

INSPECTION REPORT

BLEASDALE HOUSE SCHOOL

Silverdale near Carnforth

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119861

Headteacher: Mrs Lesley Ormrod

Reporting inspector: Steven Parker
13033

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th May 2000

Inspection number: 191918

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 for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	27 Emesgate Lane Silverdale Carnforth Lancashire
Postcode:	LA5 0RG
Telephone number:	01524 701217
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend John Mollitt
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd - 5 th December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Steven Parker	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Modern foreign language Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
Susan Walsh	Lay inspector	Personal, social and health education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
George Davies	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education Post 16	How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils?
Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	English Art Music	How well are pupils taught?

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bleasdale House provides residential and day education for up to 45 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, most of whom have many additional complex medical needs. As a consequence, there is a very large, multi-professional team, which includes nursing and therapy staff provided by the Bay Community Health Trust. There are currently 22 pupils on roll, aged from four to nineteen. The majority are from the county of Lancashire and two are from neighbouring authorities. Seventeen pupils are in week-day residence for thirty eight weeks a year, with the opportunity to stay on alternate weekends. The five pupils who attend on a daily basis are brought in by local authority transport. The socio-economic background of pupils reflects the population at large. Accommodation is in the main house, set in substantial and attractive grounds overlooking Morecambe Bay. This building includes the residence, most of the medical provision, a multi-sensory hydrotherapy pool, large sensory room, play room and administration. The education block, including another sensory room, a movement room, two resource rooms and accommodation for all the therapy staff, is in the old, very imaginatively converted coach house. This is sited across the main road through the village.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school offers exceptional twenty four-hour provision, through the excellent partnership between parents and the whole staff team. Residential staff and teachers work very effectively together to provide a seamless and stimulating experience for pupils. Excellent collaboration with all the health authority staff ensures a very high standard of therapy and care. The strong leadership and management of the senior management team successfully promotes a climate for the outstanding relationships that exist throughout the whole school and with the wider local community. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Excellent relationships, based on mutual respect and dignity, successfully support the very good attitudes to learning and personal development achieved by the pupils.
- All staff know pupils very well. Very good individual education plans and very effective systems to monitor and record pupils' progress support very good teaching and very high quality care.
- Outstanding multi-professional teamwork enables all pupils to learn and achieve very well.
- All pupils are fully included in the very ambitious range of stimulating experiences, including excellent extra curricular activities, that form the impressive twenty-four hour curriculum.
- Very good leadership and management promotes an outstanding partnership between parents and the school that very effectively supports pupils' learning and well being.
- The excellent quality of information shared between all staff and parents makes a very significant contribution to pupils' very good progress.

There were no significant issues identified for improvement. A small number of minor points mentioned in the body of the main report were considered worthy of further attention or development. These minor areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the governors.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school had a number of issues to address from its previous inspection in December 1996, and has dealt with all of these very well. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, most especially for older pupils and students, pre and post 16. Time-tabling arrangements have been reviewed to provide a more effective experience for pupils throughout the day. The curriculum has been improved and extended. Schemes of work have been revised and completed for all subjects to ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered appropriately and pupils have been properly dis-applied from the requirements of studying a modern foreign language. Further improvements have been made to extend opportunities for pupils to use technology to aid communication. After much research and development work, particularly when considering the increasingly complex needs of pupils, it was not found possible to develop opportunities for

independent mobility. The safety concerns relating to pupils and staff when crossing the road between the two school buildings have been vigorously pursued. Working closely with local and national agencies, a number of improvements have been effected and, within the constraints of legislation, everything possible has been done to ensure everyone's safety. Further alternatives continue to be pursued.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

All pupils achieve as well as they can. Regular assessment of their progress against very specific targets and high quality annual statement reviews show that pupils achieve very well across a wide range of activities. The introduction of adapted National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have ensured that pupils continue to achieve increasingly ambitious targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils clearly enjoy school, are eager to learn and always try to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are positive and co-operative throughout the day and evening. They respond very well to the respect shown to them and the positive and consistent approaches of the staff. They are particularly appreciative of the gentle humour that pervades the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and, as a result, pupils' personal development is also very good overall. This could be further enhanced through the school developing more opportunities for pupils to make appropriate choices that promote their ability to take more independent control of activities and their environment.
Attendance	Attendance is good and parents report that their children always look forward to coming to school.

Very productive relationships and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning enable them to maximise the benefits of the learning opportunities provided.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Consistently good and mostly very good teaching, particularly for pupils up to age fourteen, provides pupils with a secure and encouraging learning environment that promotes their confidence and encourages their learning. As a result, pupils make impressive progress in their learning and try hard to succeed. All staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils' very special learning needs and constantly adapt very structured approaches to bring out their best. This enables pupils to participate productively in all the activities. During the inspection, 89% of teaching seen was at least good and 38% was very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is very good and is totally relevant to the special educational needs of the pupils. All experiences, including the excellent, wide-ranging extra curricular provision, are very well planned and very effectively underpinned by collaborative working practices of the highest standard.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The very successful teamwork between residential and education staff ensures that provision for pupils' personal and social development is very good. Every opportunity is taken to encourage pupils to value each other and work well together. Carefully and sensitively planned opportunities are provided to develop pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural sensitivities at their own level of understanding.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All staff demonstrate a very high regard for pupils' well being, health and safety. They know the pupils' needs exceptionally well and are effectively helped in this by very high quality monitoring and recording systems. The consistent and caring application of well-considered policies and procedures ensures that pupils are happy and productive members of the school community.

Parents are encouraged and supported to be very active partners in their child's education. Through an exemplary range of shared information they are very effectively involved and consulted by the whole multi-professional staff team. Strong and successful links with the local primary school, a regional adult college and the wider community enhance pupils' learning opportunities. The rich range of extra curricular activities effectively supports their personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership by the headteacher, working very successfully in partnership with a strong and effective multi-professional senior management team, provides very clear educational direction for the school, including the very high quality residential provision. All staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities very successfully.

How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors meet their statutory responsibilities well. They are very supportive of the school and are actively involved in sustaining the current high standards. They are aware of the requirement to work effectively with senior management to set and implement appropriate priorities for future development, but are not as active in this process as they could be.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a number of effective strategies to evaluate its performance and has a clear commitment to continuing review and improvement. The role of curriculum co-ordinators has been established, but requires further development.
The strategic use of resources	Very efficient systems are in place for effective financial control and management. Staffing, learning resources and accommodation are very effectively used to support pupils' learning.

The number, experience and qualification of teachers, classroom support staff and residential social workers are very good. The professional development needs of all staff are effectively identified through a very good appraisal process and are well linked to the school development plan. Accommodation is good, providing a wide range of appropriate facilities. Learning resources are of good quality, accessible and very efficiently catalogued. Very good management of finances and all these resources ensures that the principles of best value are consistently applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like school and make very good progress. Teaching is very good, with high but realistic expectations. The school works closely and very successfully in partnership with parents, who are kept exceptionally well informed and feel totally comfortable and supported when approaching the school with questions or problems. The school is very well led and managed. The school provides exemplary family support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents did not identify any significant areas for improvement.

