offers another module entitled Independent Living Skills.

139. Throughout both key stages the pupils make good progress in this subject, which is taught in discrete lessons, but also permeates other areas of the curriculum and has an impact during circle time sessions and lunch times. Evidence seen in work files, careers portfolios and ASDAN modules testify the good work, which has been achieved by all pupils.

140. During Key Stage 3 pupils know about caring for their school environment in terms of keeping it tidy, how to get rid of rubbish properly, and considering whether or it could be recycled. They have been responsible for drawing up class and school rules, which have been written by the pupils and are displayed throughout the building. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of listening to others and being responsible for their own actions. They understand the stages of physical development and track this from a baby to an adult. Pupils learn that a baby requires certain things, such as a cot and a pram and that they do not. They are aware that the need to have a balanced diet and that this will help to keep them well. Their own personal safety is also developed through a study on illness and medicines and they understand that medicines are taken for specific reasons, such as for headaches or coughs.

141. This work is extended further at Key Stage 4 when the previous work about personal safety is developed through work on dangers in the general environment. They learn simple first aid techniques and are able to put a body into the recovery position. They know that in a case of an emergency such as a fire they should ring 999. Pupils are aware of a range of safety issues in the home and in the community, they identify hazards in the kitchen, such as trailing kettle flexes, and are aware that it is not safe to play on or near railway lines. Their own personal development is improved through work on relationships and they understand that a good friend is someone who listens to you and cares for you. Pupils are encouraged to consider leisure activities that they may wish to do in their spare time and the school is instrumental in preparing them for participation in clubs through the good range of lunchtime and planned after school clubs.

142. Overall the quality of teaching is good in both key stages. There is evidence of good planning, giving clear learning outcomes, which enable the learning support staff to be fully involved in the session from the start. The planning also allow for a good deployment of resources which are then used effectively, for example in a Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils used wash bags, containing hand creams and nail varnishes, which were personal to them, and this in turn promoted their self esteem and dignity. The support staff are deployed well and this ensures that time is used to the best effect. The relationships between pupils and staff are very good and this promotes their learning well because the staff are engaging and have high expectations of individual pupils. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and they are very supportive of each, for example in one lesson when one pupil was having difficulty expressing himself, everyone waited and when he succeeded everyone was delighted.

143. There are a range good supporting curriculum policies and planning for personal, social and health education programme together with the 'Independent Living Skills' aspect. There is a co-ordinator for each aspect and they have worked hard to produce relevant and appropriate materials that support their colleagues well. There is a need to audit the 'Citizenship' aspect of the curriculum, which has been acknowledged by the co-ordinator, and this will be carried out soon. At present there are insufficient opportunities for the co-ordinators to monitor the teaching of their subjects, however this has been recognised and there are plans to put a system in place. Apart from the inadequate careers library there are a satisfactory range of resources available.

