

INSPECTION REPORT

VALE OF EVESHAM

SCHOOL

Four Pools Lane, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 6DH

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 117658

Headteacher: Mr E Matthews

Reporting inspector: Mr Peter Johnson
2925

Dates of inspection: 12th –15th March

Inspection number: 191561

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	4 – 19 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Four Pools Lane Evesham Worcester
Postcode:	WR11 6DH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Joe Aspey
Date of previous inspection:	13 th May 1996

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9880	Tony Comer	Lay Inspector		How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11227	John Moles	Team Inspector	Music	Students' attitudes, values and personal development.
20566	Mary Saunders	Team Inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students or students?
2562	Robin Lomas	Team Inspector	Mathematics, Art	
18892	David Thomson	Team Inspector	Modern Languages, Physical Education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11 - 13
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13 - 14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	14 - 17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	17 - 18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18 - 19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19 - 20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20 - 21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22 - 24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25 - 43

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Vale of Evesham School is a day and residential special school providing education for students in the 4 to 19 years age range. The school provides for a wide range of special educational need; 80 students have moderate learning difficulties (MLD), 27 have severe learning difficulties (SLD), 4 have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and 35 have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The range of need and learning difficulty is broadly similar to that at the time of the last inspection, but there are significantly more students with ASD. All students have a statement of special educational need (SEN). There is a small boarding provision with 7 weekday boarders. The attainment of students on entry to the school is well below average. There are 146 students on roll; 110 boys and 36 girls. The number on roll is greater than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. The size of the school is larger than average when compared to other schools of a similar type. Almost all students are of white UK heritage and none have English as an additional language. Thirty-seven students are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly less than at the time of the last inspection. The school is located on the outskirts of Evesham and is in close proximity to several mainstream schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many very good features. Students are taught well, they work hard in their lessons and consequently their achievement is good. Students' attitudes to school and the behaviour of most are very good. Much of the provision for students' academic and personal development is very good, but there are limitations to the provision for students with ASD and for those with speech and language difficulties. Residential care is very good. The school is very well led and it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The achievement of almost all students is good.
- Teaching is good overall and very good for students aged 11 to 14 and for those over the age of 16.
- Students work hard during lessons and most make good progress.
- Students' attitudes to school, their behaviour and personal development are very good.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- Careers and vocational education are very good.
- The contribution of the community to students' learning is excellent.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good.
- Residential provision is very good.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher, key staff and governing body are very good.

What could be improved

- Provision for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- Procedures to improve the behaviour of a very small number of students, whose behaviour is very challenging.
- Provision to meet the requirements of the statements of SEN for those students with speech and language difficulties.

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 has improved well and has successfully addressed the key issues for improvement identified by the last inspection in 1996. There is now a comprehensive programme of staff development, which is more closely related to the school's priorities for improvement. There has been significant and successful curriculum development in many subjects and especially of that for students' aged 14 to 19. The school has yet to improve the curriculum for students with ASD but has identified this as a priority in the most recent school development plan. The residential accommodation and classrooms for students'

aged over 16 have been improved and are now very good. Further improvements to the accommodation, including that for students with ASD are planned. Subject co-ordinators are beginning to evaluate their subject more systematically; lesson observation and the scrutiny of teachers' planning are now features of their work. The number of students who now have opportunities to attend mainstream lessons has increased significantly. There have also been considerable improvements in other areas. The quality of teaching has improved; there is less unsatisfactory teaching and more which is good or very good, than at the time of the last inspection. The procedures to assess students' progress are more effective. Students' achievements in mathematics and science have improved and in other subjects the school has maintained the good standards reported in 1996. Students' cultural development is now promoted more effectively. The previously good management is now very good and resources have been improved in many subjects. School development planning is well established and there is a strong shared commitment to school improvement among all staff. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	N/A	B	B	B	
reading	N/A	B	B	B	
writing	N/A	B	B	B	
mathematics	N/A	B	B	B	
personal, social and health education	N/A	B	B	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	N/A	B	B	A	

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

The school has set appropriately challenging targets for students' achievement by the end of 2002 and is well placed to achieve them. Students' progress and achievements in reading, writing, number skills, science, design and technology and religious education are good across the school. Achievement in music by students aged 5 to 14 is very good and those aged 11 to 14 achieve very well in French. The good links with the local college of further education contribute to the high standards of personal and social development achieved by students aged 14 to 19. Students' achievements in relation to targets set for them in their IEPs are good for those aged 5 to 16 and very good for those aged over 16.

Though they achieve sound, sometimes good standards, the further progress of students with ASD is limited by:

- teaching, across the school, which sometimes lacks sufficient expertise to deal with the difficulties imposed by the wide range of abilities and ages present in the classes for ASD students;
- the way in which the curriculum for such students is defined;
- unsatisfactory accommodation for certain classes.

The allocation of speech and language therapy is insufficient to meet the requirements of statements of SEN and this limits the progress that is made by students who have a speech and language requirement on their statement of SEN.

STUDENTS ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes to school are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The great majority of students behave very well, but there is a very small minority whose behaviour, because of their particular special educational needs, is very challenging.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development and their relationships with each other and with adults are very good.
Attendance	The attendance of the majority of students is good. The overall attendance figures, however, are adversely effected by the persistent unauthorised absence of a small number of students.

Students are very enthusiastic about school and show great interest and involvement in the activities provided for them.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. It is good or very good in almost two-thirds. Teaching is good for students aged 4 to 11 and 14 to 16; it is very good for students aged 11 to 14 and for those aged over 16.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of learning opportunities, which are of a good quality.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides very well for students' personal development. The provision for their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its students	The school cares well for its students and promotes their personal development very well.

The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum, including the National Curriculum is good, but

there are some limitations in the planning and teaching of the curriculum provided for students with ASD and for those with speech and language difficulties. Residential care is very good. The majority of students respond well to the procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour but these procedures are insufficiently precise to deal with the very challenging behaviour of a small number of students.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management at all levels are very good. There is a strong collaborative approach to school improvement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. It has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and plays an active role in shaping the direction for improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall; there is a regular programme of activities to evaluate performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The accommodation is used well, staff and learning resources are deployed very effectively and the school budget is used very effectively to support the implementation of priorities for improvement. The administration of the school is very good.

The school is well led. There are high expectations of staff and students and they are well supported to help achievement of the targets set for them. Planning for improvement is very good and there are very efficient and effective administration procedures. While the school has good procedures to evaluate its own performance. It does not yet compare its performance against similar schools but in other respects it adopts well the principles of best value. There are sufficient staff of good quality who are provided with effective additional training. Accommodation is satisfactory but has limitations in the provision of specialist facilities for science and physical education. The accommodation for students with ASD is unsatisfactory. Resources for most subjects are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress and become more mature and responsible. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • That they are well informed about how their child is getting on and find the school very approachable. • That the school works closely with parents • That the school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significantly negative views of the school, although a small minority felt that their children were provided with insufficient homework and that the school did not provide enough extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. Inspection evidence indicates that sufficient homework is given to extend the work done in lessons and that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Students' achievement is better than at the time of the last inspection. Students aged four to fourteen achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science compared to their previous attainment and at the age of sixteen and beyond, they achieve good results in nationally accredited examinations. The range of nationally accredited awards available to students has increased since 1996 and this has contributed to the higher levels of achievement. The school acknowledges the need to provide even more opportunities for students to gain examination passes at a higher standard so that higher attaining students can be offered greater challenge in their work. It has, therefore, planned the introduction of the Certificate of Educational Achievement, in several subjects, over the next two years.

2. Students' achievement in English is good. In speaking and listening, students of all ages make good progress and achieve well, because teaching in all subjects interests students and enables them to listen well; teachers encourage students to participate in lessons by asking challenging questions. Reading has been a recent focus for the school and has led to good progress being made by many students; standards of reading have risen since the last inspection. The school recognises that it now needs to concentrate on improving the sound achievements made by students in their written work.

3. In mathematics, the achievement of students, of all ages, is good. Younger students develop sound understanding of the rules of number, which provides them with a solid foundation in mathematical understanding. This foundation enables older students to learn effectively from practical activities and, by the age of eleven, they add and subtract numbers, measure accurately and can describe different shapes and their simple properties. By the age of fourteen students are competent in recording their work and can present and analyse simple data. By the age of sixteen and beyond students' good progress equips them to use their mathematical skills successfully to solve practical problems.

4. Students' achievement in science has improved since the last inspection and is now good because there is a higher proportion of good teaching of the subject. Younger students are helped to develop investigation skills through practical activities such as the production of wool. Older students continue to make good progress and, by the time they are eleven, they can describe experiments accurately and draw accurate conclusions from their investigations, demonstrating good understanding of the concept of a fair test. This continues into the next stage of their education and by the age of fourteen they identify accurately variables that will contribute to the success or otherwise of their designs for autogyros. The work completed by older secondary students and those over the age of sixteen indicates that they have good opportunities to learn science and that their achievement in the subject is good.

5. Students' achievement is good in art, geography, history, physical education, design and technology and religious education and very good in French and music. In personal and social development, achievement is very good for students over the age sixteen and good for all other students in the school. Younger students quickly learn appropriate social skills such as those needed during lunchtime and older students learn to work both independently or as part of a team. The oldest students, those over the age of sixteen, benefit considerably from opportunities to work outside the school, on work experience and in the local college of further education, where they conduct themselves with distinction.

6. Students make good progress during their time in the school and achieve good standards by the time they leave because they are taught well. In all classes, including those for students with ASD, there is a strong emphasis on setting challenging targets in students' individual education plans and relating teaching carefully to these targets. Consequently students make good progress towards the targets which are set in literacy, numeracy and personal development.

7. The achievement of students with ASD in subjects of the curriculum, though satisfactory, is sometimes limited. This is because teaching sometimes does not use specialist methods with sufficient precision for those students who need them and the curriculum does not provide a sufficiently wide and balanced range of age appropriate experiences

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Students' attitudes to school are very good. Their attitudes to learning are good. The great majority of students behave very well. The personal development of students and relationships between them, and between them and staff are very good. These are strengths of the school, which have been retained since the last inspection and successfully combine to create a happy, secure and positive learning environment.

9. Students very much enjoy coming to school. During lessons they show good attitudes to their work, they concentrate well and most sustain their energy and interest through to the end of each lesson. When asked to work in groups, students co-operate very well together. In discussions and question and answer sessions they are eager to contribute and show respect for each other's comments and views.