Inspectors' judgements are in full agreement with parents' very positive views of the school and its provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection and parents are very pleased with their children's progress. Pupils' achievements are very good in English across all key stages and good for all other subjects and key stages. All pupils, including those with the most complex learning needs, achieve as well as they can. At the time of the inspection there was only one pupil under five and it is therefore inappropriate to report on progress against early learning goals.
2. Assessment of pupils on entry to the school shows that they are all achieving at the very earliest stages of English, mathematics and personal and social development. Using this assessment information, appropriately challenging individual learning targets are set termly for each pupil and their progress against them is monitored on a regular basis. Pupils make good progress across all subjects and aspects towards the targets set for them. Pupils achieve as well as they do because they are taught very well and they have very positive attitudes towards the interesting activities planned for them.
3. Since the introduction of an appropriately adapted National Literacy Strategy, pupils' progress towards their English targets has improved. Pupils achieve very well in relation to the individual targets set for them and demonstrate an increased success, particularly in early communication skills. Imaginative and consistent use of objects of reference and switch systems across both school and residence enables pupils to participate actively in their learning. Pupils make good progress in developing early reading and writing skills as the result of teachers' creative use of a wide range of activities and resources. These skills are very effectively extended and consolidated across all the other subjects of the curriculum and wider experiences because all staff across the school use every opportunity to encourage pupils' engagement.
4. Continuing work on adapting the National Numeracy Strategy to the needs of pupils has resulted in much improved teaching of mathematics. As a result, pupils are making good progress across a range of skills, most notably in developing an understanding of the language of early number and an appreciation of time and space. As they move through the school, pupils are provided with an increasing range of opportunities to apply this understanding in practical situations and their achievements improve accordingly.
5. Pupils achieve well in science and make good progress towards their individual targets. They develop their observational skills through 'hands on' experience of a wide range of experimental activities and are helped to make sense of their own bodies and the world around them.
6. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in all other subjects of the curriculum. Careful planning of imaginative activities, supported by high quality resources and very good teamwork between all staff, ensure that pupils' interest is stimulated and sustained throughout their learning. Ambitious use of the school's facilities and grounds and the wider local environment introduces pupils to engaging experiences

that are relevant and make important links across the subjects. A totally integrated view of pupils' learning informs the whole process.

7. The school sets appropriately challenging targets across all aspects of its work and has a high level of success in meeting them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. They have very good attitudes to learning in all subjects. They demonstrate their pleasure, both in and out of classrooms, often displaying an excitement and enthusiasm in all that they do. Younger pupils in a science session showed pleasure when experiencing the 'rain' from a watering can on their hands as they mixed soil ready to plant seedlings. An older pupil was clearly very pleased with himself whilst swimming independently in the hydrotherapy pool and this setting provides considerable enjoyment and satisfaction for all pupils. Music activities give pupils opportunities to work together to a common purpose and in greetings sessions pupils wait patiently for each other to signal their attendance through their chosen medium of communication. The use of communication aids that pre-record phrases relevant to the activity, encourages pupils to predict the next element. In an English lesson, for example, older pupils and students were participating in a sensory 'production' of the 'Wind in the Willows'. The recorded phrase 'my-oh-my' signalled the transition between elements of the story and pupils reacted with amused expectancy as the switch was presented to them to operate. This lesson also demonstrated the benefits of using multi-sensory activities to excite pupils' interest. Taped sounds of birds and water, a wide range of props and costumes and a large piece of rippling blue material to represent the river all combined to ensure that every pupil could participate fully in the experience. Pupils' positive engagement is as much the product of genuine pleasure on their part as it is of the staff's very sensitive support and prompting.
9. Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good throughout the school. In classrooms, pupils show respect for each other and staff. They observe those classroom conventions that they understand, such as showing care for materials and waiting their turn. When out in the community they behave well and interact appropriately with their environment and people that communicate with them. Older students displayed admirable patience and good manners in their contact with staff when they visited a local leisure centre to use the facilities there and were equally well behaved at the adult college. Their behaviour is very much the product of very good and consistent guidance provided by staff and the very good relationships that exist between them and staff. Gentle humour plays an important part in these high quality relationships. Pupils' behaviour out of lessons is equally good in residence, at breakfast and during the evening activities. They also have many opportunities to consolidate this during their frequent visits into the community, such as to the local bowling alley. The common approach to the development of good behaviour that is practised by residential care staff and school staff is a significant strength of the school. Parents consider this very good behaviour to be the norm within the school and identify the staff as providing good role models for their children.
10. Pupils' personal development is very good. The well-established individual programmes and supportive culture have a very positive effect upon this aspect of pupils' development. Thoughtful use of sensory timetables and objects of reference, both before school and throughout the school day, provides pupils with opportunities to understand daily routines. These prompts signal changes in

experience and the passage of time, providing pupils with some control of their actions and opportunities for making decisions, such as what they are going to choose. As pupils get older they are successful in increasing the length of time that they are able to work independently in class. Most pupils enjoy the opportunity to help with daily routines. Parents believe that their children are developing very good personal and social skills.

11. The favourable judgements made in the previous report about pupils' and students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are still valid and there is evidence to suggest that this aspect of pupils' performance has further improved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The overall quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, it was never less than satisfactory. Teaching was very good for pupils up to age 14, especially in English, mathematics, art and history and some excellent teaching was seen in history and geography for younger pupils. Teaching was good overall for older pupils and students, pre- and post- 16, with some very good teaching in physical education. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
13. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and this is reflected in the very wide range of activities that they plan to support pupils' learning. These activities are often imaginative and enthusiastically presented, successfully gaining pupils' attention and encouraging their participation. Information about the pupils is shared well between teachers, staff from the residential provision and therapists. This greatly enhances teachers' understanding of pupils' special needs and enables them to plan work that very closely reflects their educational needs, while acknowledging and taking into account their physical and health needs. Teachers constantly monitor pupils' responses, assessing their achievements against clear success criteria. Detailed records are then used effectively to plan work for the future. The small step targets in pupils' individual education plans inform planning for activities that take place within the residential provision and this ensures that learning undertaken in the classroom is reinforced across the 24-hour curriculum.
14. Communication skills are well taught. There is an appropriate emphasis on communication across the curriculum and this is reflected throughout teachers' planning for all subjects. Basic skills in mathematics are also taught well and opportunities to reinforce pupils' awareness of colour, shape and number are appropriately identified in teachers' planning. Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are realistically high across all subjects and pupils are often seen to rise to this challenge.
15. Teaching strategies take careful account of individual pupils' difficulties to make sure that they have good opportunities to participate and make progress. Pupils are grouped and positioned very well during activities and they are given subtle and enabling support by all staff. Activities, and pupils' involvement in them, are well planned and careful thought is given to making the learning experience meaningful. Because teachers use methods and strategies that have often been developed as a direct response to a specific and individual need, pupils are actively engaged in their learning and respond positively to the experiences they have. They demonstrate interest, give their attention and concentrate well. Pupils show excitement and pleasure during all the activities and interactions they are involved in.

16. Teachers use a range of strategies to monitor pupils' responses very effectively. This helps them to identify any preferences that pupils indicate. Consistent responses, such as head movements, sounds or the movement of a limb are encouraged. This then provides pupils with communication strategies for making simple choices. However, 'choice making' opportunities are not consistently implemented across the school and residential provision. Pupils are given choices about likes and dislikes and their preference for one thing over another, but they are not given many choices about the experiences they have or even if they want to participate in different activities at all. This is particularly evident for older pupils and students, who do not always have sufficient opportunities to exercise choice about what they do within safe and controlled situations.
17. Time is used very efficiently and the pace of lessons is well matched to pupils' abilities and their levels of participation and concentration. Pupils are given sufficient time to respond to the requests and demands made of them, but they are also expected to give their attention and concentration to the task they have been set. Teachers have collected and made a very good range of resources, which are used imaginatively to engage pupils' attention, to encourage their participation and to support the development of skills. Teachers and support staff work in very successful partnership and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Support staff are enthusiastic and very effective in helping pupils to participate in activities. They are very clear about their roles and responsibilities within lessons. They ensure that lessons run smoothly by quietly and efficiently managing pupils' physical and positional needs. There is frequently very good support from nurses and therapists, which ensures that pupils gain the maximum benefit from the experiences they have, because their health needs have been met. Teachers share pupils' individual learning targets with all staff and pupils present at the beginning of each session and this ensures that there is a good focus on enabling pupils to work towards and achieve the targets they have been set. Support staff are very competent with the use of objects of reference and with pupils' individual switch systems, and this makes a significant contribution to the progress pupils make.
18. Teachers use praise well to acknowledge pupils' responses and to help them recognise when they have been successful. Teachers also help pupils to develop an awareness of their own learning by describing to the pupil what they have achieved or by providing a sensory cue that acknowledges an appropriate response. Teachers provide pupils with consistent and appropriate cues about where they are and what they are going to do by using objects of reference. This basic communication system is used consistently across the school and in the residential provision. This helps to reinforce pupils' awareness and makes a significant contribution to their understanding of place, time and activity.

