

INSPECTION REPORT

CROMWELL SCHOOL

Reddish, Stockport

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106279

Headteacher: Mark Rogers

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th July 2000

Inspection number: 191416

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 special
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Thornley Lane South Reddish Stockport
Postcode:	SK5 6QW
Telephone number:	0161 320 8728
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Albert Hatton
Date of previous inspection:	21 st January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Rosemary Eaton	Registered inspector	Art; design and technology; religious education; equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How well is the school led and managed? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught?
Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector		How well does the school look care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Mary Cobb	Team inspector	English; music; English as an additional language; special educational needs; modern foreign language	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communications technology; geography; physical education	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources; efficiency
Susan Yarnall	Team inspector	Science; history; personal, social and health education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cromwell is a community special school for pupils aged 11 to 19 with severe learning difficulties. Currently, 68 pupils attend the school, including 19 post-16 students. All pupils have statements of special educational need. In addition to those with severe learning difficulties, ten pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and 11 have autistic spectrum disorders. A number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds – black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Of these, fourteen have English as an additional language. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. Almost all pupils live within Tameside; a very few are from Stockport, Manchester and Derbyshire. The school is subject to reorganisation proposals, which will see the 11-16 provision co-located with a mainstream secondary school and post-16 integrated with a college.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cromwell is a good school. The quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the school are good, ensuring that pupils make good progress overall. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils behave very well, as a result of the very close attention paid to promoting good behaviour.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a result, pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership.
- The provision for creative arts is a strength of the curriculum.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
- The school's finances are planned and controlled very well.

What could be improved

- Detailed programmes of work are not in place for all subjects and courses.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory. In particular, the lack of specialist facilities limits the curriculum and pupils' opportunities – for example, to develop independent living skills.
- Subject leaders do not take responsibility for managing all aspects of their subjects – for example, monitoring pupils' progress, sharing good practice and planning to develop resources.
- There is recognition that the effectiveness of the senior management team is compromised by weaknesses in the performance of one of the key staff.
- The provision of work experience opportunities for post-16 students is unsatisfactory.

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 previously inspected in January 1997. Since then, its performance has improved well. Pupils now make better progress, especially those in Key Stage 3 and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The quality of teaching has improved very well – it was previously unsatisfactory in 18 per cent of lessons. Pupils' attendance is now better – from being unsatisfactory, it is now satisfactory. Behaviour was good in 1997; it is now very good.

The school has tackled all the key issues arising from the previous inspection. Overall, it has made satisfactory, but variable, progress. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are now satisfactory, and links between Key Stages 3 and 4 are well established. The provision for information and communications technology has improved well. However, within subjects, programmes of work have been produced at a slow rate. This has meant that

pupils' progress has been spasmodic and is only now accelerating. The teaching and learning of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties has developed well, and teachers usually make good provision for these pupils. A suitable system has been introduced to accredit the work of post-16 students. During this inspection, teaching in the post-16 provision was seen to have improved. However, this does not accurately reflect the current situation, as one class was taught by temporary teachers. The school has done its best to improve the accommodation, and it has successfully developed that for information and communications technology and art. Library resources have also improved. However, the accommodation remains unsatisfactory, including the provision for design and technology and science. The time for teaching has increased, and is now broadly satisfactory. The procedures for monitoring, recording and improving attendance are now very good. The problem of lateness remains, but is out of the school's hands.

In most respects, the school is well placed to continue to develop – the headteacher is clear about what needs to be done and staff appreciate where there is a need for further improvement. However, the senior management team needs to be strengthened and subject leaders need to take on more responsibility.

STANDARDS

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

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

The school has set appropriate targets for Year 11 pupils to achieve this year, and these will largely be met.

Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In general, Key Stage 3 pupils achieve better than pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16 students. This is because there has not yet been time for improvements in teaching and the curriculum to affect the standards at the top end of the school.

Pupils throughout the school make very good progress in music. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in English, science, art, geography, physical education and personal, social and health education. Progress is similar in Key Stage 4, except that it is satisfactory in physical education. Post-16 students make broadly satisfactory progress. Progress is good in the class for younger students. Key Stage 4 and post-16 students have some of their work accredited through a Unit Award Scheme. Post-16 students make best progress when they are learning through practical situations – for example, running a tuck shop, working on an allotment or using a public library.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to take part in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils generally behave very well in lessons, at breaks and during visits out of school.
Personal development and relationships	Overall, good. Relationships are very good. Pupils enjoy each others' company. Personal development is sometimes inhibited because pupils are given too much support.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most absences are due to pupils' medical conditions or extended holidays. Punctuality is unsatisfactory, because transport is often late.

Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities. They concentrate very well when they are interested in their work.

Pupils and students collaborate together when given opportunities – for example, when working together at the allotment.

Pupils have limited opportunities to develop the skills they need for daily life, because the school lacks suitable facilities. For example, there is no food technology room.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

English is taught well in Key Stages 3 and 4. Science teaching is very good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory. At post-16, the teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory overall, and is better for the younger students. Personal, social and health education is well taught throughout the school. Communication skills, including literacy, are well taught in the main. However, the use of information and communications technology, signs and symbols, is inconsistent and sometimes opportunities are missed.

Teachers are generally very confident, especially when teaching their specialist subjects. They usually match activities well to the needs of all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Support assistants make a good contribution as a rule, but sometimes they are not well used or may give pupils too much help. In very good lessons, teachers have high expectations and make pupils work hard. Pupils respond well to challenges like this, and make good efforts. Older post-16 students are not generally required to make the same effort.

During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It was very good or better in 29 per cent and unsatisfactory in only three per cent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils lack the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language. There is too little time for science. The provision for creative arts – music, art and drama – is a particular strength of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is no additional support available, but pupils with English as an additional language play a full part in lessons and make progress at the same rate as other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and social development. Their moral and cultural development is catered for very well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school works hard to ensure the health and safety of all pupils.

The school's partnership with parents is good.

Programmes of work are being developed but are not yet complete for all subjects and courses. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good and is supported by a very good range of visits – for example, to museums – and events such as concerts. Links with the community are good.

The provision for personal, social and health education and for careers education and guidance is good. However, very little work experience is provided.

The arrangements for child protection are very good.

The school monitors pupils' attendance very carefully and encourages pupils to attend regularly. Its procedures for promoting good behaviour are very effective.

Teachers set targets for pupils to achieve but do not consistently assess how well they have learned during lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has a clear picture of how the school needs to develop. The deputy headteacher and Key Stage 3 and 4 co-ordinator provide effective support.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors are aware of school developments and local and national priorities. They are committed to the school and perform their statutory duties effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school carefully checks the quality of teachers' work and how well pupils are learning.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Finances are very well managed by the senior management team, administrative officer and governing body.

The school is very well staffed with teachers and learning support assistants. Learning resources are generally satisfactory. The accommodation is unsatisfactory – there are many shortcomings.

The school improvement plan is very good quality, with highly appropriate priorities for development.

The school makes good efforts to apply the principles of best value – for example, by analysing how well it is doing and the value for money it provides.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy coming to school. • They make good progress. • The school has high expectations for children to achieve. • The school helps children to become more mature and responsible. • The school is approachable when parents have problems or concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of are unhappy about the provision of homework. • A smaller number think that there are not enough extra-curricular activities. • A few parents feel insufficiently well informed about their children’s progress. • Parents are concerned about their children’s late arrival to school, caused by transport problems.

The inspectors share most of the parents’ positive views of the school. However, sometimes pupils are given too much support and this stops them being as independent as they could be.

The school is aware of some parents’ concerns about homework and plans to agree a policy concerning provision. The current situation is broadly satisfactory.

The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.

The information provided for parents is good. The current individual education plans cover a period of six months, owing to changes in the way the school sets targets for pupils. In future, these will be reviewed every term, in accordance with the school’s usual practice.

Inspectors share the parents’ concerns about the lateness of some transport and have brought the matter to the attention of a representative of the local education authority.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Most pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. They make good progress overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, particularly for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In 1997, their progress was unsatisfactory. Progress has improved in line with similar improvements in the quality of teaching. A further factor has been developments in the curriculum. Although programmes of work are not complete in most subjects, planning frameworks ensure that pupils' learning builds on what they already know, understand and can do. However, progress and achievement are variable through the school. In some subjects and key stages – for example, science in Key Stage 3 and art in Key Stages 3 and 4 – progress is good, whilst teaching is very good. This is because the curricular plans have not yet been fully implemented, so all pupils are following similar programmes, whatever their age. Similarly, pupils are making very good progress in religious education, but achievement is no more than satisfactory, because they have only just started to learn the subject. Progress slows down in the later years of post-16. This is because the quality of teaching is not of the same high quality as in the rest of the school, and an appropriate curriculum has only recently been introduced. Pupils are making good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the first year of post-16. Their achievement is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 and post-16, because there has not been time for improvements in teaching and the curriculum to have a strong impact on the standards being achieved at the top end of the school. The older pupils and the post-16 students are still making up for previous deficiencies in teaching and the curriculum.
2. The school has set appropriate targets for Year 11 pupils to achieve this year, and these will largely be met. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is a contributory factor in the good progress in English in Key Stages 3 and 4. Similarly, as the National Numeracy Strategy is implemented, improvements are starting to be seen in mathematics.
3. During Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress and achieve well in English, science, art, geography, physical education and personal, social and health education. Their achievement and progress is very good in music. In mathematics, design and technology, history and information and communications technology, achievement and progress are satisfactory.
4. Achievement and progress are good in science, art, geography and personal, social and health education in Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in English and religious education, but their progress is good and very good respectively. Progress and achievement are very good in music and satisfactory in mathematics, design and technology, history, information and communications technology and physical education.
5. Post-16 students make very good progress and achieve very high standards in their creative arts course, especially when taught by the specialist teacher. They make good progress and achieve well in personal, social and health education. Although progress is better in the first year of post-16, overall progress is satisfactory.

6. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make better progress now than at the time of the previous inspection. This is because teachers are generally very careful to provide appropriate experiences for all pupils, enabling them to progress at similar rates. Their progress is less good when full advantage is not taken of opportunities to encourage them to communicate – for example, through the use of information and communications technology, signs or symbols.
7. Pupils with English as an additional language make progress at the same rates as other pupils, because teachers are sensitive to their needs. No additional support is available for these pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy coming to school and settle down to work quickly when they arrive in the classrooms. Pupils sustain their concentration particularly well during lessons that are carefully structured and clearly focused as, for example, during literacy lessons. They are willing to get involved in lessons – writing on a flip chart during a careers lesson or reading out their work in English. They respond strongly when teachers show that they are enthusiastic, as in physical education, art and music. Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities, such as games during mathematics lessons, and when they are challenged to think hard – for example, in Key Stage 3 science lessons. Many pupils are also eager to be involved in extra-curricular activities. The mathematics club proved so popular that two sessions had to be arranged. Pupils are capable of very intense concentration when they are motivated by their work. During music lessons, noises from elsewhere do not put them off, and Key Stage 3 pupils painstakingly assembled a collage in art lessons, arranging pulses and pasta with enormous attention to detail. Pupils usually take great care of equipment and resources – for example, clearing away information and communications technology resources and handling expensive musical instruments very sensibly.
9. Pupils' behaviour is very good and this has a positive impact on their learning. They value the house system and merits for good work and behaviour, often checking with staff whether they have earned these rewards. The consistent and comprehensive behaviour management strategies have been successful, in that there have been no exclusions. Pupils get restless when activities are protracted or repetitive – as when they have to wait for all pupils to respond to similar questions. Occasionally, some pupils are unco-operative, usually as a result of their special educational needs. Other pupils in the class do not allow themselves to be distracted, and instead get on with their work. Pupils behave extremely well out of school. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils' behaviour was excellent during a physical education lesson at a mainstream secondary school. Post-16 students' very good behaviour enables them to make effective use of experiences such as visits to a public library and café.
10. Overall, pupils' personal development and the relationships and friendships that they form in school are good. Pupils enjoy the company of each other. At lunchtimes they regularly sit together and discuss girlfriends, boyfriends and favourite television programmes whilst they eat their meals. They wait patiently until they are dismissed and when outside, some pupils organise a game of football. Others take turns in playing a ball game supervised by an adult or help to care for their friends with physical or communication difficulties – guiding them round the playground and talking to them. During lessons, pupils often show that they care for one another. For example, in a personal, social and health education lesson, one pupil made sure that another, in a wheelchair, was covered by the parachute, so that he could join in the experience. Students work together effectively as a team when tending the allotment

– for example, harvesting fruit and vegetables. Pupils throughout the school work collaboratively when given opportunities – for example, to organise themselves to conduct science investigations. The high ratio of staff to pupils does on occasion inhibit pupils' independence. Staff do not always give pupils' time and opportunity to correct their own mistakes. Opportunities for pupils and students to develop independent living skills are limited by the lack of suitable facilities in school.

11. Overall, attendance is satisfactory, and close to being in line with schools of the same type. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Following the issues raised at that time, the school now records unauthorised absences and their incidence has decreased over the past three years. Parents and carers agree overwhelmingly that their children enjoy being at school: the majority of absences are caused by pupils' medical conditions or extended holidays abroad, authorised for cultural reasons. Pupils' punctuality to school in the mornings is unsatisfactory. Observations during the inspection and analysis of the records kept by the school show that the current arrangements for school transport do not ensure a consistently prompt arrival for registration at the start of the school day. A significant number of pupils arrive too late for the start of the first lesson, and some miss substantial parts of it. A few parents occasionally delay the school transport because their children are not ready for leaving home when the transport arrives. Drivers and escorts state that variations to their routes (caused by occasional respite care for some pupils) and traffic delays, lengthen the time of journeys. However, respite care is timetabled several weeks ahead and traffic delays are a regular feature of travel in the area.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, teaching was excellent in one per cent of lessons, very good in 28 per cent, good in 40 per cent and satisfactory in 28 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only three per cent of lessons. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching was very good or better in eight per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in 18 per cent. During this inspection, the two unsatisfactory lessons were taught by temporary teachers.
13. The improved quality of teaching has been achieved through very determined efforts on the part of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and hard work by teachers. A range of very effective strategies has been adopted, to monitor teaching – for example, checking the quality of teachers' planning and assessments and observing their work in classrooms. When weaknesses are found, appropriate support is provided and, as a consequence, teachers know what they need to do in order to improve. The strategy of Key Stage 3 and 4 teachers specialising in particular subjects is proving very effective. Even when they have not had specialist training, teachers are generally very confident with the parts of the subject they teach. Some are enthusiastic and infect pupils with a similar enthusiasm and desire to learn. Teaching is now good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the first year of the post-16 provision. In the class for the oldest students, the teacher was absent at the time of the inspection. However, evidence, such as the classroom environment and records of observations by senior managers, suggests that teaching is not of the same high quality as in the rest of the school. The headteacher and governors are aware of this and have taken appropriate action to improve the situation. Teaching in post-16 was a key issue for improvement in the last inspection report. Improvements have been made but not sustained in this particular class.

14. A further key issue was teaching for pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although the school has only recently appointed a co-ordinator for their curriculum, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and, as a result, so has pupils' progress. At the time of the previous inspection, insufficient attention was paid to managing and planning the integration of these pupils into lessons. Now, teachers generally plan lessons that provide a good match between tasks and activities and pupils' needs. This regularly presents a real challenge for teachers, because in some classes the range of pupils' ability is very wide – more able pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught together. Some teachers are very skilled at ensuring that all pupils can take part in the lesson, at an appropriate level. For example, in a very good art lesson, Key Stage 4 pupils were making a torn paper collage. A support assistant was deployed to work with a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties, first massaging his hands in order to enable him to experience the texture and sounds of the tissue paper as it was scrunched and smoothed. In some other lessons, support assistants teach groups of pupils separately from the rest of the class. Sometimes, this works very well – for example, in Key Stage 3 science lessons, where the teacher plans highly relevant activities and ensures that support staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the teacher moves between the groups, maintaining an overview of teaching and learning. Basing two groups in different parts of the school is less successful when these safeguards are not in place. In such lessons, pupils are generally not pushed as hard to achieve, because the teacher is not in a position to modify the activities in the light of pupils' responses and progress.
15. Teachers and support assistants make inconsistent use of signs and symbols to help pupils understand or communicate. In a minority of lessons, pupils are shown objects or symbols, so that they appreciate the subject or topic they are learning about. For example, in religious education, small wooden crosses indicate that Christianity is being discussed and, in one lesson, pupils were taught the sign for 'community'. Generally, however, such opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning are missed. Although teachers usually make sure that all pupils can cope with the work they are given, sometimes they do not ask enough of the most able pupils. For example, although some of the Key Stage 4 pupils can write independently, lessons do not always provide opportunities for them to practice their skills – instead, they are asked to cut out and stick down their responses to questions. In very good and excellent lessons, pupils are challenged to try very hard and improve the standard of their work. They respond very well to this approach. For example, in a swimming lesson, two post-16 students attempted to dive for the first time, because the teacher was very clear about what they were to achieve. Students' individual targets were known to all support staff, so that they could focus their efforts on encouraging students to succeed. Teachers are usually quick to adjust targets in response to their evaluations of pupils' achievements. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher increased the prices of sweets pupils were buying and selling to a maximum of twenty pence, rather than the previous ten, because pupils had made such good progress. In another lesson, this time in science, the teacher introduced the term 'friction', because pupils demonstrated their readiness to cope with the concept. Year 12 students were challenged to be independent and ask for refreshments in a community canteen and for help in a public library. In contrast, older students, on a visit to the Civic Centre, were over-protected by staff, who asked questions on their behalf and recorded the answers. This reduced the learning potential of the experience and reduced it to more of a sight-seeing event.
16. Lessons are less effective when they proceed at a slow pace. This can happen when teachers are, rightly, keen to involve all pupils and give them opportunities to contribute, but do not organise the lesson so as to make the best use of support

assistants. For example, in science lesson about animals and their young, Key Stage 4 pupils took turns to describe the model animals they had chosen. This took a great deal of time and meant that pupils were spectators for much of the lesson. Progress is also reduced when pupils are directed too much. In an unsatisfactory lesson, older post-16 students making sandwiches and milkshakes were given instructions, rather than being encouraged to see what needed to be done – for example, that the table needed clearing. Support assistants generally make a good contribution to the quality of teaching. Teachers usually deploy them effectively and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Occasionally, support assistants are not well used during lessons – for example, when the teacher is talking to the whole class – merely watching the proceedings. Sometimes, usefully, support staff encourage pupils to listen or participate, or they record pupils' responses. At other times, pupils' progress is inhibited because they are given too much help – support staff prompt them with answers or correct their errors too quickly. One support assistant takes responsibility for planning and teaching aspects of information and communications technology and performs this role well – her teaching is of good quality and contributes to the satisfactory progress pupils are making in the subject.