10. The behaviour of the majority of students in classrooms, in play areas, common rooms, at meal times and around the school is very good. The behaviour of students, post-16, is consistently very good. Students are clear about the standards of behaviour expected, they understand and follow the caring ethos established in the school. They often receive praise for their very good behaviour or care towards fellow students both in class, in the play areas and whilst away on school trips or during integration in partner schools. Harassment and bullying in the school are extremely rare. There is a very small minority of students whose behaviour, because of their particular special educational needs, is very challenging. This frequently results in the students concerned being withdrawn from class with a consequent interruption to their learning. Occasionally challenging behaviour disrupts lessons and other students' learning. During the school year prior to the inspection there were ten fixed period exclusions. Accommodation for some students with ASD is small in size and leads to crowding and reduced access to personal workstations. Some students find this difficult to cope with and at times behaviour deteriorates reducing their involvement in learning activities and interrupting the learning of other students.

11. The personal development of students is very good. Relationships with all adults in the school and with each other are very good. This is exemplified in the positive way they respond to their learning and the friendly way they behave towards each other and the staff in classrooms, in the play areas and around the school. Students post-16 behave in an appropriately responsible, relaxed and easy way during their break periods. They listen to music, play computer games or devise dance sequences in a sensible and mature way and treat their special accommodation with care and respect. Lunch break is a time when most of the school come together and demonstrates the caring, friendly atmosphere of the school, as older students help younger ones or younger ones help those with physical disabilities to prepare their food for eating. Students carry out additional responsibilities at lunch times

sensibly, taking food to tables or clearing away afterwards. They also carry out responsibilities around school such as taking registers to the secretary or picking up litter reliably. Parents report that their children like school and become more mature and responsible as they move through the school. They consider that behaviour is good.

12. The attendance of the majority of students is good. The overall attendance figures, however, are adversely affected by the persistent unauthorised absence of a small number of students.

13. Across the school, personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. It is a strength of the school. The school rightly integrates PSHE into all aspects of school life, for example, meal times are planned PSHE opportunities. All students respond well to the family groupings used during lunch time. Students show a good level of responsibility for each other and learn social and eating skills associated with meal times very well. The level of expectation that students and students with physical and severe learning difficulties will be as independent as their disability allows is very high and all respond very well to this and learn the skills needed well. The expectation that they will be responsible for themselves and for each other is high in all social contexts and students rise very well to such challenges. Students take on responsibilities such as chairing school groups; maintaining the schools eco-project and carry these out responsibly. Older students behave in exemplar manner during sex education lessons and discussions, demonstrating a high level of maturity.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Almost all teaching, ninety-nine per cent, is now at least satisfactory, a much higher percentage, sixty per cent, is now good or better and a significant amount, thirty-three per cent, is now very good or excellent. As a result of this improvement, students' learning across the school has also improved. The good standard of teaching contributes strongly to students' learning and achievement.

15. There is a slight variation in the quality of teaching across the school's age range. Overall, the teaching of students aged four to eleven and fourteen to sixteen is good and is very good for students aged eleven to fourteen and for those aged over sixteen. There is a more significant difference between the teaching of students with ASD when compared to the teaching of students with other disabilities; while satisfactory overall there is less good and very good teaching in classes for students with ASD. This is because specialist teaching methods are not used with sufficient precision for those students who need them and the school has not yet defined sufficiently the curriculum to be taught to such students so that they have a wide and balanced range of age appropriate experiences. Furthermore the classrooms used to teach some of these students are unsatisfactory; they are too small and not conducive to good teaching. Teaching in ASD classes focuses carefully on students' personal development through individual education plans, but not so on their academic development in relation to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Consequently students' make better progress in their personal development than in their academic development.

16. Overall teaching and learning are very good in mathematics, French and music, good in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, religious education and physical education and satisfactory in ICT; the teaching of personal, social and health education is very good. Examples of good and very good teaching and learning are widespread. In the main, teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their students' learning disabilities and they use this knowledge well to plan activities that will help their students to make good progress in their learning. In music, for example, instruments

are placed in the best possible position to enable students with PMLD to experience the different sounds they make; students responded well to this activity by signifying, with vocalisations and gesture, that they preferred some sounds to others. In the best lessons, students were interested, motivated and they sustained concentration throughout the lesson because teachers provided very challenging activities that were well matched to students' capabilities. In a science lesson for younger secondary aged students, for example, students were captivated by a simple investigation that involved running and jumping on the spot and consequently were able to determine the changes occurring in their bodies as a result of exercise.

17. Teachers generally manage students well; they set high expectations of behaviour to which the majority of students respond. In some lessons, however, the very challenging behaviour of a small number of students, due to their particular special educational needs, is not managed efficiently. In these instances teachers do not apply sufficiently rigorous strategies to keep students in classrooms and consequently students' learning suffers.

18. In almost all lessons there is an effective partnership between teachers and classroom assistants. Both deploy their time very well to ensure that students have a great deal of personal attention. This helps students to get on with their work and to overcome difficulties as they arise. Teacher's assessment of their students' progress is very good and their consistent use of praise provides encouragement for students to persevere when they face difficulties with their work.

19. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. Teachers are very competent in the teaching of basic skills which enables students to achieve well in reading. The development of students' speaking, listening and communication skills are at the forefront of many lessons. In music for example, students were asked to comment on the work of Vivaldi and also to offer constructive criticism on their own compositions and those of their classmates. In geography, the construction of simple maps and in food technology, the requirement for accurate measurement contributed significantly to the development of students numeracy skills. Teachers set an appropriate amount of homework to extend work carried out in lessons, but there are inconsistencies in the way that home to school diaries are used in this respect.

20. The work of the residential team contributes well to the learning of boarding students. The team has been given basic training in the use of specialist teaching methods and they have adapted these well for use in their work. The targets contained in the care plans of boarding students correlate well with targets contained in the students' IEPs. This co-ordinated approach contributes successfully to students' personal development.

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

21. The curriculum provided is good for most students throughout the age range. Very good opportunities are planned for religious education, and for French for younger secondary students. Students over the age of sixteen who attend courses provided by Evesham College have very good provision for design and technology. The school places particular emphasis on supporting the personal and social development of its students. Time spent on this aspect reflects the individual needs of its students well and provision is very good. The quality of the formal personal, social and health education programme is very good and progress is supported by more informal opportunities over the lunch period and at other times during the school day. Staff provide very good role models to students in this respect. The strong partnerships developed with local mainstream schools and colleges to provide inclusive opportunities for students promote personal and social development very well. All students

have individual targets for their personal development as part of their individual education plans. Those who are able are clear about what they need to do to improve and understand the targets set for them in both personal and academic development. The school has made significant improvement in the system for monitoring progress through individual targets since the last inspection.

22. The few students who are under the age of five are taught in mixed-age classes. Their curriculum is appropriate to their individual needs and supported by structured play based teaching strategies. Students who are able to benefit have the opportunity to attend sessions at a mainstream nursery on a regular basis.

23. The statutory subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught to all students from 5 to 14 years. Aspects covered are appropriately modified to meet the needs of students with content from earlier key stages sometimes being used. The school has made very good use of national guidance in preparing annual plans in each subject. Planning takes place between teachers and subject co-ordinators to ensure that there is a good match between the subject content and the individual needs of the students. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in securing access to the curriculum through well-planned schemes of work. Planning of curriculum experiences in the longer term is less secure. The school should build on its good progress in this area by developing a clearer view of the range of experiences to be offered as students move through the school.

24. The curriculum for students from 14 to 16 years includes aspects of life skills, food technology and the expressive arts, while 16 to 18 year olds also study home management, sports and leisure and community studies. All these students continue to have good provision for English, mathematics and information and communication technology with emphasis being appropriately placed on the application of these skills to daily life. Provision of careers and vocational programmes is very good and represents a strength of the school. Students have access to a wide range of work experience placements, which in some instances lead to paid employment on leaving school. There is a very good system for monitoring the progress of students in this aspect of their development, which is well supported by the Careers Service. The school holds the Quality Mark for Careers Education and Guidance in recognition of its work.

25. Suitable opportunities are planned for older students to link with local secondary schools and to attend courses at a college of further education. While these links are very positive they are not always sufficiently focussed on curriculum needs and opportunities to accredit the achievements of students are lost. The school is aware of its need to develop external accreditation for student in the fourteen to eighteen age range further. Currently students work towards the achievement of ASDAN certificates through different aspects of their curriculum and AQA on- demand tests are used for literacy and numeracy skills. The introduction at the beginning of the current academic year of Welsh Board Certificates of Achievement in English and numeracy for some students at sixteen is a very positive development. The school needs to continue to develop the range of accreditation for older students in order to allow them to demonstrate their achievements in other subjects of the curriculum.

26. Curriculum opportunities for ASD students and some of the least able are more restricted where these students are taught in specialist classes. The very wide age range in some of these classes makes age appropriate curriculum planning more difficult and specialist methodologies can lead to students spending significant amounts of time pursuing tasks, the point and purpose of which are insufficiently defined. The school recognises the need to move towards planning of provision for these students that is more in line with rest of school and has already included these students in the "transition challenge" of the Youth

Award Scheme. The extensive developmental curriculum materials available would then be used to support target setting for individuals rather than as a basis for curriculum planning.

27. Provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy to students is good overall. The school has enthusiastically introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and this approach is having demonstrable effect on standards of reading and numeracy. Consistent planning assessment and recording have provided an improved focus on targets for learning. All students have specific targets for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and mathematics as part of their individual education plans. Staff training for the use of the strategies has been given a high priority and a very good range of resources supports the work. Students approaching the end of Key Stage 2 tests have the opportunity to attend a lunchtime booster class to improve their skills in reading and writing.

28. While provision for speaking and listening is good for more able students, the least able and those with additional disabilities are disadvantaged in some classes through the lack of consistency in the use of signs and symbols to support their development. There are plans in place to address this aspect but these have been inhibited by the insufficient speech and language therapy time available.

29. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are focused on lunchtime clubs and residential trips because of the difficulties of transporting students to and from school outside of the normal school day. Residential students have a wide range of leisure activities in the evening and are occasionally joined by other students for these visits. Very good use is made of support from the local community to enhance the curriculum. This is evident in the wide range of work experience placements that have been developed but also includes some business sponsorship such as that supporting the provision for information and communication technology and sports kit. Visitors are also welcomed to lead assemblies.

30. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is very good. Social and moral aspects receive a constant focus within many of the daily routines in and out of lessons where students are reminded to act in a fair and considerate way by adults and the publication of the school's Code of Conduct on every classroom. Spiritual and cultural awareness is developed through regular assemblies that involve worship but also discuss beliefs from other cultures such as the Hindu faith. This topic had been further reinforced by a classroom display that reflects some of the customs of Hindu religious festivals.

31. Provision for spiritual development is very good, supported by an effective curriculum in religious education and assemblies. Displays of work in Key Stage 1 and 2 classrooms indicate that students are encouraged to study topics relating to the function and significance of churches in this country, while the scrutiny of files at Key Stage 3 revealed examples of students composing their own prayers. Many parts of the established religious education syllabus allow opportunities for reflection and discussion, and in humanities other concepts and ideas are explored in topics such as human rights in history.

32. Arrangements for supporting the moral development of students are very strong and embedded within the aims of the school. Adults consistently praise and encourage appropriate behaviour and most students respond by showing respect and care towards other people within and beyond the school environment. Visitors are welcomed with warmth and friendship. Assemblies again play a significant part in affirming moral values, demonstrated during the week by a presentation from a visiting RSPCA speaker who stimulated a debate about kind and cruel behaviour towards animals.

33. The quality of relationships in the school is very good. For the majority, specific targets relating to socially acceptable behaviour are included in IEPs, reflecting the school's commitment to developing responsible and trustworthy students. The prominent display of the school's Code of Conduct and class rules further endorses the priority given to this issue. In routine school activities such as lunchtime and assemblies most students behave appropriately in the larger social group and show tolerance to the minority and who find it difficult to manage these situations. In physical education, and other subjects, activities are organised where students work collaboratively and it is an impressive feature how often more able students will, without prompting, help a classmate. Humanities also makes a good contribution to students, social understanding.

34. Provision for students' cultural development is equally as good, illustrated by the range of curriculum opportunities in history, geography, french, art, PSHE and religious education, where students consider issues relating to their own cultural heritage and that in other countries. There are displays about a Japanese doll festival, Hindu celebrations, multi-cultural Britain, while previously there has been work focused on African culture and travellers' customs and traditions.

35. Overall the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and has improved since the last inspection, particularly in respect of cultural awareness where there is now a well co-ordinated approach.

36. The school has a high level of commitment to the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Planning for PSHE is good and directly relevant to the individual needs or groups of students. The school rightly integrates PSHE into all aspects of school life, for example, meal times are planned PSHE opportunities. Most students eat in the main hall in family groups with the same teacher or member of the support staff present at the table each day. Cards on the table set out clearly targets for each student's personal and social development. All are thus aware of help that might be needed or specific encouragement to be given to individual students to help them achieve skills needed for eating or social interaction. Such considerable care makes a significant impact on learning personal skills, social skills and health and hygiene education. This care permeates all aspects of school life and personal and social education are developed at every opportunity. Individual education plans clearly identify targets for development and all activities and opportunities are very clearly linked to these individual targets. Students are expected to take a full part in class and group activities and to show a great respect for each other, for example, by waiting patiently for their turn or commenting critically but sincerely on a classmate's performance in drama. The expectation that they will be responsible for themselves and for each other is high. Very good provision is made for the formal teaching of PSHE in the school time table and lessons are well planned and linked correctly to the comprehensive scheme of work. Good provision is made for sex education and drugs education and these are accurately pitched at appropriate age and ability levels. Life skills are taught well particularly to the older students post-16, and inclusion in college courses are significant to this provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

37. The support and guidance which students receive, both formal and informal is good and overall the high standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Parents appreciate the openness and approachability of staff in dealing with questions and problems and believe that the school helps children to become mature and responsible. The teaching and non-teaching staff know the students well and respond to their needs.

38. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress and the monitoring

of their academic performance are good. Assessment information is usefully gathered and used well to inform planning, in numeracy and literacy using 'p' levels, the national system for scoring attainment up to National Curriculum levels. These assessments are being extended to include other subjects. In English and mathematics, students with moderate learning difficulties are taught in groups arranged according to prior attainment levels in the subjects and this advances learning in these subjects well. Teaching and non teaching staff know the academic needs of the students well. They keep good records. Teachers plan activities well, building sequentially on prior attainment, they involve support staff closely in the planning stages and all staff contribute well to the learning of each individual student. Individual education plans satisfactorily reflect the particular academic needs of each student. Identification of progress and attainment against these individual objectives are carefully recorded and teacher's short term planning indicates frequent reference to individual education plans and the setting of activities appropriate to the particular need of the individual student. Individual education plans are reviewed termly.

39. The procedures for child protection and ensuring students' welfare, including detailed and effective care plans, are good. However, as recommended in the recent Social Services report, the school should ensure that training in child protection procedures and awareness is provided for all staff on a continual basis. There is a strong residential care team, a group of residential teachers and a school nurse, all of whom provide an environment, especially in the residential unit, in which students can flourish and in which parents and carers have confidence. The school has access to a wide range of external professional services that are used effectively, although the provision for speech therapy has been unsatisfactory. The care that students receive has a beneficial effect on their progress and personal development.

40. There is a cohesive personal, social and health education policy, and the personal development of students is carefully monitored, recorded and reported. The advice and guidance on careers, which older students receive, is particularly effective.

41. Health and safety policies and procedures, including risk assessment are effective. However, the school is rightly concerned about the levels of intrusion and vandalism in the school grounds and about the potentially hazardous traffic conditions immediately outside the school at the end of the day.

42. The school policies and procedures successfully promote discipline and good behaviour for the vast majority of students and there is no evidence of oppressive behaviour. The red and gold cards, the 'golden book', class rewards systems and the Friday assemblies all ensure that students recognise the importance of good behaviour. Individual behaviour management plans for those students with complex and challenging behaviour set out clear and appropriate management strategies but do not always extend these to include ways the student may be encouraged to participate in lessons of their own volition. This is an area for improvement.

43. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance are good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Overall, the school's partnership with parents remains good. Most believe that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress and that the school works closely with them. They have very positive views about the school and are happy with what it provides and achieves.

45. Parents' contribution to, and involvement with their children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory. The school takes every opportunity to encourage parental involvement

in the life of the school, reinforced by the home school agreement, which has been endorsed by the majority of parents and students. There is a small but dedicated group of Friends of the Vale of Evesham School that works hard to support both social and financial aspects of the school.

46. There is effective communication between the school and parents, with information provided through regular newsletters, termly parents' meetings, reviews of individual education plans (IEPs), questionnaires, and annual reports. Parents also know and appreciate that they can discuss issues informally with staff at any time. The annual reports give parents a clear indication of the curriculum covered by students, but often there is insufficient detailed information about what students' know, understand and can do. Homework dairies are generally well used, but there are some inconsistencies across the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The leadership and management of the school have improved since the last inspection and are now very good at all levels. The headteacher, senior management team and governing body work together effectively to ensure that there is a successfully collaborative approach to the management of the school.

48. Throughout the school there is a strong determination to improve the quality of education provided for students. School improvement planning is very effective; the school has adopted priorities for improvement that will raise students' achievements and these priorities are known and understood by all staff. The work of the school is guided by an appropriate set of aims, which focus strongly on the achievement of high standards of students' academic and personal development. The school is largely successful in meeting these aims. There are, however, deficiencies in the provision for students with ASD and in that for pupils with special and language difficulties and in the management of very challenging behaviour, which limit the provision of an enriching curriculum which enables students' achievement of their full potential and to take responsibility for their own development.

49. The headteacher and senior managers delegate responsibilities effectively. Managers at all levels have a clear understanding of their role in raising achievement. The governing body is more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection; it now has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, monitors the school's progress effectively and in doing so is well placed to contribute to the school's further improvement.

50. There are good systems to monitor the work of the school and to set targets for improvement. Teaching is regularly observed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, students' work is evaluated and increasing use is made of performance data. However, the school has only recently begun to make use of the limited amount of data available to compare its performance with that of similar schools. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is good. This audit of strengths and weaknesses leads to the setting of appropriate priorities for improvement which are strongly focussed on raising the quality of education and the achievement of students.

51. The school sets itself challenging targets and is successful in meeting them. The school improvement plan provides the means to raise standards and quality and the school takes effective action to meet the challenges that it sets itself. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a strong capacity to succeed.

52. Financial planning is very good. Budget management and administration is very effective; the school uses resources effectively to raise standards and improve quality. Specific grants are used effectively and correctly to support staff development. School administration is very effective; the school runs smoothly with the help of a very efficient administrative team.

53. The number of teachers and teaching assistants is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. Both are in line with national recommendations. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in meeting the special educational needs of students. However, the increasing number of students with complex and challenging behaviour place additional demands on staff expertise. Teaching assistants are valued, work well with their teachers and make a substantial contribution to students' progress.

54. The programme for furthering the professional development of teachers and other staff is extensive. It makes a major contribution to sustaining the good quality of teaching routinely seen in lessons. Very good procedures help identify the developmental needs of teachers and of the teaching and care assistants. Training opportunities link very well with the School Development Plan. For example, teachers and teaching assistants take a full part in the NOF training programme in information and communications technology, which has been identified as an area for development. Also, teachers are encouraged to continue their training by taking advanced degrees and certificates, for example in teaching students with ASD. Care assistants are following courses to help them better manage the residential provision. The induction programme, which incorporates all staff new to the school, has been very well thought through. It is very good and helps staff to quickly become effective in their work.

55. Teachers are deployed well. Most lessons are taught by teachers with either specialist training or knowledge of the subject, or have specialist knowledge in teaching students with particular learning difficulties, such as ASD. Teaching assistants are well deployed to provide best support for teaching and learning. The school provides a very good base to support the training of new teachers.

56. Overall accommodation is satisfactory and the residential facilities are excellent. However, there are a number of weaknesses in this area. The accommodation used for students with ASD is inadequate and has a detrimental impact on the learning and development of this significant minority. There are no specialist facilities for the teaching of science and an inadequate library, although the improvement of both are included in the school development plan. The outdoor facilities do not allow the playing of organised team games. The school has ambitious plans for other areas of development including a technology suite, and improvement to adult toilet facilities and office accommodation.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. To improve further the existing good standards the headteacher, senior managers and governing body should:

1. Increase the progress made by students with ASD by ensuring a better match between their needs and:
 - the organisational arrangements for teaching an age appropriate curriculum,
 - the use of specialist teaching methods and
 - classroom accommodation.
2. Improve the behaviour of students with complex and challenging behaviour by extending the range and precision of strategies to meet their specific needs, so

that they spend more time participating in lessons.

3. Work with the local education authority and health authority to ensure that provision meets the requirements of the statements of SEN for students with speech and language difficulties.