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

19. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. A coherent and very relevant whole school curriculum, including residential provision, reflects the stated special educational needs of the pupils and students. It also successfully incorporates the aims of the school and is effectively managed through the close working relationship that exists between the senior management team and well established subject co-ordinators. Policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects and areas of the curriculum, with the schemes of work taking

due note of National Curriculum guidelines. The very good IEPs reflect stated needs and are matched to subject targets. The school's response to its detailed audit of the time allocated to subjects and to the order of subjects during the school day has been successful in creating a good balance over the day and week. The analysis of the link between school work and residential activities has produced a very good pattern for the consolidation and extension of school activities when pupils are in residence.

20. The school fulfils statutory requirements by providing a very good range of relevant learning experiences, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It has been very effective in adapting both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to meet the needs of its pupils and students. Appropriate arrangements have been made to dis-apply pupils from studying a modern foreign language. Imaginative events and activities are, however, provided to ensure that pupils and students experience the culture and language of many countries through exciting theme days.
21. The use of specialist facilities such as the sensory rooms and the very well resourced swimming pool, together with the monitoring and support provided by the school's medical and therapy services, are very sensitively time-tabled. As a result, there is minimal disruption to pupils' and students' learning. This lack of disruption is very much a product of the quality of team work that is a feature of the school. Staff share their detailed knowledge of the pupils' and students' educational, personal, social and physical needs to enable pupils to succeed.
22. The excellent, planned social and leisure interactions that take place during the midday break illustrate how the school is consistently striving to maximise the opportunities that are available to extend pupils' and students' learning. The aim to provide a true 24-hour curriculum is another example of this commitment to optimising learning, with the very good collaborative style of working that pervades the school contributing significantly to this process. The impressively wide range of residential activities may involve pupils taking part in such activities as art, music, clay work and gardening. They visit the theatre, the cinema, and a range of restaurants in the immediate locality and will have experience of venues that are further afield during the weekends.
23. IEPs are in place for all pupils and students. Termly targets are planned and generated collaboratively by a multi-professional group. These targets are then used to produce separate IEPs for school and residence, which are reviewed on a regular basis. Targets reflect the individual's personal, social and general educational needs and also provide a direct link with subjects. The quality and use of IEPs is a strength of the school.
24. All pupils and students have the opportunity to have maximum access to the curriculum. Careful time-tabling makes sure that relevant programmes of work and activities are accessible, while the level and deployment of support staff in lessons or on visits ensures that all individuals, through their help, have the opportunity to derive the fullest benefit possible from the experiences offered.
25. The school's provision for personal and social education is very good. Although discrete lessons provide staff with many opportunities to target specific areas, it is the quality of personal and social development that is taking place in all the other formal and informal experiences that they are involved in that gives this element of the curriculum the quality that it has. All IEPs contain targets for the personal and social development of pupils and students and, in that they are known by all staff, they are worked towards in all lessons and in all activities, be they in school, in residence or off-site. Health and sex education are built into this co-ordinated

programme and staff, in accordance with the school's policy, make sure that the teaching in these areas is particularly sensitive to individual needs.

26. The school has very good links with the majority of the careers' services that support its pupils and students. Representatives attend and provide valued input into 14+ Transition Reviews and Annual Reviews. Through the quality of the links that are established with other services, particularly social and health services, careers' officers maintain good contacts with the pupils, students and their families. All staff, including residential care staff, play a highly valued part in the process that prepares the young adults and their families for the demands of post school life. Parents express high regard for this support.
27. The school also has very good links with the immediate community. The village and its immediate environment are used to support a range of subjects, such as history, geography and personal and social development. The village hall, local church and village school all provide opportunities for shared community integration and also enable pupils to demonstrate their skills as they share in Christmas, harvest and other community celebrations. Additionally, community resources such as the cinema, theatre, library and a range of restaurants in Morecambe and Kendal are used to support the pupils' and students' personal and social development. Visits to such venues as the Wetherigg pottery, the Bendrigg adventure centre and participation in the Lancaster carnival add another dimension to the experiences that they have and the learning that takes place.
28. The provision made by the school for the pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. During the school day the quality of the registration period, the whole school assembly, drink and meals breaks all make a very positive contribution to their social development, while the many and varied off-site educational visits provide them with the opportunity to practise and acquire social skills and insights. The rich programme of activities in the residential setting has a very clear social development focus and is very closely linked to the school programme through shared and residential specific IEPs.
29. Pupils' and students' awareness of what is acceptable behaviour is constantly reinforced through praise and the celebration of achievement both in and out of lessons. The weekly assembly focuses solely on the celebration of success and plays an important part in increasing the pupils' and students' awareness of acceptable responses.
30. The very well planned and organised daily act of worship provides pupils and students with opportunities to express wonderment on a regular basis. The very spiritual atmosphere that pervades these occasions is the product of the sensitive use of a range of sensory experiences and the active participation of all the pupils and students. The music used to call everyone to assembly has been used for many years and is very familiar to everyone, pupils and staff alike.. The sensitive contribution that all staff (school based, residential and any adult present at the time) make to the experience in general and in particular as they all sing the school hymn, creates a very special, shared atmosphere. Pupils and students listen to their singing in awed silence.
31. Pupils and students have opportunities to participate in a wide range of cultural and cross-cultural experiences such as when handling masks and bowls from Africa, cloth from Peru and religious symbols representing many faiths. They experience music from South America, listen to the sound of a visiting brass band and have the opportunity to make music using simple home-made instruments. Visits to the theatre and concerts additionally contribute to this element of the curriculum, as does a visit to the priory in Lancaster to hear church organ music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. Staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of the very vulnerable young people in their care and, consequently, the school makes very good provision for them.
33. Pupils flourish in a very caring, supportive and cheerful environment where their dignity is always respected. Although pupils find it very difficult to communicate, staff are very sensitive to their individual needs. They know each pupil very well. This is achieved through excellent standards of record keeping and very high quality relationships between staff and pupils. There is affection without excessive sentimentality and pupils' personalities are allowed to shine through. An atmosphere has been established, both in school and in the residential provision, where pupils can achieve and make very significant progress.
34. There are very many well-considered policies and sensible procedures and routines, which are carefully documented and consistently followed, both in school and in the residential provision. Record keeping is of an exceptionally high quality. There are comprehensive care plans, developed collaboratively between teachers and residential staff, which are designed to meet the very special needs of each pupil. Attention to detail, consistency and very effective monitoring of routine tasks results in pupils receiving an exceptionally high standard of care.
35. The school has developed a very effective child protection policy to address the needs of the very vulnerable pupils in its care. This policy is based on locally agreed procedures. All staff have a very good working knowledge of policies and procedures and are sensitive to child protection issues. High standards are achieved through regular staff training and a determination to remain vigilant, but sensitive.
36. Considerable improvements have been made to the format and use of IEPs since the previous inspection. Targets now directly relate to the pupils' statement of special educational needs and are carefully considered at the annual review. IEPs are used very effectively and highly focused, easily measurable targets are addressed in every lesson through a wide variety of interesting activities. There is very effective assessment; pupils' reactions and responses are carefully observed and recorded in almost every lesson. Targets and activities are changed appropriately in response to very small but very significant gains in attainment. Personal development is very carefully monitored. Some pupils have behavioural targets, although most pupils have a limited capacity to choose to behave inappropriately. The very effective use of individual education plans, the focus on individual targets both in lessons and in residential activities, and careful assessment, all assist the pupils to make very good progress.
37. Many of the pupils have very significant medical problems, and without the very high standard of medical care provided, including 24 hour nursing care, would be unable to attend school on a regular basis. The school, in partnership with medical staff, makes every effort to ensure that as little time as possible is missed through illness. Attendance is carefully monitored and day pupils are encouraged to attend school whenever possible.
38. The residential provision is of a very high quality. The school has worked hard to provide attractive and appropriate residential accommodation, while keeping the architectural features of an imposing country house. Education staff and residential