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

17. The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. However, the time allocated to science is below that recommended. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have no opportunity to learn a modern foreign language – they are disapplied from this requirement. The school has appropriate plans to reintroduce French to pupils in September 2000. The creative arts – music, art and drama – are particular strengths of the school and all pupils benefit from the richness of this aspect of the curriculum.
18. The development of the curriculum has been carefully planned and monitored by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Subject co-ordinators have been supported in writing policies and schemes of work, which now follow an agreed format throughout the school. However, pupils are still making up for previous deficiencies in the curriculum and do not have access to the full range of experiences in some subjects, due to the fact that all the necessary units of work have not yet been prepared. It is intended that these should be complete in the majority of subjects by September 2000. Although the pace of development in some areas has been slow, the completed schemes of work are well planned, stimulating and relevant. They ensure that pupils' learning builds on what they already know, understand and can do, which is an improvement since the last inspection. They are most effective when they set out clearly what pupils are intended to learn, so that teachers can use them to measure pupils' progress and the effectiveness of their teaching.
19. A new curriculum for post-16 students has recently been developed. This builds appropriately on students' existing skills, knowledge and understanding and works towards developing and applying these in a vocationally oriented environment. To meet the students' differing needs a core (key skills) and a complementary curriculum have each been developed, enhanced by additional individual learning programmes. Students' achievements are now accredited through nationally recognised accreditation schemes – a Unit Award Scheme, National Skills Profile and Accreditation for Life and Living – an improvement since the last inspection. Vocational activities are sampled through work linked, for example, to a café, allotment, mini enterprise project and car valeting. The school has well-established links with a local college, where students are able to take part in 'taster' sessions from the vocational areas – bakery, hairdressing, construction, horticulture, art and

information technology. These opportunities will be further developed in the coming year, in preparation for the planned move to that site in 2001.

20. The newly appointed co-ordinator for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is to work with subject co-ordinators to ensure that pupils with complex needs have access to the planned curriculum in a format appropriate to their needs. At present, teachers' planning addresses the needs of pupils with complex difficulties and where necessary additional support is provided. However, less able pupils do not have opportunities to take part in physical education lessons at a local secondary school and sufficient attention is not always paid to checking the access for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties during off-site visits. Pupils who are fed by tube at lunchtime do not always have the opportunity to socialise with other pupils in the dining hall and only two pupils have access to hydrotherapy facilities. The school is developing strategies to enable all pupils to communicate effectively, including the use of switches to support communication for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. At present, the use of signs and symbols is inconsistent and pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged to develop their communication skills.
21. To support and extend the curriculum, the school provides a very good range of out of school visits to local community facilities, museums, concerts and exhibitions. In addition, some pupils have participated in events such as 'Young World' concerts and 'Drama Network' weeks, working with students and staff from other schools and colleges. These events provide excellent opportunities for students to be involved with their peers in creating professional performances. A wide and very good range of extra-curricular activities is offered, both at lunchtime and after school – for example, sports, dance, darts, pool and mathematics. This provision is very good. These clubs are run effectively by members of staff and are well supported and enjoyed by pupils.
22. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has had a positive impact on literacy standards in Key Stages 3 and 4, providing pupils with appropriate challenges, especially in relation to the range of texts being studied. The Numeracy Strategy is being introduced in a phased manner. It is developing satisfactorily, particularly in the overall structure and in the oral and mental mathematics sessions at the start of lessons.
23. The school has a good careers education and guidance programme. This is taught from Year 7, initially in combination with other subjects, such as English, but as discrete lessons in Key Stage 4 and at post-16. Work experience is at present limited to one student although it is intended that this should form an integral part of the careers programme from September 2000. To facilitate this, links have been established with, for example, shops, hairdressers and nurseries. In addition, opportunities for less able students will be made available within school.
24. The provision for pupils' spiritual and social development is good. Whole school assemblies are held once a week and are well planned and linked to the religious education curriculum and a termly theme – 'Community' during the inspection. All staff are involved in encouraging pupils to reflect on the content of the assembly and to join in with the school prayer and hymn, some using signs. Religious education lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual development and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are provided with relevant activities, to enable them to take part. Art lessons and displays have an uplifting effect and pupils experience moments of enthrallment in music – for example, when they produce sounds on a French horn. Similar feelings are aroused in personal, social and health

education, when pupils experience shock and surprise in response to exciting resources, and in information and communications technology when pictures are downloaded from the Internet. The personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that there are appropriate, planned opportunities for pupils to develop social skills. The school has developed a good programme of personal, social and health education which includes sex education and substance use and misuse. Pupils follow a modular programme, taught in age appropriate blocks with sex education modules incorporated into each year's programme of study. Although personal, social and health education is taught as a separately timetabled subject, ensuring that pupils learn the full range of the subject, it is further developed and individual skills are practised in subjects such as physical education, science, and through individual feeding programmes. Personal, social and health education is incorporated into the curriculum at post-16, but not taught regularly as a separate subject. The very good range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to increase their social skills and encourages the development of teamwork. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for tasks within school and a lack of facilities for them to develop the skills they need for daily life – for example, preparing meals.

25. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and cultural development. There are very good opportunities for them to explore moral issues through the personal, social and health education programme, and the very good provision for managing and monitoring pupils' behaviour helps them to understand the difference between right and wrong. The school ensures all pupils are aware of the cultural diversity of society, through subjects such as religious education, personal, social and health education and art. A broad range of festivals is celebrated throughout the year and pupils are involved in many activities which contribute to their awareness of their own culture and those of others. For instance, they have participated in music workshops, and make visits to art exhibitions and galleries.
26. Overall, the school's links with the community are good and make an effective contribution to pupils' learning and personal and social development. The younger post-16 students have successfully cultivated an allotment. This has enabled them to benefit from regular links with members of the community, to identify a realistic activity to pursue after school, and to enjoy success in growing and harvesting fruit and vegetables. Regular visits to the local library and a community café, frequent use of local supermarkets and weekly visits to a local swimming pool all reinforce a consistent use of community facilities by the school. Recently, a member of a local supermarket's staff, who has learning difficulties, visited the school to illustrate the career avenues available to pupils. This proved inspirational to many of them, and gave them the confidence to visit the supermarket themselves and question other members of staff. The school has created many very good links to performing arts facilities and opportunities in the community. Local and municipal galleries display art work by pupils. The school is supporting work with police officers to promote citizenship amongst pupils and a local vicar is helping to raise pupils' awareness of homelessness in the city. There are close links to a local business that recently held a successful charity fun day for the school and involved many people from the local community.
27. The school has good relationships with a number of partner institutions. Some Year 9 pupils benefit from regular integration to a secondary school's physical education programme. They excelled themselves in their involvement in a 'mini Olympics', in competition with mainstream pupils, during an induction day. No other integration programmes are in place for pupils. Students from local further education colleges are regularly placed in the school and offer a lively and fresh contribution to the school's provision. The school also benefits from teacher training student

placements. Close links exist with partner schools to identify and analyse assessment and other data, and the school is currently working closely with the local college of further education to develop the new post-16 provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The procedures for the care and well being of pupils and students are good. The arrangements for child protection are very good, and the school has ensured that designated members of staff are fully trained and that all staff are aware of what they need to do if they have any concerns. Parents are made aware that the school has adopted these procedures and that they are in line with those of the local Area Child Protection Committee. The school's induction procedures for new staff clearly identify child protection arrangements.
29. The school's procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and students are good. The arrangements for identifying health and safety risks are supported conscientiously by the governors' premises and safety committee, efficient caretaking and regular monitoring of electrical, fire and physical education equipment. The school has close links with a number of visiting health professionals, therapists and the paediatric team, but is concerned that health care plans for all pupils have not yet been produced, despite an agreement with the appropriate health authorities. The school has identified the need for an intimate care policy and is taking steps to ensure consistency in the dignified care of pupils at toileting and changing times. Older boys do not now have their personal needs met exclusively by female staff as there are male members of care staff, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Although the needs of the majority of pupils continue to be well catered for, the school is reviewing the social aspects and practice of their lunchtime arrangements. Nurses attend to pupils who require tube-feeding only when the paramedical team is not available. The school has to consider each case for the admittance of pupils with complex medical needs very carefully, as nursing support in lessons is not available for pupils. The school's arrangements for first aid and administering to minor accidents are very good and there are good arrangements in place for the administration of approved medication and the referral of pupils to more specialised medical care, should an emergency arise.
30. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. This is a substantial improvement since the previous inspection. Registers are completed in line with statutory requirements and the school's adoption of a computerised monitoring system to analyse absences and punctuality has been very effective in improving attendance. The school maintains weekly records of the arrival times of school transport and the reasons for late arrivals. Signing in and signing out procedures for pupils during the school day are in place, and the school is seeking to clarify registration procedures for the very few pupils who require individual timetables. Close links are being established with the local educational welfare officer to investigate reasons behind sporadic and unexplained absences and to validate the reasons behind extended holidays abroad for cultural reasons.
31. The arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good and have improved since the previous inspection. When necessary, individual behaviour management programmes are used very effectively across the school. Key members of staff have been identified, to strengthen the effectiveness of these programmes, and this supports the orderliness and security of the school for all pupils and staff. All staff attend regular training to update their skills in managing pupils' challenging and

complex behaviour. Although records of incidents are maintained on individual pupils, they are not kept in a bound book with numbered pages.