The following minor issues should be included in the governors' action plan:

1. Improve the content of annual reports to parents to include information about what students know, understand and can do.
2. Develop ways in which the school can compare its performance against other, similar schools.
3. Ensure the consistent use of signing and symbols where they are needed.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	107
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	29	27	39	1	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 students

Students on the school's roll	No of students
Number of students on the school's roll	146
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	37

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.39

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.28

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	141
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17
Number of students per qualified teacher	7.7 :1
Average class size	8.6

Education support staff: Y1 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	39
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1098

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	10	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	1470749
Total expenditure	1471587
Expenditure per pupil	10011
Balance brought forward from previous year	56816
Balance carried forward to next year	55978

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	140
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	31	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	27	6	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	34	5	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	32	10	5	3
The teaching is good.	68	26	2	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	62	27	8	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	12	3	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	2	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	71	21	5	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	77	17	2	3	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	28	3	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	23	8	5	9

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

Inclusion

58. Inclusion was identified as a key issue in the last inspection report. There has been good improvement in the provision for integration/inclusion. Inclusion links with mainstream schools have increased significantly, so that the number of students attending in four local schools has risen from nine per cent over twenty per cent. Some students from all key stages attend weekly sessions which have been arranged through contact established by the Co-ordinator (Deputy Head) at the Vale of Evesham School, following in-school discussion of students' individual needs. An inclusion programme is set up for those who will benefit socially and academically from the provision, though for older students in the middle or upper school, links have been organised for subjects where there is less written recording – drama, PE, art, design and technology and ICT/English. Currently, all students are attending only for single sessions. The commitment and positive attitude of all the participating schools contributes to the level of success achieved. Review of placements is on-going, based on informal liaison between the schools, with the pupil's annual review as the main forum for making longer term plans.

59. The LEA Inclusion Project, begun in September 2000, has provided an additional boost to inclusion initiatives, by appointing an inclusion teacher who has organised funding to cover costs for staff to accompany students and for staff to arrange exchange visits. In this way, schools will strengthen their links and identify further areas where they can be mutually supportive. The inclusion teacher has also been effective in developing communication between the schools, particularly in monitoring the progress of students.

60. The response of students at the Vale of Evesham is equally positive. By attending a mainstream school, they recognise their opportunity to manage in larger groups and, with older students, they feel that they will learn more in the specialist subject lesson. However only one pupil aspired to return full-time to mainstream. At Key Stage 4 and post –16, effective and flourishing links exist between the school and colleges of further education. Students are keen to make the most of their link programmes.

61. In addressing this key issue, the school has implemented systems and procedures that help students to experience mainstream schooling. From this platform, the school plans to build on what has already been achieved so that students may extend their time in the mainstream setting, more informal links will be set up for teachers to share expertise and experience and joint projects will be initiated to involve groups of students from the different schools.

62. Within the Vale of Evesham School, opportunities have been created for students to move across departments so that individual needs can be suitably met. With the increased provision for ASD students, there is heightened awareness of matching the learning needs of students to their personal needs so a proportion of students join different class groups for different activities. This flexibility is designed to meet the wider range of students' needs.

ENGLISH

63. The achievement of students in English are good for most when judged against their prior attainment. Achievement is at least satisfactory for all students. The youngest students can sign or say single words in response to adult questions, match symbols and become involved in stories by turning the pages of a book and commenting on pictures. The more

able can use phrases or simple sentences to communicate ideas, identify initial letter sounds, follow left to right lines using a pencil and write over the letters of their name. Their achievements are at level P3 to P6 using the national standards for children achieving below Level 1 of the National Curriculum. By the age of eleven the most able can discuss work set for them and talk about topics of interest to their class. They show an enjoyment of books and read simple sentences using their phonic knowledge to attempt unfamiliar words. Most learn to sight read high frequency words and identify letter sounds. Some students achieve Level 1 of the National Curriculum and are working towards Level 2. These students construct simple sentences using full stops and capital letters in clear legible print. Many are able to write their own name and spell words such as bed and bat correctly. Achievements in writing for the most able are at a similar level to those in reading.

64. By the time they leave school most students can listen and contribute to discussion. They are able to talk confidently about their work and report back on work experience placements to their class. Some students can recognise whether they have produced a full sentence in response to a question. The most able can read with fluency and expression, achieving at Level 4 of the National Curriculum. Most students show enjoyment and growing confidence in their reading and can extract appropriate information from a local newspaper. They use phonic skills to attempt unfamiliar words. Others can comment on the pictures in a book and identify rhyming words. They learn appropriate terms such as author and illustrator and are able to predict the next pages in a story read with the group. More able students can produce paragraphs of independent writing and develop stories that have a beginning, middle and end. Most can fill in a form including their basic personal details and write a formal letter such as a job application. Achievements in writing are below assessed levels in reading. In the last academic Year 5 students were accredited externally at Level 3 in AQA literacy test.

65. The least able students, throughout the age range, learn to listen to stories and songs, respond to familiar adults, point to or exchange pictures and symbols to make choices and make marks on paper with a pencil or crayon. The standards achieved by less able students and those with additional disabilities in some classes are constrained by the lack of consistency in the use of signs and symbols to support their development.

66. Since the last inspection the school has worked with enthusiasm to introduce the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) to structure the teaching of English for all students from five to fourteen and for the less able older students. This approach has had a positive impact on the standards of reading in particular. The strategy has been adapted to provide medium term plans for these age groups using the national material for Key Stage 1. This has provided a clear structure for planning the teaching of literacy skills and a context for assessing and recording progress. All students have specific targets for reading, writing, speaking and listening as part of their individual education plans, which link to the national strategy. Staff training for the use of the NLS has been given a high priority and a very good range of resources has been purchased to support the work. A booster class has recently been introduced to raise the attainment of the most able eleven year olds.

67. For students from fourteen to eighteen the school has introduced a range of accreditation and is beginning to implement this for students across the ability range for which the school provides. All students have access to accreditation through ASDAN awards at an appropriate level. Students over the age of sixteen have been able to gain recognition for their skills in English through AQA on –demand tests. In this academic year the school has introduced a course leading to Certificates of Achievement through the Welsh Board for more able students of fourteen to sixteen.

68. Most teaching in English is good with some excellent teaching taking place. No unsatisfactory teaching in English was seen. The implementation of the NLS has provided a good structure for planning in the subject that is used well by teaching staff. There is a clear

link in lessons to the targets identified in students' individual education plans and progress is carefully recorded. As class teachers teach most subjects these English targets are also addressed in other lessons. The introduction of a whole school system for reading records would enable progress to be monitored more easily as students move classes. A good range of methodologies are used in the teaching of English with most lessons using the structure of whole group introduction, followed by individual or small group tasks and short plenary sessions. Teaching is most effective when targets for learning are shared with students as well the tasks to be completed being listed. While the NLS lesson structure and use of "Big Books" for whole class reading is being effectively used, there is a need to monitor carefully the understanding of the underlying principles of the approach so that the delivery remains purposeful in all lessons. The appropriateness of tasks to some older students should be kept under review. The very good range of resources to support teaching in the subject is readily available and used well.

69. Very good relationships between adults and students are evident in all classes. Students respond to this by working hard and attending to their teachers. They develop confidence in their abilities and are enthusiastic about learning. The atmosphere in most lessons is calm and purposeful. The school's system of positive behaviour management is implemented in all classes and for the majority of students is very effective. However, for the most challenging students these strategies are leading to significant amounts of curriculum time away from lessons.

70. The leadership provided by the co-ordinators in English is good. They support teaching and learning in the subject well by identifying clear priorities for development based on evidence about the standards achieved in the subject. The NLS has been very successfully implemented through whole school planning, staff development and the purchase of resources. An effective system is in place for monitoring teaching in English. The co-ordinators have been effective in developing annual plans for teaching English in each class. Further development needs to consider planning in the longer term to identify the experiences appropriate to each stage as students move through the school and especially to ensure access to a relevant curriculum for all students in classes where the age range is very broad.

71. The need for improving the classrooms in which some students are taught the subject is recognised by the school. These rooms are currently having a negative impact of the standards of work achieved. Plans are in place to improve the library facilities, which are inadequate. There is currently a small area set aside for reference books in the school entrance. This is very limited in its use and students do not have independent access to fiction material in a central library. Good use is made of the School Library Service to provide books in classes. Corridor displays feature work in English, such as a series of book covers reproduced by students. This enables students to celebrate their learning in the subject.

72. The amount of speech and language therapy provided for the school has recently been reduced and is currently inadequate to meet the needs of students whose statement of SEN requires the provision of this therapy. This deficit is having a particular impact on the learning of students who require a communication approach supported by the consistent implementation of signs and symbols.

MATHEMATICS

73. Across the school, students' achievement in mathematics is good. The very good progress of younger students gives them a solid foundation in mathematical understanding and basic skills, especially computation. The use of practical activities, involving signing as appropriate, such as counting and board games, measuring their own height, cutting and pasting shapes, following a drum beat, and threading beads, successfully engages students'

interest and shows them that they can succeed in the subject. Through such activities concepts such as a 'fair test' are understood by quite young students. In Key Stage 3, students become more accurate, and more competent in recording their work. The additional special educational needs of some students with ASD in some mixed-age classes at Key Stage 3 currently limit their progress. At Key Stage 4 and post-16 students' good progress equips them to use mathematical skills in everyday life, such as managing money and estimating.

74. Students are enthusiastic about mathematics. In almost all cases they concentrate well for lengthy periods. They work well in groups, pairs and as individuals. They take pride in attaining their targets. Behaviour is almost always very good. The exception is where the additional special educational needs of some students, in particular of some of those who have ASD, have insufficiently been taken into account in planning.

75. The principal factor in the progress seen is the very good recent implementation throughout the school of the National Numeracy Strategy. All teachers have received in-service training in the strategy. Its use is consistent throughout the school. Support staff have become equally skilled in implementing the strategy. They play a key role in the good progress which students make. The key features of the strategy are very good medium and short-term planning. This is clearly derived from the National Curriculum orders, makes highly effective use of 'P' levels and is linked to continuous rigorous assessment lesson by lesson. Lessons have a very clear focus, which helps students understand what is expected of them. The oral parts of lessons provide students with good exposure to the use of mathematical language, and proceed at a good pace. The plenary section of lessons gives students opportunities to consolidate their learning by explaining to the others in the group what they have done and how they have arrived at their conclusions. Teachers use a variety of successful strategies, including good use of questions matched to students' level of understanding. This has the result that students usually answer correctly, pride in their success leading them to take greater risks in their learning. The extensive use of oral language in mathematics lesson significantly promotes students' competence in language in other areas.