staff work in close and successful partnership. Communication between the two groups is exceptional. There is excellent continuity of care, with policies, procedures and routines being very consistent between school and the residence. The very experienced staff of residential social workers are clearly determined to provide pupils with a very high standard of life. The residential provision includes a very wide range of exciting evening and weekend activities, which reflect the staff's own interest and considerable skills. For example, there are well-designed art experiences and regular theme evenings such as a recent Valentine's Ball that included fancy dress and a themed menu. During these activities, targets from pupils' IEPs continue to be addressed and assessments are recorded. The very effective 24-hour curriculum includes many interesting visits and extensive involvement with the local community. The stimulating environment in the residence together with high expectations of the pupils ensures that the pupils keep making progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The school has continued to develop its partnership with parents and many aspects of the school's relationship with parents are now excellent. Parents regard the school as a wonderful, happy place where their children are treated as individuals. They very much appreciate the staff's hard work and dedication. All staff, including the nurses and therapists, consistently support parents and carers. The school encourages parents to be fully involved in their children's education and always respects parents' and carers' knowledge and expertise about their children and their difficulties.
40. Both the range and quality of information provided for parents are excellent. Information ranges from lively newsletters, which are designed to ensure that parents have a very clear picture of their children's busy and exciting school life, to home-school diaries and informal telephone calls. Parents are fully involved in the annual review process. The whole multi-disciplinary team provides an extensive range of very detailed information prior to the review. During the review, parents are encouraged to make a very full contribution and the warm relationship between the school and parents is very evident. Parents are thrilled to receive a termly record of achievement with photographs of their children enjoying a wide range of experiences both in the school and residence. There is a true open-door policy and parents are encouraged to visit at any time. The school also provides an open day where parents can formally consult the class teacher, the therapists and care staff on an individual basis. The school very effectively ensures that the parents of children, who are unable to tell their parents about school life, are able to know exactly what is going on each and every day.
41. Formal homework would not be appropriate for these pupils but the excellent communication between the school and parents ensures that many of the programmes initiated by therapists and targets identified by teaching staff are continued and reinforced both in the home and the residence.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, working in a close and successful partnership with her multi-professional senior management team, ensures that the school is very effectively managed. An excellent shared ideal to constantly improve provision and a strong will to succeed have ensured that the sound foundations

reported at the previous inspection have been built upon and exceeded. All the staff and the governing body have a strong vision about the purpose of the school, supported by clearly stated aims, which is fully reflected in the life and work of the school. A strong commitment to equality of opportunity and access underpins the very good relationships, which are a strength of the school. The delegation of well-specified responsibilities to senior managers, teachers, classroom support staff, residential care workers, medical staff and therapists, very effectively includes everyone in pursuit of the school's goals.

43. Improvements in the school are very carefully planned and successfully implemented through a collaborative process of development planning, which includes clear criteria for success. These criteria are rigorously monitored and the outcomes properly used in future planning. The school's introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, for example, very thoughtfully adapted the framework to the requirements of the pupils and was supported by comprehensive preparation and training. This has led to very significant improvements in the quality of teaching and, consequently, in the achievements of pupils and students. Considerable development work since the previous inspection has ensured that the already effective procedures for assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements and progress have been further improved to ensure that the school's capacity to make detailed plans for each pupil's individual learning and success against targets has been enhanced.
44. The governing body carries out its statutory duties well and individual governors visit and are involved in the work of the school on a regular basis. The readiness of governors to give their time to help with current developments, and monitor the school's work and administration, particularly when considering their small number and unfilled posts, is testament to the corporate nature of the school's leadership and management. There are, however, some uncertainties about the future role and function of the school. Governors are not as active as they could be in the process of seeking ways to be further involved in the debate about how the school might best develop to meet the challenge that this situation presents.
45. Appropriate performance targets are set and useful information about the quality of teaching and learning is collected through a range of monitoring approaches involving senior staff. These data are well used to evaluate the success of the school's provision and to plan future developments. In this context, whilst the role of curriculum co-ordinators has been well developed in relation to improving curriculum provision, they are not yet sufficiently involved in the monitoring of their colleagues' teaching and pupils' learning. The school's clear perception of its own strengths and weaknesses is reflected in its very good improvement planning procedures, and can be judged by the impact of many developments, particularly of the curriculum provision, since the previous inspection.
46. Financial planning is very good and fully supports school improvements. All of the school's activities are accurately costed in the annual budget plan. Very efficient financial procedures are effectively employed and regular monitoring of expenditure by the finance committee is very good. The governing body maintains a strong strategic control of the school's finances. The available budget, particularly in the light of falling numbers and the LEA's continued funding of a relatively high level of unfilled places, is well used to effect valuable developments, especially in resourcing and the maintenance of a skilled and experienced teacher establishment. Recent audits of the school found few issues to be tackled, but they

have all been actioned appropriately. There is a large, properly administered and audited school fund, which provides additional resources and activities as required.

47. The school is currently well staffed. The number, experience and qualifications of teachers, classroom support staff and residential social workers are very good. All staff have comprehensive and appropriate job descriptions. The overall deployment of teachers is generally very good, although the arrangements for teaching pupils and students pre- and post- 16 are not always efficient. Staff training is well linked to the identification of individual needs through a very good appraisal system for all staff and the school's needs as identified in the development plan. There is a very good process for the induction of all staff and a tangible sense of collective teamwork. These approaches to staff support and professional development have been celebrated twice through the renewal of the school's status as an 'Investor in People'.
48. The accommodation is good and provides a wide range of appropriate facilities, including two sensory rooms, a multi-sensory hydrotherapy pool, a movement room, therapy rooms and a medical room. The main house accommodates the residential provision, which has been imaginatively developed to retain the character of the old building and is homely and attractive. The old coach house conversion, across the main road through the village, has also been very effectively designed and extended to form the school. The house and school are set in extensive and very well kept grounds. All the facilities are very efficiently used and the pool provides a useful income from user groups to offset its running costs. Following the findings of the previous inspection, the school, its governors and the parish council have made significant and impressive efforts to improve the safety of the crossing arrangements between the two buildings. These are judged to be as safe as they can be in the circumstances of current legislation, but are still considered to pose some risk, by both the Social Services Inspectorate and this inspection team.
49. The overall level of learning resources has been improved across the curriculum since the previous inspection and it is now at least good and very good in some subjects, such as English, science and design and technology. As the result of a significant investment of time and energy, all the resources are very effectively stored and catalogued and are, consequently, accessible and very well used.
50. The school has good procedures for ensuring that it receives best value from the services it uses and receives. Its working relationship with the Bay Health Trust is good and regular dialogue ensures that provision and practice are maintained at the current high quality. The corporate approach that involves the whole school community in making major decisions, the close and very successful partnership with parents, the openness of planning strategies and the detailed training and research, ensures that all school developments are founded on best value principles.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

There are no key issues for the school to address, but in the context of its many strengths, the following minor points for improvement should be considered as the basis for an action plan:

- create more opportunities for pupils to make choices and explore and control their environment independently; (*referred to in paragraphs 16,57,102 and 103*)