32. Assessment and monitoring procedures are good and are used effectively to identify ways of helping pupils to make better progress. The school has used a national system to record assessments for all pupils in language and literacy, mathematics and personal and social development and has set targets for them to improve by the end of each key stage. Considerable work has taken place with staff to ensure that there is a common understanding of achievement within each level identified.
33. Targets in pupils' individual education plans include the areas described above as well as all other subjects of the curriculum. Copies of pupils' targets are kept in teachers' files but, in practice, the quantity of targets for each pupil is difficult to manage. As a result, teachers do not consistently make reference to individual targets when planning lessons. This means that opportunities are sometimes missed to set tasks such as reading and writing at the right level for each pupil. Individual education plans are checked by the deputy headteacher, to ensure that targets set are specific and measurable. This has successfully improved the quality and usefulness of targets. There is not a determined effort to encourage all but the most able pupils to be involved in evaluating their progress and setting targets for the future.
34. Day-to-day assessment procedures are in evidence in some subjects, but this has been acknowledged in the school's draft assessment policy as an area for development. Where curricular plans set out clearly what teachers want pupils to know, understand and do – for example, in art and music – pupils' achievements can readily be recorded and this information used to plan subsequent lessons. Work in pupils' files is not always dated and annotated – for instance, with the amount of support pupils' have needed – and it is therefore sometimes difficult to track individual pupils' progress.
35. Assessments of their needs are appropriately used to identify the necessary extra support required by pupils with complex learning difficulties. Additional staffing and liaison with external agencies such as the visual and hearing impairment teams are positive features of this process.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. Overall, parents have a positive view of the school and are pleased with the standards that their children achieve. The overwhelming majority feel that their children enjoy school. Parents are comfortable in approaching the school with any questions or problems. The school is responsive to their views – for example, following the findings of a questionnaire on the subject, the timing of open days has been changed in order to accommodate those parents who found it difficult to attend in the evening. Parents are routinely consulted on the targets for pupils' individual education plans, and behaviour plans when applicable, and most parents are pleased with this involvement. However, a few are not happy with the amount of information they receive about their children's progress. Several parents are unhappy about the punctuality of school transport and the companies involved with transporting their children. The contribution of parents and carers to children's learning at home and school is satisfactory. A significant number of parents are concerned about the amount of homework their children receive. The school does not have a homework policy but some pupils do take work home, either on request or because teachers consider it appropriate, and parents are fairly evenly divided on

whether they are happy with this procedure, or not. Parents and staff work closely together through the Parent Teacher Association. They raise funds to run the school's mini-bus and to arrange social events for staff, parents and pupils – for example, a recent successful trip to Dublin.

37. The quality of information provided for parents is good and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Weekly newsletters keep parents informed of developments at school, trips and outings, and forthcoming events. Home-school books are used with younger pupils, to pass on daily or weekly reports if this is judged to be the best method of communication. Otherwise, the school and parents generally make good use of the telephone and this is supplemented by bus and taxi escorts. However, one or two parents are concerned about a lack of communication between home and school in the post-16 provision. The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents both now meet statutory requirements, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. Following the inspection in 1997, firm action had to be taken by the headteacher and governors in order to bring about changes in the attitude of some staff, and this resulted in a number of teachers leaving. The school has now identified a serious problem with the performance of one member of the senior management team, and has taken appropriate action in an attempt to secure the effectiveness of the team. These difficulties, together with some opposition to attempts to encourage teachers to take responsibility for leading and managing subjects, have resulted in the pace of developments being slower than the headteacher and deputy headteacher would have wished. Recently, the rate of progress has accelerated, as new staff have taken up posts and others have accepted the need for change. Teachers can now see the results of their hard work: teaching and pupils' progress have both improved. Consequently, they are ready to develop their management roles, by taking responsibility for their subjects in areas beyond the production of policies and programmes of work. Resources, standards and sharing good practice, for example, provide scope for co-ordinators to extend their influence.
39. Led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the school makes very good use of a wide range of data to measure its performance and compare itself to other schools. For example, data from OFSTED has been used to set targets for improving the quality of teaching and attendance rates. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have devised and implemented very good procedures for monitoring and supporting teaching. These incorporate teachers' own evaluations of their work and feedback from senior managers. The quality of these dialogues is appreciated by teachers and has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The strategy has also resulted in teachers being receptive to constructive criticism. This was observed on numerous occasions during the inspection – teachers listened very carefully to feedback from inspectors, in order to improve their practice and develop professionally. This climate of self-review and improvement has taken time to achieve, but is now a feature of the school.
40. The school improvement plan is very good quality. The priorities for development are highly appropriate, including improving teaching, increasing opportunities for accrediting pupils' work, and developing the procedures for assessment. There are clear links to the school's aims, the local education authority's development plan and, where appropriate, the previous post-OFSTED action plan. Each priority is supported

by a detailed action plan, showing, for example, responsibilities and resource implications. Although there is no reference to governors being directly involved in either achieving the priorities or checking that the necessary actions have been taken, the plan includes commitments to keeping governors informed of developments, in order that they can monitor progress. Termly reports from the headteacher are detailed and are presented at meetings dedicated to them, so as to allow time for explanations and debate.

41. Governors are aware of school developments and local and national priorities. They are committed to the school, and although only a few are able to visit regularly, the three committees provide very good opportunities for governors to make contributions to school development. For example, the curriculum and standards committee regularly receives reports from subject leaders and one member visits lessons to observe policies in practice. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.
42. The staffing situation is very good. Teachers have a range of qualifications and experience, and there is a sufficient number to meet the demands of the curriculum and management needs of the school. The role of teachers beyond their immediate teaching duties is not generally well developed. For example, subject co-ordinators do not routinely have a long-term view of how their subject should be developed. The relatively high turnover of teachers in recent years has been well managed by the school, both on a short-term basis, and with a view to ensuring that the school's future needs are met. There is a very good number of classroom support staff, many of whom have qualifications, and all of whom receive good induction and further training within the school.
43. The appraisal system is good overall, although the school does not undertake formal appraisal procedures with teaching staff because of staff resistance in the past. However, classroom observations are backed up by annual reviews with staff, to consider, for example, assessment procedures, the curriculum and individual education plans. Within the past year, formal appraisal has begun with the non-teaching staff, and this has been a very positive move. All new staff receive a very good introduction to the school, with weekly meetings with the headteacher or deputy, explanations of the main routines and safety procedures, and advice about who to go to if support is required.
44. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory. It was very unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, and, despite many good efforts by the school to improve matters, things are still not good enough. There is a recently installed 'temporary' block of four classrooms to relieve congestion in the other classes; much of the school has been redecorated and refurbished; several rooms have become specialist or semi-specialist in nature. These include the information technology suite, the art room, and to a lesser extent, the science and geography rooms. The premises are well maintained inside, and kept very clean by the premises manager and his staff. On the other hand, there is a host of deficiencies. More than half of the classes are now in 'temporary' blocks outside the main building. The accommodation for post-16 students is limited: there is no room for an independent living facility, nor for an adult-oriented 'lounge' area. There are no facilities for food technology. There is no facility for hydrotherapy. The hall is too small for physical education lessons for secondary age pupils, and it is a multi-purpose area, as well as being a corridor to other parts of the school, and a storage repository for many chairs and tables. Storage space is limited throughout the school. There are still too few specialist rooms for secondary age pupils. Some classrooms are small and cramped for the numbers of pupils who go into them. The changing areas for physical education are still very limited, despite

recent improvements. There is no separate medical room for pupils who are ill, and only one changing area for boys and girls requiring intimate care. The grounds are very cramped, with very little open play space. The parking and manoeuvring areas for buses and taxis are extremely tight and difficult.

45. Resources for learning are satisfactory in the main, and this is very much an improvement on the previous situation. They are particularly good for music, where there is a very good range of some high quality instruments. History and English are the only other subjects where the resources are actually good: history resources are well organised and accessible, and there is a very good provision of reading scheme books to support pupils' learning. For most other subjects, the resources are currently satisfactory, and are being developed well. However, in science the resources are too limited and unsatisfactory, and this is despite the addition of many items that teachers have made or bought themselves.
46. The school's finances are very well managed by the senior management team, the administrative officer and governing body. There is very good and effective teamwork to ensure that the budget will be able to pay for all the developments and on-going costs that have been identified for the following year. The budget is set well in advance, and becomes firm as the new financial year approaches, and minor alterations are made during the year by effective and controlled movements of money between departments. The spending is well controlled by the senior education and office staff, and well monitored by the governors, especially through the relevant committee. Those involved fully understand the implications of the decisions they take – for example, on the balance between employing additional support staff against having more money for learning resources. A report by the auditors last year was largely positive, and reported good overall management of the school's finances. The issues were minor, and all have been corrected since then. The only exception has been the school's inventory: it is still not up to date, despite the purchase of much expensive equipment.
47. The school makes good use of the new technology that is available nowadays. Very good use is made of the money that is received for particular purposes. Most of this is from the 'Standards' fund, which has to be spent on very specific things, and the accounting and monitoring procedures are clear. This money and other funds, such as those for information technology, is spent wisely, imaginatively and in accordance with the requirements of the agencies allocating the money.
48. The school makes good efforts to analyse how well it is doing, and to compare itself with other similar schools. For example, it works with a small group of other local schools to compare their costs, qualifications, training needs, and so on. It carefully considers what quality of service it is providing; the standard of teaching, for instance, and how well pupils are learning. It looks at what value for money it is providing, and what value it gets from services and suppliers that it buys from.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order for raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Complete programmes of work for all subjects and courses. These should set out clearly what teachers want pupils to know, understand and be able to do. It will then be possible to use them to measure pupils' progress and judge the effectiveness of teaching. (paragraphs 18,34)
2. Continue to develop the accommodation so that it no longer has a negative impact on the curriculum and the range and quality of pupils' experiences. (paragraph 44)
3. Enable subject leaders to take more responsibility for managing their subjects – for example, monitoring pupils' progress, sharing good practice and planning to develop resources. This will involve providing appropriate training to develop teachers' management skills. (paragraphs 38,42)
4. Secure the effectiveness of the senior management team by providing any necessary advice and support to enable all key staff to fulfil their roles. (paragraph 38)
5. Ensure that post-16 students have opportunities to take part in appropriate work experience placements. (paragraph 23)