76. The successful implementation of the strategy has had the positive effect of ensuring that the learning needs of students are rigorously addressed, in most cases successfully. All students have mathematics targets in their individual education plans. Specific targets are clearly addressed in teachers' daily lesson planning. Students' progress is ensured by the accumulation over time of mathematical understanding and skills through successfully attaining their targets. Many students understand their targets. This enables them to take greater responsibility for their learning, which itself contributes to greater progress. The recent extension of accreditation opportunities at Key Stage 4 and post-16 is having a very positive effect on attitudes and progress, and is likely to lead to higher attainment. All students have equal access to a broad, balanced and relevant mathematics curriculum.

77. The school has a good mathematics policy. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy was led by the previous mathematics co-ordinator who left the school at the end of the last academic year. The further development of the subject requires that the school: provides for consistent specialist monitoring of mathematics teaching so as to ensure that the opportunity to receive cumulative learning experiences, which has followed from the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, becomes embedded as a reality for all students, including those in mixed-age classes, and that moderation of judgements of pupil attainment is more secure; and extends the use of information technology. Resources for learning have greatly improved since the last inspection and now make a major contribution to students' progress.

SCIENCE

78. The provision for science is good. The standards achieved by the majority of students have improved since the last inspection because there is a higher percentage of good teaching. In addition the school has improved the curriculum by implementing the Qualification and Curriculum Authorities (QCA) primary modules of work for science. This has provided a coherent curriculum plan. Some of the QCA secondary modules have also been implemented providing opportunities for students aged eleven to fourteen to study appropriate age related work and the oldest secondary age students now have suitable opportunities to have their learning accredited because the school has implemented the Welsh Board science syllabus. Students over sixteen have appropriate opportunities to learn about science related topics such as the environment and health during modules of work, and their achievements are accredited through the Youth Award Scheme. This improved curriculum planning is helping to raise standards because teachers have higher expectations of students' achievement when they plan work. The curriculum provides a good framework to guide teachers when they plan lessons. What students will learn during their time at school is clearly identified for each year group and this enable teachers to plan so that students build on what they have already learned. However, scrutiny of students' work indicates that occasionally teachers do not ensure that learning planned for students when they revisit topics is sufficiently different to that which they have experienced in the past. Curriculum plans, particularly the opportunities for younger secondary age students and the opportunities for accreditation have been implemented fairly recently and the good procedures developed to monitor the curriculum are already beginning to identify this as an issue.

79. At the time of the last inspection in 1996, students' achievement was judged to range from satisfactory to good, it is now good across all age groups in the school except, for those students with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. This is because they do not have the same curriculum opportunities as other students. Their achievement and progress is no better than satisfactory because the curriculum implemented for them is significantly different to that provided for their peers. It does not provide them with a sufficiently broad range of age related learning experience. This has already been identified as an area for development. In addition, the teaching methods implemented to address these students' behavioural and learning needs are not being used as effectively as they could be to support the development of students' understanding and skills in the subject.

80. The last inspection report identified that curriculum provision, particularly for secondary age students' was restricted by a lack of suitable science accommodation. This situation continues although there are plans to create a specialist science room by 2002. The curriculum opportunities planned for secondary age students are restricted to those modules of work which can be taught in the classroom. For example, older students study sports science and pollution, but at the moment they are not able to study materials and their uses or making new materials because the facilities are unsuitable. However, the school makes good attempts to ensure that a wide range of suitable learning opportunities is provided within the limitations of the accommodation. The achievement and progress of the majority of students is good in relation to the curriculum they are offered.

81. Teachers and classroom assistants effectively support students in Year 2 to develop early investigation skills when they learn about the processes used to turn a sheep's fleece into a jumper. The teacher provides a good selection of resources, which students are encouraged to explore. Their attention is good while they watch a video about the topic and they are keen to feel the wool before it is spun. The teacher provides a good demonstration of how to make a short strand of wool, by twisting the fleece between two fingers, and

students try hard to copy. They watch with interest when the teacher shows them how to knit and they use past learning effectively to identify that the knitting needles are made of wood. Their understanding of size is reinforced well when they try on an Aran jumper. They know that it is too big for them and suggest that it must belong to the teacher. Younger primary age students with autistic spectrum disorders are beginning to understand that materials look and feel different. They are provided with a good range of materials to explore and the teacher and support assistants effectively model appropriate 'exploring behaviour'. Students copy what the adults do, feeling the different textures. The teacher ensures that students are introduced to appropriate vocabulary during the activity.

82. Older primary age students are excited when they check the experiments they have done to grow seeds and bulbs under different conditions. They describe accurately what they see and draw conclusions from the outcomes. They know that plants need light and water to grow successfully because they have proved it. The teacher extends their understanding further with good use of a video clip and by using the book 'My bean diary'. The teacher uses questions well to help students explain what they know. They name the different part of the plant accurately and know that a bulb acts as a plants' 'lunch box' providing it with food and water. Students confidently use skills learned in literacy to help them understand more about the growth of a bean when they read the text together and they recognise that the drawing in the book has been labelled. Activities such as these capture pupil's attention and they make good progress because they are interested in what is happening.

83. By the time they reach Year 6 students demonstrate a good understanding of 'fair tests' and they make accurate observation and measurements when they test the strength of different magnets. The teacher has high expectation of students' participation in activities and this encourages them to share their understanding. Because the teacher recaps past learning effectively students make good links between what they already know and the work they are doing. This enables them to offer sensible suggestions as to what 'might' happen. The teacher provides a good demonstration of how to test the strength of several different types of magnets, carefully emphasising the need for the test to 'fair'. Students are effectively involved in the activity and by their insistence that the different magnets are moved towards the bar from a designated line they demonstrate their understanding that each test must be done in the same way. Students are asked to predict the number of paperclips that a magnet will pick up. They make sensible suggestions but are surprised when they have under and over estimated by almost fifty per cent. The teacher uses this opportunity well to reinforce students numeracy skills when she asks them to say which guess was closest to the outcome of fifty-one, twenty-five or one hundred, students correctly answer twenty-five. Students appropriately use the outcomes of the first test and the information they have about the strength of each magnet to inform their next estimate.

84. Students continue to develop their understanding of 'fair tests' and by Year 9 they accurately identify a number of variables when they test their autogyros. They clearly understand that the size of the autogyro, the weight used to stabilise it and the height at which it is dropped will all make a difference to the results. The teacher provides a clear explanation about how to make an autogyro and this is supported by a suitable worksheet with written and drawn instructions. This enables students to make the model with a good degree of independence. One pupil recognises that he has made a mistake in the way the wings are folded and is able to correct it without help. Students effectively use skills and understanding they have gained in design and technology when they are challenged by the teacher to make the smallest and largest autogyro they can, and to experiment with different wing shapes. Students know from their tests that the newspaper does not have enough strength to make a very large autogyro successfully.

85. Younger secondary age students learn about the effects of exercise on the body.

They clearly understand what they are going to learn because the learning outcomes are shared effectively with them. They know that they are going to find out why we need exercise to keep healthy and that exercise makes the body feel hotter. The teacher challenges students throughout the lesson to make the connection between exercise and the heart and by the end of the activities students clearly understand that the heart beats faster during exercise and they have also understood that the heart is a muscle. There is a good emphasis on developing students' vocabulary and the teacher establishes what they already know by asking students what they think circulation means. Students remember what they have learned in past lessons and know that circulation is about blood, veins and the heart. There is a good emphasis on research when students watch a video about exercise and health and this is reinforced when the teacher encourages them to look at the good range of information books in the classroom.

86. Older secondary age students with autistic spectrum disorders demonstrate basic understanding of cause and effect when they learn about battery and electrically operated appliances. They know that connecting a plug to a socket and flicking a switch will make a radio come on. No other science lessons were observed for older secondary age students or students over sixteen but scrutiny of work, students and students records and curriculum plans indicate that they have good learning opportunities and that their achievement is good.

87. In a small number of lessons the needs of lower attaining students are not met as effectively as they could be and their progress is only satisfactory. The learning outcomes identified for these students do not sufficiently reflect their learning needs or their levels of achievement and the learning outcomes established for the whole class are not appropriate. Lower attaining students are well supported in lessons but too frequently the work given to the majority of students is not adapted sufficiently to match their needs and their achievement is lower than the rest of the class. In good lessons teachers plan different tasks for lower attaining students and write different learning outcomes for them.

88. Teaching and learning range from satisfactory to good and are good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is now a higher proportion of good teaching. The majority of the satisfactory teaching is for students with additional special needs and those with autistic spectrum disorders. During this inspection good teaching and learning was seen for students of all ages. Good introductions, interesting activities and high expectations result in students achieving well and concentrating for the whole lesson. Teachers subject knowledge is good and they use it effectively to prepare activities, through, which students can achieve the learning outcomes identified. Work is well planned to meet the needs of the majority of students and it provides them with sufficient challenge as well as good opportunities to practice what they have already learned. Simple investigations, such as warm up exercises, running and jumping on the spot help to reinforce new learning for younger secondary age students when they find out if changes occur to the body during and after exercise. Teachers use questions well to test students understanding and to extend their learning and participation. Persistent questions, as well as constant reminders, by the teacher, help students in Year 4 to explain why seeds grow but stones don't. Teachers provide clear explanations and demonstrate techniques well. This enables students to carry out simple experiments with a good degree of independence.

89. Lessons include a good range of practical teaching methods and students have the opportunity to work as part of a group and as individuals. Teachers achieve an appropriate balance between providing information and allowing students to investigate. There is always plenty to do in lessons and as a result students maintain their interest and participate fully. Classroom assistants play a significant role in successful lessons particularly when they support individual students or small groups who need sensitive encouragement to help them participate effectively. Teachers constantly refer to students' previous experiences and this

helps them to make connections between things they already know and new learning. Because teachers plan using the learning outcomes identified in the curriculum and assess students' achievement against them, they have a good understanding of what the majority of students know and can do. This enables them to prepare activities and work that effectively support students' learning. However, in less successful lessons, particularly for students with more complex needs and those with autistic spectrum disorders learning opportunities are not as well planned. Teachers do not always develop curriculum planning into sufficiently precise targets for each individual and it is unclear what responses they expect students to make to the experiences they have. The activities planned for these students are not always presented in a way that enables them to make progress. Frequently students' involvement is not sufficiently focused on what they need to learn.