- develop the governing body's role in leading the process of identifying and implementing appropriate development priorities for the school's future in the context of local and national special needs initiatives; *(referred to in paragraph 44)*
- further develop the established role of subject co-ordinators to include monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within their assigned subjects; *(referred to in paragraph 45)*
- explore more efficient ways of deploying teaching staff *(referred to in paragraph 47)*
- continue to explore possible further improvements to the safety of the road crossing between the two parts of the school. *(referred to in paragraph 48)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	34	51	11	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	22
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	1

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	7	School data	0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0

Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	21
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.4
Average class size	5.5

Education support staff: YR– Y13

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	522

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,112,230
Total expenditure	1,112,230
Expenditure per pupil	50,555
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,283
Balance carried forward to next year	36,283

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	22
Number of questionnaires returned	19

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	0	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	72	17	11	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	32	0	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	26	26	0	10
The teaching is good.	89	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	79	21	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	21	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	20	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	79	11	5	0	5

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. Provision for pupils in the early years of learning is very good. The policy clearly reflects both the aims of the school and early learning goals and is underpinned by a curriculum and its associated scheme of work which serve as a very good foundation for the pupils' development within the school.
52. Clear links are identified between the curriculum for early years and the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and a very well organised system for initial, baseline and on-going assessment is in place. The procedures for assessment recognise the distinct needs of pupils at this phase and overlap with and are directly linked to the very good system that is in place for the rest of the school. The IEPs for the early years, are adapted to meet this population's needs and are of high standard.
53. The scheme of work provides opportunities for pupils to have experiences under the headings of language and literacy, number, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, creative development and personal and social education, with the work in each area carefully linked to, and preparing the pupils for, the curriculum at Key Stage 1.
54. This aspect of the curriculum is very well managed. The co-ordinator is secure in her knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils and has a clear vision about how the provision should develop. The level of resourcing is satisfactory and is of very good quality. The co-ordinator anticipates the need to add to this resource base as the number of pupils increases.

ENGLISH

55. Pupils' and students' achievements in English are very good overall. They make very good progress in relation to their past learning and the targets set for them, as the result of consistently good teaching right across the school.
56. Pupils make very good progress in developing early communication skills, because switch systems and objects of reference are used consistently across the school and within the residential provision. Teachers use pupils' individual switch systems to help them take an active part in lessons. Pupils are often very aware of their participation in activities and try hard to move their fingers, limbs or heads to press their switches. They use the switches to play pre-recorded parts of a story and this develops their awareness of cause and effect, reinforcing an important concept in the development of early communication skills. The consistent use of objects of reference helps pupils to become aware of where they are and what is about to happen. The consistent use of the same objects across the school and in the residential provision makes a significant contribution to the progress pupils make. Teachers plan a wide range of activities that enable pupils to respond to or initiate communication. They are encouraged to still or quieten when they are spoken to and they give their attention well when they hear familiar or interesting sounds.
57. Teachers carefully monitor and record pupils' responses to activities, looking for any changes in their facial expression, the movement of their limbs or the way they vocalise. Over time, these records build into a very clear picture of the sounds and

movements that pupils use consistently to indicate their feelings and their basic needs. Teachers use this information effectively to establish realistic success criteria for pupils' learning and to plan future work. Pupils make simple choices between items that are offered, for example, choosing the colour of an apron for painting. A number of pupils can clearly indicate a preference and teachers ensure that there are suitable opportunities for pupils to build on these skills. Teachers do not, however, provide as many opportunities as they could for pupils to make choices that have a direct impact on their experiences or their participation in activities, particularly as they get older.

58. Pupils' progress in developing early reading and writing skills is good. Teachers effectively promote early reading skills by developing pupils' awareness of people and objects and by creating and using different environments for teaching. The school's multi-sensory rooms are used very effectively to encourage pupils to respond to stimulation and to focus their attention. The use of these environments also encourages pupils to demonstrate an awareness of 'differences'. In the sensory room, pupils are encouraged to focus on objects under ultra-violet light or to watch moving lights, and imaginative use is made of darkened classrooms to help pupils concentrate and focus on resources. Early writing skills are developed through activities that encourage pupils to reach out and take objects that are offered or to accept physical prompts to hold objects placed in their hand. Pupils explore, or are helped to explore, the resources they are given and, with encouragement, a few pupils will pass objects from one hand to another. Subjects such as art are used effectively to support the development of early writing skills and pupils have been supported to make marks on paper by dribbling paint and to use printing blocks to create writing patterns.
59. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The great majority of teaching is good right across the school and teaching of younger pupils up to fourteen is often very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and very good understanding of pupils' special needs. This enables them to plan learning experiences that are very closely matched to pupils' needs and effectively address the additional needs of pupils who have sensory difficulties. All activities have an appropriate sensory focus and this ensures that pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
60. Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and participation are realistically high and are well informed by the outcomes of assessment and record keeping. The work they plan for pupils provides an appropriate level of challenge and pupils respond well, trying hard to participate and use their skills. However, teachers are very aware of the physical and health needs of pupils and are careful not to demand too much of them when they are unwell. Teachers plan activities that are imaginative and exciting. Pupils respond positively and will often vocalise to gain attention, responding to adult talk or physical contact by giving their attention.
61. Teachers have gathered a wide range of interesting and imaginative resources, which they use very effectively to encourage pupils to participate in activities. Adults prompt and support pupils to explore the items they are given, encouraging them to look, touch or listen. A number of pupils will use the resources they are given to make noises by hitting, banging or shaking. Teachers effectively encourage this communication by acknowledging pupils and responding to them. Because of this, pupils interact well with adults; they turn towards familiar voices and will smile or make eye contact. A few pupils will look from one person to

another during group activities, responding to their name or to the questions directed at them.

62. The subject is well led and managed. It is reviewed regularly and the subject co-ordinator has clearly identified appropriate areas for future development. A good subject management plan has been established to guide this development. English provision has been improved since the last inspection. Very good relationships have been established with the speech and language therapy service and this has ensured the development of effective subject policies and guidance for areas such as communication and switch use. The speech and language therapist carries out feeding assessments, and early communication skills are effectively reinforced through the feeding programmes that are established.
63. The curriculum is very relevant to pupils' needs. There is an appropriate emphasis on communication, but pupils also have good opportunities to learn early reading and writing skills. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented very effectively right across the school and has been appropriately adapted to meet the needs of all pupils and students. Teachers have been very imaginative in the way they have planned learning opportunities that reflect the content of the Strategy and are relevant for pupils.

MATHEMATICS

64. Overall, pupils' and students' achievements are good in mathematics and they make good progress towards the targets set for them.
65. By the age of seven, pupils experience a wide range of sensory and physical activities, which provide them with opportunities to acquire an understanding of the language of early number – big, small, long, short, fat and thin. They further add to their mathematical experiences and understanding as they use a tactile timetable to order the activities that will take place every day. By the age of eleven, pupils continue to develop their awareness of the language of number and, additionally, have increasing opportunities to begin to match numbers with objects. Drinks time and calling the register both provide opportunities for them to increase their understanding of number in practical situations. The characteristics of solid objects are stressed as they explore round, square and spiky shapes and they enjoy activities, which involve measuring, using non-standard measures such as strips of dough, their hands and feet and buttons. By the age of fourteen, some pupils are more consistent in their response to the basic vocabulary of space and shape. They show excitement as they use a dice to identify which number bag they will be dipping into to search for objects that have distinct textural quality and shape. Older pupils and students further consolidate their understanding of the language of number, time and space and they are more familiar with descriptors such as slowly, quickly, later and before. They use real objects to make choices when they are asked to select one or two objects from three or four and they continue to measure using non-standard measures and a measuring rod when measuring objects in class. Post 16 students practise and use their number skills in a college setting when taking part in the Use of a Community Resource module of their Accreditation Through Life and Living Skills (ALL) course.
66. Teaching in mathematics is good across all key stages. Lessons are well planned, with staff showing increasing confidence in their use of the approaches advocated by the National Numeracy Strategy. This approach has been well assimilated into

the staff's style of working, with the very effective deployment of support staff providing added quality to each element of the number lesson. The teachers' sharing of lesson and individual objectives with support staff and the very detailed knowledge that all staff have of the pupils' individual needs has a very positive effect upon pupils' learning. Such is the quality of the sharing of information about pupils' individual educational and personal needs, that care and medical staff consistently support the learning that takes place, as they use the language of number in non-class based situations, including the residential setting.