In addition, the following issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- a) Enable pupils and students to become more independent learners, by establishing how much help and support is appropriate for each one, ensuring that this is not exceeded and encouraging pupils and students to do as much as possible for themselves. (paragraphs 10,15,16)
- b) Continue to monitor the effects of transport on pupils' punctuality. (paragraph 11)
- c) Ensure that alternative methods of communication – including information and communications technology, signs and symbols – are used consistently by all staff. (paragraph15,20)
- d) Increase the breadth and balance of the curriculum and pupils' opportunities by teaching a modern foreign language and allowing more time for teaching science. (paragraph 17)
- e) Increase the opportunities for pupils to attend lessons in mainstream schools. (paragraph 27)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	28	40	28	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	68
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

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	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	10.5	School data	1.0

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	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	3
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	
White	54
Any other minority ethnic group	

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	8.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	758

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	99-00
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	£
Total income	759223
Total expenditure	770667
Expenditure per pupil	11334
Balance brought forward from previous year	30830
Balance carried forward to next year	19386

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	68
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	23	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	46	4	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	52	0	0	20
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	30	22	22	13
The teaching is good.	44	41	7	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	33	15	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	22	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	30	0	4	7
The school works closely with parents.	48	33	11	7	0
The school is well led and managed.	48	41	4	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	56	0	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	41	22	7	7

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are concerned about the late arrival of some children's transport.

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

ENGLISH

49. Pupils make good progress during Key Stages 3 and 4. They achieve well in Key Stage 3 and satisfactorily in Key Stage 4. The school's adaptation of the National Literacy Strategy has had a positive impact on the breadth of experiences available as well as on the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Achievement in Key Stage 4 is comparatively less good than in Key Stage 3, because the improvements in teaching and the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy have not yet made up for gaps in pupils' previous learning. Achievement and progress are satisfactory at post-16.
50. In both key stages and at post-16, pupils and students are encouraged to take an active part in speaking and listening to others. Key Stage 3 pupils, studying 'The Twits', expressed their opinions about the story and one pupil could suggest other stories that she has enjoyed. Teachers encourage pupils to practise their skills in 'real life' situations. For example, older pupils prepared questions in advance of a shop assistant visiting school – 'What is your job?' and 'Do you like your job?' This work was extended by the teacher to develop pupils' awareness of the need to speak clearly when shopping. Pupils in Key Stage 4 listened to a poem, 'The Feel of Things', and because the teacher used a good range of relevant objects, pupils were able to suggest appropriate adjectives when writing their own poems – for example, 'shiny' paper, 'smooth' chocolate. The youngest post-16 students organise and run a tuck shop for the rest of the school, so providing valuable opportunities for all pupils to extend their communication skills as they ask about prices or listen to replies. In a drama lesson, the teacher provided excellent opportunities for post-16 students to develop their speaking and listening skills, considering objects such as fabric, keys, and a telephone and suggesting a plot for an improvisation. Since the last inspection, the school has made a determined effort to develop learning opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A range of switches are available for these students and staff are generally using them appropriately to encourage pupils to make choices and express preferences, for example, between different foods. Signing and symbols are in evidence throughout the school, although they are not consistently applied by all staff, so restricting opportunities for some pupils with very limited verbal communication to access all areas of the curriculum. The school has, however, recognised the value of developing alternative methods of communication, both in the draft English policy and in the training that is being delivered by the teacher from the Hearing Impaired Service.
51. The structure of the Literacy Hour is evident in Key Stages 3 and 4 and supports pupils' ability to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. The school has invested in two schemes to support reading, both of which are age appropriate and capture children's interest. For example, during one lesson, a group of pupils in Key Stage 3 listened, totally engrossed, to a tape recording of one of the stories. Pupils respond enthusiastically to English because teachers maintain the pace of learning through a combination of whole class and group teaching. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have been introduced to a variety of age-appropriate texts. One class, studying 'The Twits', took part enthusiastically in a range of group activities according to their abilities. Some lower attaining pupils followed a recipe to construct Mr. Twit's beard, using a multi-sensory approach – smell, taste and touch – with support staff reinforcing descriptive words heard in the story. Higher attaining pupils developed their understanding of the story by independently writing sentences to describe Mr. Twit's beard. Pupils in Key Stage 4 enjoyed reading a poem together. Because the teacher had chosen a poem

with a repetitive phrase – ‘I wonder’ – all pupils were able to join with the teacher in saying at least the first two words of their verse. Some were able to read a few words or sentences, especially when the teacher used signing to support words in the text. Post-16 students visited a local public library to choose books about different careers. They were able to handle books carefully and refer to illustrations when discussing the contents of the book with an adult.

52. Some higher attaining pupils read simple texts fluently, using the context and their knowledge of the sounds made by letters, in order to correct their mistakes – for example, changing ‘was’ to ‘saw’ without any support. When questioned, they showed understanding of the events in the story. Some pupils are encouraged to take reading books home, but a homework policy is not yet in place. Pupils are required to refer to books, and hence practise their reading skills, in subjects such as art and history.
53. The range of writing has increased since the last inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 3 retell stories, label diagrams in science and write book reviews. In Key Stage 4, pupils have opportunities to write creatively and they enjoy constructing poems. Post-16 students appropriately record personal details in the form of curriculum vitae and work together to create a school magazine. Most classrooms have age-appropriate resources to support pupils’ writing. For example, an alphabet frieze uses the initial letters of a range of occupations, and pupils use word banks, personal word books or dictionaries. Because many pupils find handwriting laborious and tiring, teachers have appropriately identified other ways to encourage them to record words and sentences. For example, pupils working on a comprehension exercise selected words printed on paper to complete sentences and pasted the words in the appropriate spaces. On occasion, adults supporting group work give too much help to pupils. For example, a support assistant erased a mistake that a pupil made in her writing rather than encouraging her to decide what to do for herself, and higher attaining pupils were asked to paste words in sequence to form sentences instead of writing them independently.
54. The Key Stage 3 and 4 co-ordinator has received relevant literacy training and has provided training to the rest of the staff. There have been valuable opportunities for her to observe lessons and work alongside staff in Key Stages 3 and 4. All pupils have been assessed in language and literacy, to establish their levels of attainment, and end of key stage targets have been set in the areas of reading, writing and speaking and listening. Targets set in individual education plans reflect and support these targets. The co-ordinator has written a draft English policy, but, as yet, there are no guidelines to support staff in a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading, including the use of symbols and pictures to support text. This, and the inconsistent use of day-to-day assessment procedures, means that it is difficult for teachers to identify pupils’ skills and preferred strategies in order to provide them with appropriate resources and support.

MATHEMATICS

55. Pupils’ achievements in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory; and their rate of progress is improving, particularly since the some aspects of the Numeracy Strategy have been introduced. This is not fully in place throughout the school yet, but the trend is clearly towards improving pupils’ achievements. This strategy should come to fruition as staff complete their training, and the ways of working are fully implemented in all classes in the new school year.

56. The higher attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 count to ten or twenty, sometimes with a little help, and can add up numbers below ten. They recognise coins to 20p, and know some of their values, but often have difficulty working out how they can make up an amount such as 6p, when practising shopping, for instance. They tell the time to the hour, and sometimes, to the half hour, and have good understanding of concepts such as more and less, bigger and smaller. They can recognise basic shapes such as triangles, circles and squares, and know what it is about them that is different.
57. By the end of Key Stage 4, the higher attaining pupils use coins more consistently up to one pound, and understand ideas like more and less in more complicated situations, such as comparing lengths, weights and the capacity of different containers. They add and subtract numbers below twenty, and are learning their multiplication tables – twos, fives and tens, especially.
58. Lower attaining pupils throughout the school are beginning to recognise colours, to choose between two items, to match similar shapes or sizes, and even count to three – although sometimes with adult help. They can hold objects, look at them closely, and visually follow them as they move across their field of vision. They understand that something still exists, even when it is hidden, or half hidden.
59. Pupils' learning in lessons during the inspection was satisfactory overall, with no lessons that were unsatisfactory, and some in which the learning was good or very good. The teaching of maths is also satisfactory overall but again there are instances of good and very good teaching. Teaching is particularly effective where lessons start with a brisk mental mathematics session to liven the pupils up – as in a lesson in Key Stage 4 where the teacher and pupils engaged enthusiastically in a variety of rhymes and games, such as 'Four Famous Footballers'. This very good lesson went on to look at solid shapes around the school. It was well based on previous work, was very well planned and organised, and used good resources, including deploying the support assistant to do individual work with one pupil. The teacher had a positive and enthusiastic relationship with the pupils, and she used questioning and praise very well to encourage their thinking. The pupils responded enthusiastically and eagerly to the work, which finished with them creating graphs of shapes they had seen, and discussing their frequency around the school.
60. Sometimes, teachers are obliged to spend time managing difficult behaviours among the pupils – hence the need for many support staff. On the other hand, there are occasions when support staff are given too little to do in lessons, and this can lead to them 'helping' the pupils too much, and not allowing them to become more self-reliant. Other subjects make contributions to pupils' learning in mathematics – for example, they take measurements in science and create patterns in art.
61. Mathematics in the post-16 unit is mainly practical, often oriented towards money, shopping and basic counting. The oldest students are learning at a rate that is barely satisfactory, although this is better in the early part of the unit. The teaching overall was satisfactory, but there were weaknesses in the planning and the focus of lessons, the pace at which some lessons were run and the lack of any 'sparkle' to lessons. The large number of support assistants in the leavers' class can lead to students being almost overwhelmed, and certainly over-helped and prompted too much, giving them little chance to develop their own answers, and do their own work. These support assistants need to be given clearer directions on how to help and when to help. One very good lesson involved the younger students preparing for, and running, a tuck shop for the rest of the school, with many varied opportunities for counting, and for using of coins. It was a very well organised lesson that runs each

week, and gives a good opportunity for students to interact and communicate with each other. More could be made of this aspect, with more opportunities for students to do more things themselves, and to try to learn from their own mistakes, instead of having everything quite so well organised.

62. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the management of the subject is now good. This is a good improvement on the previous report, when it was unsatisfactory, although the lack of co-ordination between Key Stage 4 and the post 16 unit still exists. There is a good policy in place, and a clear direction for the development of the subject, especially through the Numeracy Strategy. The co-ordinator is well involved in the planning of lessons and modules, but not yet fully involved in the monitoring of teaching, except in her role as deputy headteacher. There is some over-reliance on a single planning and assessment scheme, which is not totally suitable for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils, missing, as it does, one large area of the mathematics curriculum. This area (data handling) *is* taught, but not as a fully integrated part of the overall mathematics plan. A mathematics club is run each week as a games-oriented extension to lessons.

SCIENCE

63. Pupils' achievements and progress are good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Younger students in post-16 also make good progress in relation to the science activities connected to horticultural studies. These standards represent an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In post-16, only the younger students took part in science activities during the inspection and here the teaching was very good.
64. Due to a limited scheme of work at the present time, all pupils in each key stage are following the same modules of study. In Key Stage 3, lessons are well planned with appropriate modifications to meet the wide and varying needs of the class groups. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are assigned activities to enable them to explore the sensations of movement and to learn to request 'more' when they enjoy a particular activity. They use their senses to find out about their environment and respond to objects and living things. In one lesson, higher attaining Year 8 pupils developed their skills in recording experiment results and, with adult support, transferred them to a bar chart. The teacher is skilled at posing questions which makes them think about their results and to use their knowledge to further understand the concept of friction. At the end of the key stage, higher achieving pupils discuss how to set up an experiment and understand the concept of a fair test. They identify the parts of a flowering plant, know seeds will germinate if they have water and that plants need light and water to grow. When completing experiments, pupils are able to independently use charts to record their results. They work confidently, co-operate with one another and discuss their results. Disagreements that occurred during an observed test were sorted out maturely by the pupils and with a low level of adult intervention. Pupils are encouraged to use scientific language in all lessons and, by the end of the key stage, they are using terms such as 'experiment', 'fair test', 'measure' and 'result', with confidence. Time at the end of lessons is used very well to enable pupils to share their work and experiences and recognise each other's achievements.
65. In Key Stage 4, higher achieving pupils can identify different animals and match them to their young while less able pupils can identify familiar pets and their young. Most pupils understand that some young animals look like their mothers, such as a foal and a horse, while others are very different, as with a tadpole and frog. Lower attaining pupils can complete simple experiments with adult support, while the more able ones complete simple recording charts when carrying out their experiments.

66. The post-16 students who study science through their horticultural work can recognise the conditions necessary for planting and growing seeds and the changes that occur in a plant as it grows and develops. They identify ripe and unripe fruit on their allotment and work well together – for example, harvesting redcurrants.
67. The teachers and learning support assistants work effectively as a team, ensuring that in the majority of cases learning objectives are understood and met by all pupils. However, there are some instances in lessons where Key Stage 4 pupils are given insufficient opportunities to become independent learners. In all lessons there was a clear link between the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils.
68. As in the last inspection, pupils' experiences are limited by the lack of an appropriate science area within the school; and the allocation of time to science is still insufficient to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The science co-ordinator has a curriculum framework in place, which ensures that pupils learn about all the required aspects of the subject. However, there is as yet no completed policy or scheme of work, and this is having an impact on the progress pupils can make. A subject development plan is in place and the scheme of work is being written using a range of appropriate material and guidance, including visits and discussions with colleagues in mainstream schools. The modules that have been completed indicate that pupils have access to a potentially well-balanced science curriculum. Resources are insufficient to meet the demands of the planned curriculum.

ART

69. Pupils make good progress overall and achieve high standards. They make very good progress in lessons. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection and reflects similar improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The quality of teaching is now very good and the curriculum is rich and stimulating. Because the curriculum has only recently been implemented, in each key stage, all pupils are following the same programme of work, and are only now starting to have opportunities to work more independently, applying what they have learned.
70. During Key Stage 3 and 4, pupils acquire a extensive range of skills and learn about a very wide variety of techniques and styles. The curriculum has been very well thought out, so pupils have opportunities to work in different scales and degrees of detail, individually or in groups. The two specialist teachers are very careful to ensure that all pupils are able to make progress. For example, during the inspection, Key Stage 3 pupils were using collage techniques to create Aztec gods. The main activity was simplified suitably, so that lower attaining pupils experienced the sight, sounds and textures of resources such as dried pulses and pasta and used their fingers or brushes to spread paint, choosing colours and deciding when their work was complete. Because the range of pupils' needs and ability is so wide and lessons are very practical in nature, high staffing levels are necessary – the pace of learning inevitably slows when fewer adults are available. In turn, this means that the small art room becomes congested with pupils and staff, together with wheelchairs, making it difficult for resources to be easily reached.
71. In a very good Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils made very good progress as they reviewed some of the work they had done during the year, and chose an area in which to specialise for the remainder of the term. The lesson was very well organised in order to enable pupils to make informed choices. The teacher led the class in a torn paper collage activity, whilst a support assistant worked with each pupil in turn,

reminding them about the activities they had undertaken. Pupils were questioned and prompted very sensitively, with books used very effectively to arouse their interest. They found it hard to explain the reasons for their choices – for example, of painting ‘because it’s great’ – but had clear preferences and strong views about what they wanted to do next. As in the Key Stage 3 lesson, a suitably modified activity was planned for a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties – again, depending on the availability of additional support to carry this out.

72. Post-16 students follow a course in theatre studies, developing and applying skills in contexts such as set or costume design. During the inspection, students used information and communications technology to design posters, selecting suitable images and adding borders and text and filling in the background. Students continue to build up their repertoire of skills – for example, decoupage, marbling, and designing fabric by developing images from magazine illustrations. The end products are good quality, but are often similar for all students. Their work is still quite closely directed – partly because they are still learning skills, but mainly because lessons, although planned by the specialist teacher, are taught by support assistants. Students’ work is not yet externally accredited.
73. The two co-ordinators work very well together, and have similarly high expectations and enthusiasm. The subject development plan could usefully be extended to include aspects such as monitoring teaching and learning, to share good practice and raise standards still further. Art makes a very strong contribution to pupils’ cultural development and to the school environment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stages 3 and 4 and achieve satisfactory standards. This is in line with the quality of teaching, which is also satisfactory. Pupils’ progress and achievement are better in making rather than designing skills, but they are given opportunities to design, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils’ progress was also considered satisfactory at that time. The programme of work consists of a sensible range of projects, enabling pupils to learn and practise a variety of skills involving the use of materials such as food, textiles and card. However, some of the specified end products are too difficult for pupils to achieve without considerable adult support.
75. Key Stage 3 pupils learn how to use stencils, with the intention of decorating terracotta pots. In one lesson, the higher attaining pupils watched a clear demonstration, by a learning support assistant, who made good use of technical vocabulary – for example, ‘stipple’ and ‘prototype’. Pupils were interested, because they had been shown a finished product, which looked very effective, and so they watched carefully and asked questions. Pupils were required to choose from a suitable range of commercial stencils and they chose the colours they used. However, lower attaining pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, undertook an alternative task – making toast – working with learning support assistants in another part of the school. The work planned by the teacher was not sufficient for the time available, and the staff had to find the pupils ‘something to do’, limiting their progress in the subject. Later in the week, the teacher adapted the lesson appropriately, so that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties worked on similar tasks to the rest of their class. The limited space available in the art room (used for design and technology) is one reason why groups are sometimes split up. In these instances, planning provided for learning support assistants needs to be more precise.