90. In a small percentage of lessons teachers do not manage the inappropriate behaviour of individual students effectively. The strategies implemented do not support students to participate in activities and learning is disrupted because they remove themselves from the group or are removed from the room. When this happens on a regular basis students do not make as much progress as they should.

91. Teachers ensure that there are good opportunities for students to use their literacy skills. Speaking and listening are developed through the effective use of questions and there is a good emphasis placed on the development of appropriate vocabulary. Students in Year 8 are appropriately introduced to the names for the different parts of a plant when they look at the mustard and cress seeds they have grown. Students' also have good opportunities to use their numeracy skills, for example, when they count the number of paperclips picked up by the magnet and when they transfer this information to a simple graph.

92. The subject is well led and managed. A suitable development plan has been established to guide the development of the subject over the next year and plans for longer-term developments are beginning to be identified, such as the implementation of additional modules of accredited work when the specialist science accommodation is built. The subject is monitored through curriculum planning and by examination of students' work. This ensures that the QCA modules of work are adapted to meet the specific needs of each class group but it does not ensure that learning outcomes, identified for lower attaining students within curriculum plans are consistently transferred to lesson planning. There has been limited monitoring of subject teaching and more is planned for the future. Monitoring is beginning to identify appropriate areas for development, such as the need to moderate teacher assessment to ensure that there is a shared understanding of assessment criteria, and the need to ensure that topics are revisited in a way that extends students understanding. The quality and range of learning resources available is good overall and has benefited from well planned purchases to support the implementation of curriculum planning.

ART AND DESIGN

93. Pupils' achievement in art is never less than satisfactory and is frequently good. Younger students learn skills such as control of brushes. They improve their fine motor co-ordination through cutting shapes with scissors. Found objects, different materials such as felt, plastic and rubber, everyday objects such as kitchen equipment, are all used to enable students to learn about design. Students learn that they can control equipment in various media in order to achieve their design ideas. Students with physical disabilities derive enormous satisfaction from their pottery lessons; they make progress in motor control, and show improved body tone. Through exposure to the work of others, including famous artists and craftspeople, students begin to develop a critical eye which helps them to take responsibility for the standard of their own work. Through observing the work of other people, older students move on to using art to reflect on and to express their own emotions.

94. Students' attitude to art and their behaviour are good or better in three-quarters of lessons; in a quarter they are excellent. They work collaboratively. They respect each other's efforts. The good behaviour of older students is supported by the rigorous nature and content of lesson planning.

95. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good overall. In three-quarters of lessons it is good or very good. Key features are very good planning focused on individual development in the subject, based on targets in individual education plans, purposeful learning outcomes, the very good relationships staff have with the students, and the sound use of a variety of resources.

96. The curriculum clearly follows the requirements of the Foundation Curriculum for younger students, and of the National Curriculum for older students. All students have equal access to a wide range of artistic experiences. There is a successful and popular weekly Art Club. The school has a good art policy, which includes improvement to the assessment and recording system to ensure that students have an equal chance to build up their knowledge and skills in art progressively. This will include the systematic collection of annotated samples of students' work. The knowledge, vision and enthusiasm of the co-ordinator suggest that the aim is likely to be achieved, provided that the recently introduced programme of monitoring the teaching of art is enhanced. Resources are now good. With the exception of ceramics, storage for students' three-dimensional work and work in progress is inadequate. This has a negative effect on achievement. The use of display in the school corridors is very good. It celebrates students' achievement in art as well as in other subjects, and contributes significantly to the provision of a positive learning environment for all.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. The standards students achieve and the progress they make in all elements of design and technology are good throughout the school. The good progress identified at the last inspection has been maintained. Good quality teaching, some of which takes place in the excellent specialist rooms for teaching resistant materials and food skills, is well supported by very good planning documents. Both contribute significantly to the good attitudes students have to learning about design and technology and the good progress they make. Students at Key Stage 4 are disadvantaged in resistant materials as they are unable to gain a nationally accredited award that reflects the good progress they make during their time at school.

98. By the time they are six years of age, the highest attaining students have learned about the link between design and making. They have learned to use basic hand tools, select the correct equipment for use and use it appropriately, with due regard to safety. For example, in resistant materials they use saws, hammers and marking equipment; whisks and different types of knives and spoons in food skills; scissors, needles and thread in textiles. The lowest attaining students construct from simple designs, for example, a card for Easter in the form of an Easter chick. The highest attaining students produce good quality work from more complex designs. For example, they measure their own foot size, cut, form and decorate cloth slippers for themselves. By the time they are eleven years of age, the highest attaining students have learned to use power tools with close adult support. They cut and sand when they make wooden puppets, use sewing machines and mixers in food skills. The link between design and making is now very well established and the use of models, especially in resistant materials and food skills, is clearly understood as an important element in producing a construction which works. Over the duration of Key Stage 3, students making skills are enhanced by use of a wider range of power tools such as saws, drills and lathes. They learn to connect materials together by gluing, screwing, making traditional joints in wood, by soldering and through the use of different sewing styles in textiles. They know what

makes a healthy diet in food skills. They plan and cook a healthy meal.

99. Pupils at Key Stage 4, continue learning about resistant materials at the local college for further education. The progress they make in using power tools, heavier than those available at school, is good, as is their progress in constructing increasingly complex designs to better levels of accuracy. Being able to work successfully in the more adult college environment considerably benefits the development of their self-confidence and other personal and social skills. However, they do not gain credit for the good progress they have made over their time at school as the syllabus followed does not lead to a nationally accredited award. This is not the case in food skills and textiles, in which students gain a Certificate of Educational Achievement in food skills and ASDAN units in textiles. Post 16 students take all their design and technology lessons at the local college. Appropriately, in resistant materials, most gain merit levels on units of the Open College Network. In food skills, they gain success on a number of units of the Oxford, Cambridge and the Royal Society for the Arts, such as investigating the catering industry, safety in the kitchen and equipment.

100. The good quality of teaching seen in most lessons promotes good quality learning. For example, students attend very well to their tasks because the objectives of lessons are made very clear to them. They enjoy being active in their learning and work hard intellectually in designing and physically when they are making. Students learn to enjoy the designing element as much as they do the making element of a task because of the emphasis given to designing as the important first step in making. Older students take pride in explaining, using appropriate technical terms, how their designs will function when they are constructed. The high expectations of teachers are reflected in the pride students have in their work. Consequently, very little work is unfinished or fails to reach to a good standard. In many lessons the different levels of students needs and abilities are well catered for in lesson planning and through the good use of teaching assistants. In the occasional lesson this is not the case. The needs of the lowest attaining students are not well met and the progress they make is limited.

101. Co-ordination of each of the three major elements of the subject is good. Planning documents are very good and provide considerable support for planning lessons. Assessment is effectively linked to individual projects. 'P' levels are well used, especially to assess the progress made by the youngest students. Information technology is insufficiently used to support teaching and learning especially in the designing aspect of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

102. Achievement is good throughout the school. Evidence obtained from the limited number of lessons observed indicates that most students make good progress in relation to their ability. This was confirmed by the scrutiny of students' work and discussions with students.

103. Students in Key Stage 1 and 2 learn through direct experience what places are like by investigating the local environment including the school grounds, park, shops and rivers. They collect data by recording the weather. Photographs are taken to record their experiences. In the middle school students make good progress in interpreting and drawing simple maps, learning that features such as bridges or castles can be represented by symbols and located using grid references. Less able students can match photographs to features around the school buildings and make simple plans. Older students can describe some of the physical features of the Earth and can name and locate some mountain ranges and deserts. They describe the impact that people make on the environment, for example through pollution or tourism, and show sympathy for people affected by disasters. In carrying

out practical activities younger students are helpful to each other and most older students take pride in the presentation of their work.

104. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and often good; it is good overall. A very good lesson was seen where effective routines for conduct had been established which allowed students to listen and take interest in each other's ideas. The teacher corrected misconceptions sensitively and encouraged the less able students with the result that all the class were confident in putting forward their opinions. Questioning is used skilfully in most lessons to establish what students already understand and prompt further development of their knowledge. Where activities are carefully structured to meet different levels of need and are appropriate to their interests, all students are enabled to make good progress in their learning. Older students are made aware of a specific target for the lesson. A varied range of teaching methods and resources are used making the curriculum relevant. Year 6 and 7 for example are learning a rap song about the water cycle which they will perform for the rest of the school in assembly.

105. Teaching and learning in geography have improved since the last inspection because the co-ordinator has worked effectively to develop and monitor them throughout the school. She has started to record graphically the achievements of different year groups in order to analyse progress and inform future planning. The new National Curriculum has been introduced, following appropriately modified QCA schemes of work up to Year 9. The schemes identify clearly what students are expected to learn. There is a good breadth in the curriculum, including the opportunity for most students to attend a residential field trip in Year 7. The older students in Key Stage 4 have started to work towards accreditation in humanities and the post 16 group have the opportunity to follow a wide ranging community studies course. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to update the geography policy and extend the range of resources to meet the new curriculum. Greater use of ICT, to practise geographical skills, is restricted by a lack of suitable software.

HISTORY

106. The provision for history is good. The standards achieved by the majority of students have improved since the last inspection because the school has implemented the QCA primary modules of work. These provide a coherent curriculum plan, which was not in place at the time of the last inspection. In addition some of the QCA modules for younger secondary age students have also been implemented and this provides opportunities for students aged eleven to fourteen to study suitable age related work. The oldest secondary age students are taught history through humanities and they have appropriate opportunities to have their learning accredited. These are both recent developments. This improved curriculum planning is helping to raise standards because teachers have higher expectations of students' achievement when they plan work. The curriculum provides a good framework to guide teachers when they plan lessons. What students will learn during their time at school is clearly identified for each year group and this enable teachers to plan so that students build on what they have already learned. Scrutiny of students' work, however, indicates that occasionally, when students revisit topics the learning planned for them does not sufficiently extend their understanding. Because the curriculum plans, particularly the opportunities for younger secondary age students and the opportunities for accreditation have been implemented fairly recently they have not yet been fully reviewed. The procedures developed to monitor the curriculum and students work will identify this as an issue when the subject is next audited.

107. At the time of the last inspection, in 1996, students' achievement was judged to range from satisfactory to good, it is now good across all age groups in the school except for those students with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. This is because

they do not have the same curriculum opportunities as other students. Their achievement and progress is only satisfactory because the curriculum for them is significantly different to that provided for their peers and does not provide a sufficiently broad range of age related learning experience. In addition, the teaching methods, adopted to address these students' behavioural and learning needs, are not being used as effectively as they could be to support the development of students understanding in the subject.