67. Pupils respond very well with interest and effort to mathematical experiences, and most will sustain their concentration for the bulk of lessons. This is a consequence of the carefully targeted individual support that they receive. The range of activities provided, the pace of lessons and the manner whereby staff respond to the pupils' slightest positive reaction to a stimulus ensures that all have the opportunity to succeed and derive enjoyment from their number experiences.
68. As a consequence of the school's wish to incorporate the best of the National Numeracy Strategy into its scheme of work, a well thought out holding strategy has been created while the school policy and its related scheme of work is being reviewed. Significant work has already been done on the scheme of work. Medium-term plans and detailed short-term plans are in place for the blocked units covering measurement, time, data collection and patterns. There is, however, an identified need to fully document the 'continuous focus' element of the scheme of work. Notwithstanding the developmental nature of parts of the scheme of work, the co-ordinator has ensured that good assessment and reporting procedures are already in place. The completion of the review is identified as a priority by the co-ordinator.
69. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the teaching of mathematics, the allocation of time for the subject and in the quality of planning.

SCIENCE

70. Pupils' and students' achievements in science are good across the whole school and they make good progress against the challenging targets set for them.
71. Pupils make good progress in developing an understanding of life processes by exploring green plants. During the week of the inspection younger pupils were focusing on scented leaves and roots, by experiencing the smells and feel of a wide range of herbs and fibrous root balls. Older pupils and students were then going to sow seeds to grow different herbs and subsequently pot on the seedlings. Other pupils were potting up forget-me-not plant plugs as a start to making a flower display for the class patio. Each class has its own assigned area in the grounds containing large raised plots, designed by the science co-ordinator and built by the school handyman. Outside each classroom they also have planters and flower towers which the pupils plant and tend throughout the season. These activities enable pupils to explore the characteristics of the plants through reaching for, looking at and feeling them. Some make purposeful actions with tools when planting and all have structured access and the opportunity to respond to subject specific language. In these sessions, imaginative and very well prepared activities enable pupils to experience the world around them and develop an appreciation of living things and the need to care for them by, for example, regular watering. Teachers and classroom support staff work very effectively in partnership to ensure that each pupil has access to the experiences at their own level. They are always

aware of particular sensitivities and use a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils' full engagement.

72. Very detailed records and attractive portfolios and photographic displays of recent projects demonstrate that these lessons are typical of many others. The quality of teaching is always at least good because teachers are highly imaginative in dealing with a wide range of topics. Sound and light are experienced as part of physical process, materials and their properties are explored through the changing effects of mixing, dissolving and melting and many aspects of the human body, for example blood circulation and healthy eating, are covered through very engaging practical experiments. Pupils are enthusiastic and often excited by these activities and they are able to interact and make valuable links across their own experiences to come to some appreciation of the world around them.
73. The curriculum and supporting schemes of work are very good and have been developed collaboratively across the school. Approaches to well-chosen topics are ambitious but realistic and careful assessment ensures that pupils' response and progress are evaluated and the information used effectively to inform future planning. Resources are very good, well catalogued and readily accessible.
74. The previous inspection was critical of the provision for this subject. There has clearly been a significant improvement in the quality and range of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' achievements and progress are much better. The hard work and commitment of the subject co-ordinator have been important contributors to these improvements.

ART

75. Pupils' and students' achievements in art are good and they make good progress as the result of very well focused teaching.
76. Pupils are involved in a very wide range of experiences that encourage them to touch and explore materials and to stretch out for and hold different tools. Teachers provide a very good and stimulating range of resources for pupils to use and these effectively address the needs of pupils with sensory difficulties. For example, some older pupils used feathers, glitter and a good range of bright shiny papers, as well as tissue paper, to make the wings for their insects. The teacher and support staff effectively encouraged pupils to explore the materials before they were sandwiched between two sheets of clear sticky plastic. Pupils responded very well, demonstrating a clear preference for some materials over others. Some other pupils had the opportunity to develop an awareness of red during a sensory art session. In a darkened classroom they were encouraged to touch and explore red objects that had been made to feel warm and they experienced the smells of red fruits such as strawberries. Younger pupils were given the opportunity to develop an awareness of the colours red, white and black. They were presented with boxes of each colour and by careful monitoring of their responses the teacher was able to interpret their preferences. Pupils were then given the opportunity to feel the different colours, which were placed as large blotches onto a piece of paper and then covered with a thin sheet of plastic. As pupils explored the surface of the plastic the colours were mixed to create different patterns.
77. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers are very creative and the imaginative adaptation and use of the unusual resources that teachers collect enhance pupils'

participation in activities. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they use art activities very effectively to support pupils' learning in other subject areas, particularly in the development of communication and to provide opportunities for pupils to practise physical skills such as holding and reaching out. Small step targets have been identified for all pupils and teachers effectively plan activities that enable them to build on their past learning. Because of this, pupils make very good progress in relation to the targets set for them. Very high quality displays of pupils' work around the school show the range and quality of their efforts.

78. There is a good policy and scheme of work that effectively guides teachers' planning and ensures that pupils are involved in a wide and appropriate range of art experiences. The subject is well led and managed and there is a very good range of resources to support learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

79. Overall achievement in design and technology is good and pupils and students make good progress towards their individual targets.
80. Younger pupils are developing a range of skills in handling and manipulating materials in food technology when making lemon biscuits. Outstanding planning and preparation by the teacher ensure that all materials are ready to hand. Very clear objectives and individual targets (which are shared with the pupils at the beginning and regularly reinforced during the lesson) serve to focus sensitive support by all staff. This results in pupils achieving their challenging targets and being fully engaged throughout the various elements of measuring, mixing and forming the ingredients. A very good, continuous commentary by staff, using a simple naming vocabulary, helps pupils to explore the materials and operate an electric mixer using a press switch. The high quality of teaching and staff collaboration observed here was also seen in a similar lesson with older pupils. Appropriately high expectations, when it was assumed that pupils could do what was required of them, ensured that they did squeeze the lemon, roll out the mixture and cut out the biscuit shapes. Very careful timing of the lesson meant that they could bake and taste the finished product as a reward for their efforts at the end.
81. By the time they are sixteen, pupils are tackling more ambitious projects and prepare a whole meal. Good planning and very clear objectives enable support staff to help pupils to participate fully and work successfully towards their well-focused targets. Good use is made of switches to operate kitchen equipment such as whisks. Adult intervention is subtle and positive and, consequently, pupils hold spoons to measure and mix, identify and give named utensils to adults and taste and smell the ingredients. It is clear that they are enjoying these activities and even clearer that they are not so keen when it comes to doing the washing up at the end.
82. The very well developed curriculum and schemes of work for this subject, which have close links with art, introduce pupils to a wide range of activities and materials. They work successfully with wood, paper, textiles, mouldable plaster and wax, using hand tools such as cutters, rollers and drills to make attractive and useful products, such as picture frames. They are clearly proud of these and they are much appreciated by parents when they are sent home. Planned further developments of the curriculum will introduce more ambitious use of tools and an increase in construction and disassembly activities.