76. In a lesson at Key Stage 4, the project – designing and making a money container – was too challenging. It was the first time pupils had used textiles for sewing, and so were still learning basic skills – such as pushing a needle into fabric and returning it to the surface. The teacher had sensibly modified the task for lower attaining pupils, who practised threading beads or lacing a cord through a perforated board. Pupils had good opportunities to develop their designing skills. For example, they examined a range of money containers, from piggybanks to purses, learning that there are a number of solutions to the problem of storing or carrying money. However, a more realistic choice of project – for example, a bookmark or a coaster – would have given pupils a greater chance of applying their limited skills to producing a functional end product, which could be tested in use.
77. The last co-ordinator left at Christmas and responsibility for the subject is still to be allocated. Resources are barely adequate and the accommodation is unsatisfactory, particularly for food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

78. Pupils' standards of achievement are good in both key stages. They are making good progress in the long term, and their learning in individual lessons is good overall. By the end of Key Stage 3, the higher attaining pupils have a sound knowledge of some landscape features such as rivers, valleys, mountains and volcanoes. They have studied aspects of the environment, including the soil types and the use of the land. Through valuable trips into the local area they have learned how to read simple maps, and use basic grid references, directions and map symbols. Some aspects of the work give good support to other subjects such as mathematics; using charts and graphs to illustrate aspects of the weather and land use, for instance.
79. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' knowledge and understanding has increased, along with their mapping skills. They have a better understanding of environmental issues such as conservation, recycling and the use of natural resources. They know about some environments with different weather conditions – such as deserts, rainforests and polar regions – and they can remember the basic things that make each one different. They have made in-depth studies of places such as France and India, and have learned about many aspects of their culture, people, dress, food and language as well as their geography. A major project has been the water cycle and the main features of river systems, concentrating recently on the River Amazon in contrast to the local stream and river that were studied previously, including during a field trip.
80. The teaching of geography is good overall. A very good lesson about volcanoes, for instance, saw very good planning and preparation of a series of related activities. After a recap on what they had learned previously, there were video clips of volcanic eruptions, and then a simulated eruption on pupils' own model volcanoes that were made in a previous lesson. These eruptions were caused by a mixture of baking powder, colouring and vinegar, and the resultant 'lava flows' were a cause of great wonder to the pupils. They were fascinated, attentive and very interested in the whole lesson, including later on when they worked in groups, making the lava flows more permanent with coloured cornflour running down the slopes of their models, and completing two worksheets about their 'experiment' and about the inner workings of a volcano. In one lesson where the learning was a little slower, it was because the teacher tried to do too much in a single period, and there was not enough time to reinforce points clearly, with, for example, good pictures of the rainforest, or effective video sequences. Teachers make good use of a range of resources, and their lessons generally run at a good and enthusiastic pace. The teaching and the pupils'

progress have both improved well since the last inspection, both being good now, and satisfactory previously. Pupils are still enthusiastic, excited and well motivated by the teaching in this subject, as they were before.

81. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic. The scheme of work is wide ranging and has very appropriate content; it is currently being extended to include the lowest attaining pupils more directly and specifically. Good use is made of field trips and the local environment. The role of the co-ordinator is not wide enough to include long term developments such as resourcing, training and monitoring the teaching and planning, although the two teachers do work well together. The resources are satisfactory, and are being developed well. There has been an overall good improvement since the last inspection, when many aspects of the subject were satisfactory, and being developed.
82. In post-16, geography is not taught as such, but there are good aspects of geography in lessons such as the orienteering at a local park, planning the layout of the allotment in the horticulture work, and in considering environmental issues.

HISTORY

83. Pupils' achievement and progress are overall satisfactory. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is satisfactory overall.
84. Due to the fact that subject specialist teaching has only recently been introduced, all pupils in each key stage are currently following the same modules of study. In Key Stage 3, pupils learn the difference between past and present, through the use of artefacts and visits to local museums. With some adult support, a small number of higher achieving pupils in Year 8 are able to use written source material to identify relevant information about rich and poor people in medieval times. By the end of the key stage, higher achieving pupils can produce a time line depicting major events and can answer questions about the past using evidence from a range of sources. For instance, when studying 'Medieval Realms' pupils can suggest food that would have been available at that time. They recognise that because cows were kept, milk, and therefore cheese, would have been consumed, and identify chips and 'MacDonalds' as being modern foods. They are very aware of what are modern resources and can categorise objects, food and drink into modern and medieval. Lower attaining pupils explore and respond to sensory clues from elements of the periods being studied. For instance, pupils collect flowers to create scented water for washing and participate in a medieval banquet, tasting 'pokerounce' and drinking 'hippocras'.
85. In Key Stage 4, higher achieving pupils develop the ability to use non-fiction books to find information relevant to the topic under study and with support can record information. In their study of the Tudors, pupils give careful consideration to whether they would have liked to live as a rich or poor person in Tudor times and can complete simple worksheets indicating their preferred choice from a range of artefacts. Lower attaining pupils respond to artefacts and experiences relevant to the topic being studied, including a visit to a museum.
86. In both key stages, teaching is well supported by a good range of appropriate artefacts, which capture pupils' interests. Good teaching is highlighted by a range of activities within lessons which are well matched the needs of all pupils. However, the pace of some lessons is slow and more able pupils are insufficiently challenged or extended in their activities, leading to them making less progress.

87. From September 2000, history will be taught as set out in the school's planning framework, with each module fully resourced. This is a marked improvement from the previous inspection. The history co-ordinator monitors delivery of the curriculum through discussion with teaching staff as she does not teach the subject herself. There is a system of school accreditation for pupils on the completion of each module of study but as yet no system for recording the development of skills or the progress pupils are making.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

88. Pupils are progressing satisfactorily through Key Stages 3 and 4, and are achieving in line with what might be expected. The rate of learning in lessons during the inspection was actually good in most instances. This good learning in the short term has not yet had time to have a major impact on the long term progress that pupils make, and this remains satisfactory for the time being. Also, the progress is not uniform. There is inconsistent use of information technology for routine communication for the least and lower attaining pupils who could make good use of it in classrooms. More satisfactory is the use of information and communications technology to support learning in other subjects – such as English, science, geography and mathematics. In specialist lessons, pupils learn information and communications technology skills, about a wide range of related equipment, and the uses of high technology machines in school, at home, and generally in the environment. In these lessons, pupils have learned good keyboard skills, how to access programs and how to manipulate screen displays. They can use hand-held games machines, controllable toys and vehicles, and play on-screen games and interactive reading programs such as 'Max and the Machines'. They have produced small posters and newsletters with borders, clip art pictures and a variety of font styles and sizes. Some pupils can also access the Internet, and have sent and received e-mails, usually with a little assistance.
89. The teaching of information and communications technology is good overall and this, along with the creation of the information technology suite and having lessons specifically for the teaching of information skills, has led to good learning in lessons. Skills are taught within the framework of a good and very basic level scheme, often by a particular support assistant who is very capable. Most lessons are well focused on specific skills, and are well planned and organised. There is generally a good level and quality of support in the form of staff to help pupils in ways that really are helpful, guiding and suggesting, rather than doing it for them. There is still scope for this help to become less direct, as long as the work is prepared properly in advance. One good lesson, taught by the support assistant, saw Key Stage 4 pupils being encouraged to choose their own activity from a selection of computer programs or controllable items. The pupils were keen and enthusiastic; they could enter their names to access the programs, change the batteries on the toy robot, and read along with a story. The whole lesson was well planned and organised, and fitted well into the overall scheme of work. Another equally good, and more structured lesson had very specific targets for each pupil to achieve when writing several sentences about themselves into the computers. The software was appropriate, and pupils could correct their spelling and punctuation with some prompting. They then checked their e-mail boxes, and – lo and behold – found a message asking if they could supply any interesting articles about themselves for the school newsletter, and, if so, could they please e-mail them to the school office!
90. The lower attaining pupils have access to the sensory room, and to the switches there that can operate bubble tubes and fibre-optic displays, but not always sufficient

access to very simple communication aids, such as switches. This has improved since the previous inspection, but remains an area for further development.

91. Information and communications technology in the post-16 unit is only just satisfactory overall, with the better provision and standards of learning and progress being in the earlier year than in the leavers' group. Although there is evidence of some use of information technology being used to produce a newsletter, some subject report-writing and titles for displays, there is little to indicate that positive teaching of information technology skills takes place with any consistency. One lesson was taught during the inspection, by a temporary teacher, and this was good: it was well organised in the information technology suite, with good software that enabled students to check their work as they went along. Students were keen and industrious, responding well to the challenge of entering text and being careful with capital letters, spaces and spelling, and making up their own sentences in a diary style of writing. At the same time, other students in the same group were completing a module on electrical items in the home, and were using a washing machine, tumble dryer and iron.
92. The management of information and communications technology is good. There have been developments with the resourcing and setting up of the dedicated suite, and this has been very successful in raising standards from a previously unsatisfactory level. More training is imminent, along with more equipment, and it is expected that all staff will have good expertise and confidence in the future. There is a good policy in place, and the scheme of work is being developed; for the more able pupils it is well under way, but has only just started for the least able ones. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection, when it was a key issue for development.

MUSIC

93. Overall pupils' achievements and progress are very good because the teaching is very good, occasionally excellent. Since the last inspection the school has successfully integrated music into a creative arts curriculum and pupils have enjoyed music, art and drama in age-appropriate productions such as Romeo and Juliet.
94. Key Stage 3 pupils learn how to breathe correctly and produce voice sounds of long duration and clap simple rhythms to represent their names. The teacher uses assessments of pupils' progress to determine when to introduce informal notation. They move from clapping the rhythms of the names of vegetables, with reference to pictures of broccoli, cauliflower and carrots, to following more advanced informal notation – letters and numbers – with confidence. During one lesson, pupils progressed from short to longer sequences of rhythms – building up to clapping 'red hot chilli peppers'. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to take part in the lesson – for example, wearing bells on their wrists. Because the activities were so well matched to each pupil's needs, the whole class was completely focused and motivated, throughout the lesson.
95. Key Stage 4 pupils take part in individual projects where, for example, they are encouraged to create rhythms on a keyboard. The appropriate deployment of learning support assistants means that pupils have access to the instrument of their choice with proper support, and so make very good progress. The teacher is committed to ensuring that all pupils are active participants in music lessons. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches to select favourite sounds.