108. Teaching and learning for the majority of students are good. A significant number of the lessons observed for primary age students were judged to be satisfactory. However, one very good lesson was seen for students in Year 2 and scrutiny of students work, their records and teachers' planning indicates that overall teaching and learning are good for the majority of primary age students. Lesson observations for secondary age students were limited to classes for students with additional special needs and those with autistic spectrum disorders. Teaching for these students is satisfactory overall, although a good lesson was observed for older students. Scrutiny of students work, their records and teachers' planning indicates that teaching and learning for the majority of secondary age students are good. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to range from satisfactory to good. There is now a higher proportion of good teaching for the majority of students.

109. Students in Year 2 are encouraged to contribute their ideas to a discussion about a Victorian wash day because the teacher dresses up in character and uses a very good range of artefacts well, providing a clear demonstration of how they work. Students capable of higher attainment use their understanding to describe what the different items are for. They clearly understand that the artefacts are used 'to get things clean' and can link this understanding to the video clip about the disposal of water and a visit where they watched dirty clothes being washed in a machine. Students are interested in the activity and they concentrate well because the teacher demonstrates with expression and supports students learning effectively by using familiar rhymes. Students are given lots of opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and this enables them to make very good progress. In a Year 4 lesson about World War II the teacher effectively uses a video to reinforce students understanding of the artefacts they are looking at. Good use of questions during a discussion enables students to share their understanding about life during the war and they remember key facts that they have been taught. They know that bombs were dropped during the war and that houses were knocked down. The teacher's emphasis on associated vocabulary enables students to remember that people hid in 'Anderson shelters' and used sandbags.

110. Students in Year 5 compare the ancient and modern Olympic Games. They understand that people in ancient Greece lived and dressed differently because the video clip is well chosen to illustrate this fact and the teacher provides additional information to ensure that students have understood. Students are keen to work as demonstrated in the way they contribute to discussions. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher effectively uses questioning to invite comments from students when they talk about how evacuees must have felt. The discussion is well supported by the range of artefacts provided because they prompt students to ask questions. The teachers' explanations are clear and the language used challenges students to pay attention. Students are provided with appropriate opportunities to explore their ideas and they understand that the evacuees would have felt sad and miserable but would also have felt excited about 'going on an adventure'. In a good lesson for older students with more complex learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders, very good use is made of old and new artefacts such as an old money box and a modern one and an old and new child's cuddly toy helps students to understand the concept of old. Lower attaining students are well supported to feel and smell the artefacts and those capable of higher attainment demonstrate their understanding by sorting the items into two groups, 'old' and 'new'. There is a strong focus on they key words so students of all abilities achieve well.

111. Good and very good lessons are characterised by clear introductions, interesting activities and high expectations. These result in students achieving well and concentrating for the whole lesson. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and they use it effectively to prepare activities, which enable students to achieve the learning outcomes identified. Work is generally well planned to meet the needs of the majority of students and it provides them with appropriate opportunities to link past learning with new experiences. Teachers use questions well to test students' understanding and to extend their learning and participation. Lessons include a good range of practical activities and teachers achieve an appropriate balance between providing information and allowing students to investigate the good range of artefacts they provide. Classroom assistants support students effectively by providing encouragement, which helps them participate. Because teachers plan using the learning outcomes identified in the curriculum and assess students' achievement against them, they generally have a good understanding of what the majority of students understand. This helps them to prepare activities and work that effectively support students' learning. However, in less successful lessons, particularly for students with more complex needs and those with autistic spectrum disorders, learning opportunities are not always as well planned. Teachers do not always develop curriculum planning into sufficiently precise targets for each individual and it is unclear what they expect students to learn from the experiences they have. The activities planned for these students are not always presented in a way that enables them to make progress. Frequently students' involvement is not sufficiently focused on what they need to learn.

112. Teachers ensure that there are good opportunities for students to use their literacy skills because speaking and listening are developed through the effective use of questions and there is a good emphasis placed on the development of appropriate vocabulary.

113. The subject is well led and managed. A satisfactory development plan has been established to guide development over the next year but it does not yet contain plans for subject development over the longer term. The subject is monitored through curriculum planning and by examination of students' work. This ensures that the QCA modules of work are adapted to meet the specific needs of each class group but it does not ensure that learning outcomes, identified for lower attaining students, are consistently transferred to lesson planning. There has been limited monitoring of subject teaching and more is planned for the future. Monitoring is beginning to identify appropriate areas for development, such as the need to develop the range of computer software available, but further information is needed to ensure that teachers' planning is translated into effective learning and that topics are revisited in a progressive way. The quality and range of learning resources are good overall, this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has benefited from appropriate purchases to support the curriculum and effective arrangements with local museums to borrow additional good quality artefacts, as they are needed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. The achievement and progress of students of all ages are satisfactory. Both standards and progress are likely to improve. In the lessons taken in the recently opened, very good, computer suite, the standards students are achieving and the progress they are making are good. Over time, the availability of better facilities, supported by a greater amount of software than has been available in the past, should provide a wider range of learning experiences, improve the effectiveness of teaching and realise better standards and progress for all students. At the last inspection, information technology was not taught as a discrete subject as it is now. The standards students are achieving and the progress they are making are over a wider curriculum than was the case at the last inspection. This represents an improvement.

115. By the time they are six years of age, the highest attaining students have learned to control the screen through the use of simple switches such as the Big Mack. They match keyboard letters to those on the screen and use modified keyboards to control additional equipment such as a tape recorder. By the time they are eleven years of age, they have learned to present information in the form of pictures, symbols and familiar words in their own files. They open files, move information from one to another and save and print their work. By the time they are fourteen years of age, the highest attaining students have progressed so that they achieve at Level 2 of the National Curriculum assessment procedures. They use simple word processing programs confidently. They retrieve, modify and store files with confidence. They have learned to use spreadsheets to present data in graph form. They use programs such as Dazzle to model, for example symmetric drawings and are beginning to understand the application of computers to everyday life. By the time they are sixteen years of age, they have moved to Level 3 of the National Curriculum. They use the computer without help to prepare their work in other subjects. They gain information from CD roms, such as Encarta and confidently use word processing and publishing programs that allow them to print cards for Easter and Christmas, posters, letters and reports. This year, for the first time, students at Key Stage 4 are taking a nationally accredited award, the Certificate of Educational Achievement of the Welsh Joint Education Committee. This is good. It allows students to gain recognition for the progress they have made at school. Over their time at school, the lowest attaining students progress to achieve Level 1 of the National Curriculum. They learn to control the screen well through the mouse, modified keyboards and by touching it. They program a turtle to stop at a particular point after following a set of directions. Even during Key Stage 4, they continue to have difficulty in working independently, especially when they have to save and retrieve their own files. Over their time at school students with PMLD make satisfactory progress in learning to control simple switches such as the Big Mack and, when in the sensory room, those switches activated by sound and movement.

116. Post 16 students take lessons in information and communications technology at the school and also in the local college of further education. In school, they make good use of computers to support their activities in the Team Enterprise project. They use, skilfully and confidently, a number of software packages including 'Word', 'Excel', 'Powerpoint' and 'Bitfolio'. When they are in the college they follow the syllabus that leads to Open College Network certification in Information and Library Skills, Electronic Resources and the Internet. Most gain the award at the merit level.

117. Especially in the new computer suite, students enjoy their learning and show good attitudes. For example, they concentrate and apply themselves very well. They take pride in producing their best work. This is especially so for students whose learning difficulties limit the quality of their handwriting who make good use of word processing programs. All students treat and operate the equipment appropriately and with respect.

118. The quality of teaching is satisfactory over all key stages. Teachers have a secure knowledge of that aspect of the subject they taught in the past using the school's older computers. However, many are still learning about the capabilities of the school's newer personal computers. In this they are helped by the weekly professional development programme, funded through NOF that is helping to increase their skills and knowledge, as well as those of many of the teaching assistants. Relationships between students and staff are very good. In many lessons the very good work of the teaching assistants helps match lesson tasks to students needs and abilities very well. This was the case in a very good lesson in the computer suite in which the teaching assistants very good knowledge of Dazzle was helpful in supporting the learning of the lowest attaining students. In a minority of lessons, the progress made by students with complex and challenging behaviour is limited by the strategy of removing them from lessons, therefore from the opportunity to continue their

learning, as part of the procedures for improving their behaviour.

119. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The QCA schemes of work have been adopted and lesson plans derive from them. Resources to support teaching and learning have improved considerably since the opening of the computer suite. This and the improving knowledge and skills of teachers and support assistants is providing a solid platform to realise improvement in the standards and progress students are making in the subject.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

120. French makes a significant contribution to the secondary curriculum. Only a limited number of lessons were seen during the inspection, but the progress of students in Key Stage 3, who are following a course comparable to that in mainstream secondary schools, was very good, with many of them achieving at a level close to national expectations. Students display confidence in using the vocabulary they know, and can all respond orally in the target language to simple questions about themselves, such as “what is your name” and “where do you live”? More able students can put together four or five sentences to give a fuller description of themselves, their age, colour of eyes and exemplified in their knowledge of colours, numbers, days of the week and subjects on the school timetable. Additionally all students respond appropriately to basic instructions in French (e.g. ‘Stand up! Come here!’). All students are developing correct pronunciation by listening and conversing with the teacher. Less able students are able to achieve equally well, since most of the work is reinforced by visual prompts (where they can point to or identify the object) and group activities that engage their interest (group chanting, and songs). Scrutiny of files at both key stages indicate that many students are able to record in French and so further consolidate their knowledge.

121. Students’ response to French is very good. They work with enthusiasm, participate fully, concentrate hard and are respectful and appreciative of the efforts made by others. They enjoy the lessons.

122. From the limited observation of lessons, French is taught very well by an experienced teacher who has developed a well structured scheme of work that ensures progression and achievement. Precise objectives are set for each lesson and shared with the students, while time is taken at the end to check with them how well these targets have been met. Activities are varied and suitably matched to the ability levels of all students, using resources that are stimulating and relevant. High expectations of work and behaviour are maintained and a good pace of work consistently achieved. Specific coaching points, relating to plurals and masculine/feminine genders, are skilfully incorporated into teaching, which is very good.

123. Since the last inspection the teaching of French has been extended to five secondary classes and accreditation at Key Stage 4 introduced through ASDAN awards. Such improvements add to the positive contribution of the subject for those students with access to it. Further developments should involve continuing expansion of resources, especially in the area of ICT software packages and more consideration of cross-curricular projects. With the encouragement of the co-ordinator, a second teacher has now begun to offer French to her own class.