83. All pupils make a contribution to the school's productive use of craft activities that are very carefully matched to individual interest and capability. For example, pupils make many of the Christmas greetings' cards that are sent out from the school. As a result they experience collage making, printing, cutting and folding. The mini-enterprise, run by older pupils and students, makes chutney from home-grown produce which is sold at the Christmas coffee morning. The significant proceeds from these sales are then donated to local groups and organisations. In Post 16, students build successfully on their earlier learning when participating in craft activities at the adult college.
84. The overall good quality of teaching and the other activities provided outside school hours, for example making bird-boxes in woodcraft, ensure that the very valuable 'hands-on' aspect of this subject, engages and motivates pupils. The high quality of individual support from the whole staff team and the consistent use of praise has pupils responding with effort, interest and enthusiasm.
85. Design and technology is well co-ordinated. Significant improvements have been made in the management and resourcing of the subject since the previous inspection and the subject now provides very valuable learning and developmental opportunities for pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

86. Pupils' achievements in geography are good.
87. Pupils have opportunities to experience the different effects of land use, to explore different localities, both human and physical, and to experience the effect that weather has on their lives. These experiences are offered in the school, the village and in a range of settings in the wider community.
88. Younger pupils up to seven years of age, look at the village with its different shops and people, such as the butcher and shopkeeper, and visit different community venues such as the Preston multi-sensory centre. They follow up these activities by making simple relief models in clay. Pupils up to age eleven, compare Silverdale with Africa as they look at the different animals that are found locally such as cattle, sheep, deer and rabbits and additionally visit the local Wild Life Oasis to look at animals that are different. Older pupils, up to age fourteen, find out about Peru, and this provides them with opportunities to look at and weave simple cloth and make clay beads. In contrast, the activities directed at giving them experiences about a cold climate have them listening to the sounds of whales, wearing warm, heavy clothes, beating an Eskimo drum and 'fishing' through an ice hole. All classes have the opportunity to study a river, with this work extending their experience of water, its sound, movement and the materials found in it. Pupils up to the age of seven, showed marked enthusiasm as they felt fluffy cotton wool clouds, while older pupils enjoyed feeling the wet grass through which their river had to flow.
89. Teaching of geography is consistently good and sometimes very good. The teachers' deployment and style of working collaboratively with support staff, including shared planning and recording achievements, has a very positive impact upon pupils' learning and the progress that they make. Support staff know precisely what individual support is required and play an important part in the observation and noting of individual targets achieved. Pupils show real pleasure when staff praise their achievements and will show great effort as they demonstrate their new-found

skill to the rest of the class. All teaching is underpinned by the need to utilise all of the pupils' senses and physical skills and to be particularly sensitive of the individual's preferred sense or movement. The success that is the product of this approach plays an important part in helping to maintain the pupils' interest and concentration and contributes significantly to the enjoyment that they display during geography lessons. Planning is detailed, recognises the need for a variety of activities to promote an experience and is closely allied to very good on-going assessment.

90. Since the last inspection the teaching and organisation of geography shows significant improvement, while resourcing for the subject shows some improvement.

HISTORY

91. Pupils' achievement in history is very good.
92. Pupils have opportunities to become aware of their place in the environment. It helps them to understand themselves as unique individuals within their families and the school community, and to have experiences which help them to develop an increasing awareness of what is past, the present and what is to come. Additionally, the 'continuous unit' that runs through the scheme of work identifies the need to use their arrival at school, their daily routines and celebrations such as birthdays and religious festivals, to support further their historical understanding.
93. Pupils' understanding of the passing of time is also very well promoted through the daily use of tactile timetables. At the start of every day and before afternoon sessions they collectively and individually are made aware of the order of lessons and other events. Carefully selected objects of reference are used to identify the various components of the day. As pupils handle these objects they are not only made aware of the language directly related to them, but also hear the staff use words such as now, later, after and before in order to reinforce further their experience of sequence.
94. Up to the age of seven, pupils have experience of important events and people as they role-play the events that lead up to the Great Fire of London. Pupils aged up to eleven re-enact events from World War II and older pupils have experience of working in a Kendal shoemaker's workshop. Class and individual portfolios, including photographs of pupils, provide further evidence of historical experiences as pupils receive visits from the Vikings, sail around the world as Columbus and have experience of washing clothes during the '50s in their Washday Blues lesson.
95. The quality of teaching in history is consistently very good. Teachers' planning and organisation ensures that historical experiences are of a type, and are presented in such a manner, as to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to be active participants. The negative reaction by some to the smell of rotten cabbage during the re-enactment of the Great Fire of London was predictable, while the positive response by the one pupil was unexpected. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the singing while beating patterns in leather, as they pretended to be shoemakers in Kendal, and they showed equally obvious pleasure with the tactile experience of being wrapped up as mummies, during their work on Egyptian history. Teachers have high expectation and demonstrate significant ability in presenting historical topics in ways that involve all the senses to make them accessible to all pupils. The session on World War II had pupils responding with obvious wonderment to search lights

and the sounds of sirens. This activity also provided them with opportunities to handle sandbags and a wide range of equipment that had been brought into school by staff. The manner whereby teaching staff, support staff, care and medical staff and parents all contributed to the collection of equipment and materials that were needed for this session provides a very good example of how all involved with the school work together to optimise the quality of the pupils' learning.

96. Pupils enjoy history; they maintain a high level of interest and concentration and show in a variety of ways, through eye contact, touch, smiles, vocalisation and movement, that they are responding to the various activities and experiences with intellectual effort.
97. The quantity, quality, and organisation of resources for history is good and they are effectively supplemented through the carefully targeted use of a wide range of local facilities, including the village, Lancaster, and the Lake District.
98. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the teaching of history, pupils' achievement and in the organisation of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are good and they make steady progress in its application across the curriculum.
100. Very imaginative and thoughtful adaptations of the National Curriculum programmes of study have produced schemes of work that have integrated the technology into every subject area, with particular emphasis on the use of switches to communicate, control and make choices. In the early stages of their learning, pupils experience a wide range of visual, sound and touch stimuli in the classroom and multi-sensory settings throughout the school. In morning greetings' sessions, for example, they use communicators with pre-recorded messages to signal their presence and make contact with adults and their peers. As they progress through the school, they become more adept at using opportunities to communicate, control tools and equipment and handle information systems. Older pupils respond to instructions and use switch mechanisms to move and match images on a computer screen, enabling them to undertake sign matching exercises and to access information and images from CD Roms.
101. Because of pupils' particular difficulties, and the wide range of individual needs in each class, ICT is not taught in discrete lessons, but its use and application is integrated fully into teachers' planning for lessons and individual pupils' contribution to them. Pupils' achievements indicate that there is effective teaching of the subject and that they are highly motivated by the opportunities presented to them. They respond with enthusiasm, take great pleasure from their use of control technology and, as they get older, use computers in a range of activities, including word/symbol processing of, for example, the recipe for their food technology lessons.
102. The school was part of the first group in the authority to participate in developments for the National Grid for Learning. It has had all the cabling and infrastructure installed and the co-ordinator has received appropriate training. The date for going on-line has, however, been delayed by unforeseen technical difficulties and the school is not as yet connected to the Internet. There are detailed and ambitious plans to develop further the use of ICT across the school and residence, both as a

learning tool and for administration and training. The most important developments for pupils will be in relation to giving them more control over their environment and the ability to communicate their needs and wants to adults more effectively.

103. Much work has been done in response to the critical judgements of the previous inspection. Organisation of ICT and the provision of resources have been considerably enhanced. Detailed schemes of work now enable teachers to integrate the technology effectively into all their planning, and extensive training for all staff has resulted in the applied use of ICT right across the school and in activities throughout the day. Pupils' achievements have, as a result, improved. There are appropriately ambitious development plans and a clear will on the part of the co-ordinator and all staff to further apply the full potential of the technology to pupils' learning and to provide them with greater independence.