96. Post-16 music is taught as part of a theatre studies module. Students continue to develop skills within personal projects and achievements sometimes exceed expectations. In one excellent lesson, a student persevered and managed to produce a sound from the tenor horn. This was largely because of the enthusiasm and skill shown by the teacher. Students were encouraged to hold the note by being accompanied by clapping – the number of claps increasing from four to six. In this way, the students made progress from playing a short to a long note. They were totally engrossed in the lesson and took great pleasure in each other's successes.
97. Students of all ages and abilities have opportunities to develop skills in extra curricular activities. Individual tuition for pupils on the tenor horn and euphonium takes place during lunchtimes. The co-ordinator has made valuable contacts with mainstream schools and colleges and pupils from Cromwell School are included in events organised by the local Drama Network and performed at Tameside College.
98. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has successfully developed music, to the extent that it is now a strength of the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

99. Pupils' achievements and progress are good throughout the school. Teaching is good overall. The progress made by pupils is clearly linked to the quality of teaching and in particular to the skilful way in which teachers ensure that both more able pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to access the curriculum in a stimulating and appropriate manner.
100. The opportunities available to pupils to develop necessary skills have been restricted due to the limited number of modules completed within the newly developed scheme of work. However, as from September 2000 the subject will be taught following the school's curriculum framework, with each module fully prepared, enabling pupils to experience a wide range of appropriate activities which include sex education and the use and misuse of drugs.
101. In the early years of Key Stage 3, higher achieving pupils understand the benefits of exercise and know that it strengthens bones and muscles. They are also aware of the consequences of lack of exercise and over-eating. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can make movements to music and explore the sensations of using muscles in their faces and bodies through smiling and stretching. In Year 8, pupils experience and recognise feelings of shock and surprise. Higher achieving pupils discuss articles and reports they read in the newspaper and select those which they find 'shocking'. They identify what it is in the reports which shocks them – for instance, a train crashing, a child going missing, and a boy who has been attacked. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes shocking news, and can discuss with the teacher and amongst themselves the feelings they experience. Lower attaining pupils experience shocks and surprises through the use of 'party poppers', bursting balloons, imitation spiders and snakes, and by exploring the contents of a number of boxes and parcels. They identify whether they receive a nice surprise or a nasty shock when they open them. By the end of the key stage, pupils can describe a range of feelings – happy, sad, angry and fed-up – or use their senses to experience and react to a range of music, art and tastes.
102. At the end of Key Stage 4, higher achieving pupils can identify dangerous situations and have explored the ways in which they should behave, both in public and in private. They understand the need for some belongings to be personal, as opposed to shared, and know that certain activities are private. Lower achieving pupils have

participated in emergency drills and can identify a policeman, fireman and ambulance when prompted. Pupils are encouraged to make choices and express opinions. For example, when sampling a variety of crisps, they taste them and then identify which they like and dislike. Pupils listen well to each other, respecting different points of view.

103. Effective links have been established with the science, religious education and physical education co-ordinators to ensure aspects of personal, social and health education occurring in these subjects can be reinforced and developed. The majority of lessons are well planned, stimulating and well matched the widely varying needs of the pupils in each class. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties are generally able to access all aspects of the lessons, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However in a few lessons, insufficient consideration is still being given to the wide range of ability within class groups or to the need for age-appropriate resources and activities.
104. At post-16, students do not have regular, discrete lessons. Instead, a number of aspects of the curriculum contribute to their development. Higher attaining students are encouraged to use public transport – for example, when travelling to swimming lessons – helping them to become more independent. Students make use of a range of community facilities, such as a canteen and a library. These opportunities enable students to practise socialising with people that they don't know well, and raise their awareness of resources that will be available to them when they leave school. The cultivation of an allotment is a valuable link with the wider community and permits students to develop a range of personal skills. Some students have opportunities to take part in college courses. These perform the valuable and dual function of giving students a taste of courses they may wish to pursue in the future and enabling them to use facilities such as the refectory, developing their social and independence skills. Their progress is sometimes inhibited because staff do too much for them – for example, holding their hands when out and about. Additionally, the environment of the post-16 provision is not sufficiently adult in nature – there is no common room or facilities for them to practise skills such as preparing meals or looking after their appearance. The dearth of work experience opportunities is also a limiting factor, again restricting students' chances of being independent. Nevertheless, students do make better progress than at the time of the previous inspection, and some of their work is externally accredited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

105. Pupils' standards of achievement are good in Key Stage 3, and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Pupils are gaining skills and knowledge at a rate that is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Learning is good overall, representing an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils undertake physical activities in a good range of aspects, and make particularly good progress in some, such as dance in Key Stage 3.
106. During both key stages, pupils become more able to move in time to music, and to take part in musical role-play activities, such as 'Going on a Bear Hunt'. They take part in dance routines with sari fabrics and ribbons (with good geography and cultural links), and the more able pupils learn to mirror the movements of a partner well. The athletics programme is largely aimed towards the summer sports day, and it includes running, long and high jumps, and throwing things such as foam javelins, bean bags and a variety of balls. Pupils can throw objects for short distances, and sometimes they are quite accurate in aiming, for example, bean bags into a bucket. Gymnastics focuses on balancing, and on moving in different ways along, across, over and under

a range of equipment such as benches, mats and vaulting stands. Pupils are imaginative at finding different ways of moving on the apparatus, although many have difficulty in jumping over a raised bar or a wide mat. They practice games skills, and they play a number of games such as hockey, football, soft tennis, kwik cricket and boccia. The more able pupils can throw balls, but they all find it difficult to catch them. They can hit balls with a bat or hockey stick, but their skills are inconsistent, and they often struggle to understand the rules of games or athletics events – where to run next, or who is on their team, for instance.

107. It is mainly the more able pupils who go swimming, and they learn well during the term each year that this is available to them. The higher attaining pupils learn to swim different strokes in a recognisable fashion, including backstroke, and some have achieved distances of 25, 50 and even 100 metres. The most able pupils have attained the Bronze Survival Certificate. Other pupils have good water confidence, and some can jump or dive in, and fetch rubber bricks off the bottom of the pool.
108. The teaching of physical education is generally at least good and is very good in Key Stage 3. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff plan lessons well and are well organised, with good warm-up activities. Pupils are informed about related health and hygiene matters – such as the need for exercise and how it affects the muscles, breathing and blood flow in the body. However, pupils are not generally fit. They struggle in events that involve stamina, such as running round the school grounds; many are overweight and become breathless easily. This affects the progress they make – they are not always able to benefit from the teaching. Lessons, such as athletics and games outdoors, are conducted at a good pace, with good encouragement to pupils. In one particular lesson, pupils had a good warm-up by running round the perimeter of the school. They then took part in a series of activities such as running round a series of cones in a race, or taking part in an obstacle race that involved running, high and long jumping, throwing a bean bag, and climbing through a hoop. Pupils were encouraged to work in teams together, and in competition against each other. They responded well to the activities, and enjoyed them. In an indoor aerobics, dance and gymnastics session, the pupils put almost as much energy, enthusiasm and effort into the activities as the teacher did. Generally though, teachers have to work very hard to achieve an energetic response from pupils.
109. Only one lesson was seen in the post-16, and this was a very good swimming session at the local pool. Students were well grouped according to their attainment level, and were taught with specific skills in mind, with enthusiasm, and with a good eye for safety. The teacher and support staff were enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and students responded with very good efforts and equal enthusiasm. Students also undertake orienteering in a local park, and engage in a range of activities at a nearby leisure centre, including gymnastics and climbing on an artificial rock wall. The provision for physical education for this age group is satisfactory.
110. The in-school physical education is enhanced weekly by a very good link with a local comprehensive school. The more able Key Stage 3 pupils join in very well with the their mainstream peers for activities such as rugby, gymnastics and, during the inspection, a sports day for the area's primary schools. There are also other valuable activities in school such as the dance club, sports club and a darts and pool club, run by teaching and support staff at lunchtimes or after school. A sports coach from the local authority comes in regularly to help with tuition. The main drawback with physical education is the accommodation, which is unsatisfactory and has an adverse effect on pupils' progress. The multi-purpose hall is small, outdoor space is restricted, and there is no hydrotherapy pool for the less able pupils. Two such pupils

are able to go to a local hospital hydrotherapy pool, but others do not get any water-based activities. Their needs are not fully met by physiotherapy alone, good as this may be.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

111. Pupils are currently making rapid progress through both key stages. However, their achievement is only satisfactory, because they have been taught a restricted curriculum until the start of this academic year. At present, pupils in both key stages are studying the same programme of work. Next term, each key stage will have a separate curriculum, building on this year's introduction. The quality of teaching is very good.
112. Pupils learn about a number of themes – such as symbolism and values – and how these relate to Christianity and other world faiths. These have been chosen carefully to reflect the backgrounds of the pupils, so they all have opportunities to contribute to discussions. During the inspection, pupils were developing their knowledge of the concept of 'Community', by considering festivals – in this instance, those held during the Autumn Term. More able pupils can match objects to festivals – for example, a diva lamp to Divali, a mango and a melon to Harvest, and an Advent candle and Christmas decorations to those events. They know that a festival is a time to say 'thank you' and can suggest why they might want to do this – for instance, the birth of a baby cousin. The specialist teacher is particularly skilled at modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. For this lesson, a lovely, relevant activity had been planned. A pupil investigated scented plants – such as rosemary, lavender and curry plant – and then contributed to the school community by planting seeds for a sensory garden. She showed definite preferences, and made very good efforts to reach out and grasp the plants. Her very good progress was possible because the teacher's detailed planning enabled a learning support assistant to work very sensitively with the pupil, encouraging her to communicate and recording her responses. The whole lesson was very well structured, so that all pupils revised what they had already learned and then built on it, extending their knowledge of festivals and the importance of community. After a game and the matching activity, the lesson ended with a period of calm. Pupils listened attentively to a piece of church music, picking up cues from the teacher's demeanour and sitting still and quiet.
113. The subject is very well led and the co-ordinator has a clear view of how it needs to develop in order to continue to raise standards. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.