MUSIC

124. Throughout the school achievement for the majority of students is very good and they make very good progress as they move through the school. For students with ASD, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties achievement is good and they make good progress as they move through the school. Throughout the school these

levels of achievement and progress occur because work is well matched to each students' prior attainment and tailored to their particular need. Challenge is consistently high, students are expected to respond well to the demands made of them. Students with ASD and severe or profound and complex multiple learning difficulties are skilfully encouraged to contribute to class performances. For example in a performance about spring and new life, students worked hard at trying to establish a rhythm to their playing. Great pleasure was expressed by both the pupil concerned, other members of the class and the staff present. The teacher aided the pupil to understand rhythm by beating time and encouraging the pupil with smiles and hand signals when the rhythm was established. Students with moderate learning difficulties play well, using both tuned and untuned instruments whilst following a score, constructed from symbols of their own making.

125. Throughout the school students' attitudes to music are at least satisfactory and predominantly good. In two lessons observed they were very good. Students are keen to take part in musical activities. They try hard to play instruments in time, follow a score and sing tunefully. Their behaviour is very good in what are often exciting lessons. Relationships between students and staff and amongst each other are very good. They work well together on performances. For example students in an expressive arts lesson work well together and with the teacher, to represent the various plagues that afflicted the Ancient Egyptians as the Israelites sought to escape captivity. They invented a wide range of sound and action performances 'buzzing like flies' or 'groaning from the effects of boils'. They listened to each others suggestions and were critical of their own performances suggesting appropriate improvements, agreeing them and sensibly incorporating them into their performance. All students are aware of the need to practise and they persevere to fulfil their part in a performance. For some this requires outstanding mental and physical effort. Great pleasure is expressed by many students with severe or profound learning difficulties when a recording of a previous performance, perhaps even from as long ago as the previous week's lesson, is played. Students identify themselves and demonstrate which instrument they were playing and some beat time to the performance. Such attitudes and behaviour are the result of very high expectations by the teachers and all staff involved in students' learning. This has a significant impact on the good learning and achievement which takes place.

126. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. In one lesson observed it was excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the individual needs of each pupil in their class and they carefully match the activities to each group of students and where appropriate to each individual pupil. Specific elements of music are taught in carefully planned sequences, often referring back to performances in previous weeks and using recordings of these performances when necessary. Such care with planning ensures students progress well. Expectation, by all teachers, that students will achieve what is being asked of them is high. Very good support is provided by knowledgeable support assistants who share the high expectations of the teacher. For example they are skilled at placing instruments in the best position for students with complex and profound multiple learning difficulties to experience their input to the session. Students with hearing difficulties are helped to take part by ensuring that their radio microphone is placed near to the sound source. Language skills are constantly at the forefront of the teaching and contribute greatly to achievement in literacy. Students are expected to discuss pieces of work by composers such as Vivaldi, comment critically on their own and others performances and compose and perform pieces either individually or in groups. After each performance, whether solo or group, individuals and groups are rightly expected to criticise the performance and establish areas for improvement. Such very good quality teaching has highly significant impact on the very good learning that takes place.

127. Students are constantly reinforcing and then learning new aspects of music and skills of instrument playing and performance. Students learn such things as score writing,

following a conductor, playing instruments and singing. They are expected to learn, and use correctly, a range of technical language such as minor and major and expressive language such as tense, relaxed, calm, chaotic. Speaking and listening are significant parts of the lessons. This attention to literacy skills significantly enhances their breadth of vocabulary and speaking, listening skills and turn taking and social skills. Ideas and understanding are developed very well through composing work for performance. This frequently entails considerable mental and physical effort often over long periods of time and many students learn well how effort built sequentially achieves a final goal. Teachers engage students in exciting multi-disciplinary activities such as a performance about the plagues that require work over several weeks and the acceptance that others may have ideas better than theirs. This has a considerably positive impact on personal development.

128. Leadership of music is very good. The co-ordinator is well qualified she provides good advice and assistance to colleagues and has implemented a clear well structured scheme of work. She has increased the range of resources available, in particular the number and variety of tuned instruments. These are improvements since the previous inspection. The curriculum is broad, balanced over each academic year and relevant to all the students at the school. It fulfils statutory requirements and offers relevant programs of study from appropriate key stages. It makes a good contribution to other subjects, in addition to literacy, for example, creating sounds in science, sound effects in drama and religious education. The school is beginning to introduce an expressive arts curriculum covering a range of subjects. The use of information and communication technology to support provision in the subject is satisfactory. Assessment procedures are good and assist teachers well in their planning. Resources are good and include many from other cultures. The subject's contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is particularly the case for spiritual development as students are encouraged to listen carefully and reflect on the background to a performance. In one lesson on Spring, students started the lesson by listening to a recording of Vivaldi's Four Seasons during which students were very quiet and reflective and made thoughtful observations and comments following the performance.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Achievement and progress in PE is always satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally very good. Students work hard in lessons to improve their skills in movement and co-ordination activities. They listen carefully to instructions and will focus on the task so that in working with balls, bean bags and other portable equipment they display the level of control expected of their capability. Within lessons where there were physical challenges and obstacles to overcome, students showed an impressive array of strategies to meet the requirements of their assignments, involving technical and tactical skills. They demonstrated that they could operate effectively as a team. Older students were also able to keep to the rules in games and needed minimal prompts about behaving responsibly around PE apparatus in the hall and in the swimming pool.

130. Students' attitudes and behaviour in PE are often good or very good and always satisfactory. They concentrate well, work with enthusiasm and commitment, and enjoy the lessons. They are well motivated to improve on previous achievements, striving hard to gain the various certificated awards in swimming, gymnastics and other areas. In team activities, the high level of collaboration and support shown to less capable students by more adept classmates, is excellent.

131. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes better in all lessons. It is most effective when teachers give clear instructions, offer concise and targeted coaching advice and organise activities with an appropriate level of challenge and interest to match the needs

of all the group. Pupil performance is significantly aided by the teacher providing accurate and regular feedback. The learning and standards achieved are also positively influenced in lessons where there are planned warm-up activities and plenary sessions to evaluate what has been covered. When teaching is less effective, it mainly involves students with more complex learning difficulties and arises because the tasks have been significantly differentiated to meet the specific needs of individual students. For many students with ASD, it is recognised that lessons require structure and routine but sometimes opportunities are missed to reinforce the learning by emphasising the key aspect of body awareness which the teacher wishes to develop e.g. stretching or relaxing. Teaching has improved since the last inspection.

132. Teaching is supported by a thorough and helpful scheme of work which is being modified to incorporate recent QCA suggestions. The co-ordinator has observed colleagues in lessons in order to be able to offer practical guidance on resources and curriculum content, but there is a need to develop the role further, since most teachers have little specialist knowledge. Although they benefit from training which is organised by the school they require evaluative and constructive observation on their work. Provision is enhanced by links with the local swimming pool and leisure centre, Upton Warren Pursuits Centre for post 16 students, the LEA Advisory Service and contacts with the local District Council which is presently providing help with the lunchtime soccer club. Certified awards in swimming, athletics, and gymnastics contribute to the positive attitude of students and is further consolidated by involvement in special sports events with other schools. Assessment of achievement is also tied closely to identified targets, and recorded in students' profiles but often these targets are too general to be useful to teachers in their planning. Accommodation is satisfactory with some good features such as the large school hall and outdoor hard surfaces. There is an adequate range of portable equipment and a limited supply of adapted small equipment for ASD students.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Over all the school, the achievements and progress students make in religious education are good. Both have marginally improved on the mainly good progress reported at the last inspection. Good quality teaching, based on detailed schemes of work for each key stage, derived from the Worcestershire Locally Agreed Syllabus, contributes to the good attitudes students have to learning and the good progress they make over all aspects of the subject. Over their time at school, many students gain an understanding of the concept of faith, and of other religious virtues, which they incorporate into their own lives.

134. By the time they are six years of age, the highest attaining students are beginning to understand concepts such as sharing, trust and friendship. They know that Jesus is a special person, who was born in a stable at Christmas time and that they can talk to him through prayer. The lowest attaining students have difficulty in understanding abstract concepts, but know the meaning of 'special people' such as mummy and daddy. By the time they are eleven years of age, the highest attaining students have learned to recognise important differences, and similarities, in major religions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. They have learned that symbols have meaning and that these can take the form of a cross, a special day such as Easter Sunday, or music and food, which help in celebrating important festivals. The lowest attaining students know that there are different religions and the names of the places in which prayers are said, for example, temples, mosques and churches. Progress continues to be good over Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. By the time they are sixteen years of age, the highest attaining students have learned sufficient about beliefs and values, world religions and Christian beliefs to gain merit levels on these ASDAN units. The lowest attaining students achieve pass grades. Post 16 students gain success on more ASDAN units, including those of Hinduism, Buddhism and the Christian Church today.

Over their time at school, students gain a considerable knowledge of many religions. Many students attain a good understanding of some of the abstract concepts linked to the notion of faith.

135. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject. They are very good at relating religious concepts such as friendship, respect and love to students' day-to-day lives. Lessons are planned well. The well thought out schemes of work help ensure that students' new learning is built on that gained previously. This helps students gain a good understanding of what they have learned. This is especially so when they compare the important characteristics of the celebrations of different religions to each other or begin to understand abstract concepts such as trust, respect and love. Teaching is helped by good resource support. The range and quality of artefacts extend over many religions and are well used in lessons. By providing frequent opportunities for students to see and touch artefacts such as models and other representations, teachers make lessons in religious education interesting and exciting. Teaching assistants are well used to help match the lesson tasks to students' needs. In each case they benefit the standards students achieve and the progress they make.

136. Students are enthusiastic about their learning, because lessons in religious education are well planned and interesting. They make a substantial effort to learn, even difficult abstract concepts. They are helped in this by their very good relationship with the teachers and teaching assistants that allows them to be confident as learners and to ask questions when they are not sure in their understanding. The school operates a system whereby students with complex and challenging behaviours are able to leave lessons. In a small number of cases these arrangements restrict the opportunities these students have to continue with their learning and therefore limits their progress.

137. Co-ordination of religious education is good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and through the very good schemes of work and advice to teachers provides good support for lesson planning. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated as part of the programme led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and is supported by visits to lessons by the co-ordinator. This helps promote good standards in teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Lessons in religious education make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.