MUSIC

104. Pupils' and students' achievements in music are good and they make good progress as the result of good teaching.
105. A music specialist teaches the subject throughout the school. There is a good subject policy and a scheme of work, which ensures that pupils take part in an appropriate range of learning experiences. These experiences are well planned and enable pupils to build on their past learning. There is a very good range of musical instruments to support learning and these are used effectively to develop pupils' awareness of sound. Music is appropriately used to support the development of pupils' communication and to provide opportunities to practise responses such as grasping and holding objects that are placed in their hands and reaching out towards objects that are offered. Pupils are encouraged to listen and to the music or musical instruments that are played and their responses to these experiences are carefully monitored. This information is recorded and used effectively to measure their progress and to build up a picture of their communication skills as well as their preferences for different sounds.
106. A good range of opportunities to experience the music of other countries also enhances pupils' cultural awareness. During the week of the inspection, pupils were provided with opportunities to hear African, Caribbean and Latin American music and they were effectively supported to play a range of percussion instruments to accompany the Caribbean Calypso 'Yellow Bird'. Pupils accept physical prompts to hold and shake maracas and they explore the sounds made by stringed instruments. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in musical performances and during the inspection were busy learning songs for a community concert planned for the B.B.C 'Music Live' celebrations. Music is effectively used throughout the school and the residential provision to provide pupils with cues to place, time and activity, to stimulate responses and create a relaxing atmosphere.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

107. Pupils' and students' achievements in physical education are consistently good and often very good. All pupils and students follow a scheme of work that covers three continuous units of therapeutic approaches to learning, swimming and movement room activities. These incorporate blocked termly units on games, dance/aerobics and outdoor activities. This thoughtfully well-structured programme enables teachers, support staff, therapists and residential staff, working in close and

effective partnership, to offer individualised experiences tailored to the particular needs of all pupils and students, whatever their age or capability. Pupils and students consequently make good progress against the targets set for them.

108. Through the therapeutic approaches programme they learn the all-important ability to control simple movements of their body. This approach to learning is applied in a wide range of settings including massage, sensory integration and aromatherapy. Pupils appreciate the close working relationship that they have in these activities and gain significant benefits that accrue over time. This then enables them to participate more successfully in activities across the curriculum.
109. When working in the high quality environment of the hydrotherapy pool with a very experienced specialist teacher, pupils become increasingly self-aware in a very enabling setting. This helps them to relax and develop the confidence to move increasingly independently. They receive very good teaching from the specialist teacher who is encouraging and appropriately ambitious. As a result, they make good and often exceptional progress. A small number of pupils can swim unaided. The pleasure that they show is testament to the value of this achievement. Teachers and support staff, who themselves benefit from the guidance and support on offer, work very effectively in partnership, particularly when keeping records of the all important assessments that are ongoing and inform planning for the next steps of teaching. Pupils go into the pool regularly in the evenings and at weekends with residential staff to consolidate this learning and progress.
110. Activities in the movement room are designed to extend pupils' understanding of the way their bodies move in space and they enjoy learning to balance, roll, turn, travel, swing, climb and grip. When teachers, support staff and therapists are working together in this setting, they are constantly thinking about the way pupils' learning will relate to the day to day activities that they experience in school and residence. This then means that pupils have the ability and confidence to, for example, balance whilst getting dressed or transfer successfully from their standing frame to a wheelchair. The few independently mobile pupils in the school are especially successful in this setting. Older students apply this learning well when they participate very successfully in activities, including trampolining and tandem tri-cycling, at a local leisure centre.
111. The aerobics sessions, set to stimulating, contemporary dance music, are enjoyable opportunities to exercise and let off steam, as well as to pattern movements and encourage independent movement. Pupils often demonstrate successful new achievements in this very positive activity. Games are adapted to ensure that all pupils can participate and contribute. This is another area, together with a very wide range of outdoor activities in the extensive grounds and further afield in the local environment, where residential staff very successfully supplement and extend valuable learning and leisure benefits.
112. The good and often very good teaching that occurs throughout this subject is the result of very detailed planning, which is informed by helpful advice and support from physio and occupational therapists and thorough assessment of pupils' performance and progress. The sensitive and highly effective partnership between teachers and classroom support staff is a very important element in the success of these programmes, particularly when the principles and individual programmes are integrated right across all subjects of the curriculum.

113. The joint co-ordinators of the subject have taken full account of the identified improvement suggestions from the previous inspection. As the result of this good management, the subject is now properly integrated into the timetable and allocated appropriate time. The subject benefits from high quality accommodation and resources, which are all well used.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

114. Only a limited number of lessons were seen during the inspection and judgements have, therefore, been supported through the observation of daily acts of worship and the analysis of teachers' files, individual education plans, records and reports.
115. Overall, pupils' and students' progress is very good throughout the school. They respond with awe and wonder to the wide range of sensory stimuli presented. Because of this, each pupil and student has the opportunity to react to stimuli that are preferred, has meaning for them and are enjoyed. Lessons consistently help pupils to be aware of themselves as unique and valued individuals. They additionally provide opportunities for them to develop an awareness of being part of a caring family and, through the use of a very good range of religious artefacts and multi-media experiences, provide them with stimulating experiences of other faiths.
116. A well-structured three year cycle of activities, including activities promoting living the faith, worship, life as a journey and the study of founders and leaders, provides the pupils and students with opportunities to re-visit experiences using different focuses and artefacts. The whole programme is carefully threaded through with a very well balanced range of religious festivals from the major faiths.
117. The teaching of religious education is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned; the activities and resources used to develop the lesson's focus are carefully selected in order to ensure that all pupils and students have the opportunity to respond with enjoyment and understanding. Listening to the wind of the spirit of Pentecost while using a switch to control the sound and the wind had pupils responding with wonder as they focus on a candle, whilst celebrating achievement at the end of the day. The quality of the concentration and respectful silence shown during this experience was excellent. The acts of collective worship that take place at the end of every day are of the highest quality. They are planned over time, are an integral part of and make a significant contribution to the pupils' and students' religious education. The sensitive choice and use of sound and the carefully orchestrated opportunities for participation provide all pupils and students with a religious experience that has meaning. The singing of the school hymn by all the staff present creates an ending to the day that is full of significance with the pupils and students responding with a silence that adds to the spirituality of the occasion.
118. Pupils and students enjoy their religious education lessons. The range of activities and sensory experiences chosen help to maintain their interest and contribute to the effort that all show.
119. The subject is very well resourced. The wide range of reference materials, audio and video-tapes and a very good selection of artefacts are very well organised. They are of very good quality and are very well matched to the special educational needs of the pupils and students.
120. Significant improvement in teaching and in the organisation of the subject has taken place since the last inspection.

POST 16 PROVISION

121. Provision for Post 16 students is good. It is age-appropriate and reflects the demands that will be made of them in their life when they leave school. This may include further education, leisure or supported work activities.
122. The curriculum continues to provide opportunities for students to acquire and use the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and communication as discrete subjects and also provides opportunities for these skills to be applied within other curriculum areas. The curriculum further recognises the students' immediate and post-school needs through programmes that focus on daily living skills, leisure activities, the creative arts and community skills and currently provides an opportunity for students to attend Lancaster Adult College. Students attend a communication and social skills course, as well as art and music sessions, in order to gain accreditation through the ALL scheme for the 'Use of a Community Resource' module. While participating in this course, students are demonstrating that they are capable of reducing their reliance on known support staff and are making new relationships with other adults. Additionally, the students attend a leisure centre once a week in order to develop their familiarity with such venues, to have the opportunity to practise their personal and social skills and to enjoy the experience of learning to ride tandem tricycles and work at specific programmes on the trampoline. They respond with enthusiasm and effort to both these activities.
123. The links established between the provision for pupils and students, pre- and post-16 are good and serve well as a transition between the two stages. This transitional process will take a more prominent role if the distribution of pupils and students changes and there is a need to have two distinct classes, instead of the current combined class. The school's senior management team and the co-ordinator for Post 16 provision are already considering this possibility.
124. The co-ordinator for Post 16 recognises the need for more accredited courses, as well as planning to increase the range of activities which provide students with the need to make choices and increase the number of situations whereby they have a greater degree of control over their environment.