

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KINGSTANDING SCHOOL**

Kingstanding, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103628

Headteacher: Ms M Pipe

Reporting inspector: Mary Last  
17171

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> February – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 192204

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Old Oscott Lane Kingstanding Birmingham
Postcode:	B6 3JF
Telephone number:	0121 635 2111
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Phil Haynes
Date of previous inspection:	March 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17171	Mary Last	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages, music, English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements, How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9545	Kevin Greatorex	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10876	Martin Sutton	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design	
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Science, geography, history, equal opportunities, special educational needs	
27058	Kath Cannon	Team inspector	English, physical education, religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3838	Aileen Webber	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology, Post-16 provision	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Kingstanding School caters for up to 99 pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties from 11 to 19 years of age. There are currently a total of 74 pupils on roll, 29 of whom are girls and 34 are students over 16 years of age. Approximately 50 pupils are entitled to free school meals which is higher than in similar schools where pupils and students have severe profound and multiple learning difficulties. Five pupils and students in the school have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs with severe learning difficulties identified as their major learning problems. Sixty-seven pupils are of white UK heritage, two black African heritage and five Pakistani. There are five pupils with English as an additional language who are appropriately supported in class. All pupils' achievements are well below those expected in mainstream school as a direct result of their learning difficulties.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Kingstanding School is a supportive school where the staff are committed to providing a stimulating and interesting education for its pupils despite past unsatisfactory inspection judgements. However the school is still facing difficulties in providing consistent standards of education for a minority of its pupils. There is evidence of a strong commitment from staff, governors and the parents who are generally very supportive of the school's work. The headteacher ensures that the daily management of the school is efficient and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Provides very good teaching in three out of every ten lessons and good teaching in a further two out of every ten which motivates pupils and helps them make satisfactory and often good progress
- Supports the pastoral needs of pupils and students through very good relationships which help them to try harder and increase their skills
- Behaviour is good, pupils and students concentrate well and enjoy lessons
- Provides a positive learning environment where pupils show courtesy and students over 16 are well prepared for life after school
- Many teachers and assistants have improved their computer skills and now support pupils well in their use of ICT

#### **What could be improved**

- Provision for a minority of pupils with additional needs, for example sensory autistic spectrum disorder and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties
- Current arrangements for addressing pupils personal care needs during lesson time, particularly after lunch
- The identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the senior team and governors
- Arrangements for annual reviews, individual educational plans and pupils' targets
- Arrangements for assessing the risks attached to all activities on and off site

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school made sound progress in addressing most of the unsatisfactory features identified in its previous inspection in March 2000. The school has raised standards in teaching and learning so that teaching in over nine out of every ten lessons is now satisfactory and in over five out of every ten it is good or better. These higher standards are the result of a continued commitment by the headteacher, governors and staff to school improvement and to raising pupils standards of learning. However, the pace and level of improvement have not been consistently sustained since the last inspection. This is particularly so with regard to acknowledging whole-school strengths and weaknesses, some aspects of assessment and in meeting the additional needs of some pupils and students. Arrangements for annual reviews are unsatisfactory because the range of information required is not provided and much paperwork is incomplete. However, there has been significant and continuing improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the teaching of literacy at Years 7 to 11 following the successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 11	by Year 14	Key	
speaking and listening	B	B	very good	A
Reading	C	C	Good	B
Writing	C	C	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	C	C	Unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	C	C	Poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	C		

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

Pupils achieve well in relation to their previous learning and the complexity of their learning difficulties. Pupils' achievements and progress in English and mathematics are satisfactory and for some higher attaining pupils they are good. The pupils enjoy lessons which are derived from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and can increasingly use the skills they learn in everyday life when talking to visitors or shopping. In science pupils make satisfactory and often good progress and increase their understanding of materials and the environment. All pupils and students grow in confidence and maturity as they move up through the school and their personal development is good. A very small minority of pupils do not achieve so well because the tasks are repetitive and do not challenge them or because they do not have sufficient structure their learning. Students over 16 achieve well in most aspects of the curriculum, but some would benefit from a clearer focus on literacy skills to improve their reading.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: all pupils and students have positive attitudes to the school and work. They come happily to school, eager and ready to learn and keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: during lessons, at lunch and break times and when moving about the school, pupils and students achieve high standards of behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good: many pupils show high levels of respect and courtesy to adults as well as to other pupils and students. The school provided good opportunities for pupils and students to take responsibility and improve their self-confidence.
Attendance	Consistently good: unauthorised absence was high last year because two students were absent for most of the year.

Pupils' attitudes to school are good and they are generally well motivated, work hard and enjoy the tasks set for them in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is good overall and only unsatisfactory in two lessons when the work does not attract their attention or they are not well supervised. In these cases pupils move around the room and disturb others. However, all pupils make significant improvements in their attitudes and behaviour so that by the time they are over 16 they present as confident and likeable young people who are interested in continuing their learning when they leave school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	N/A	N/A	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.*

Teaching and learning is now good overall and it is very good or outstanding in three out of ten lessons. In the best teaching the staff plan a wide range of activities which are individually matched to the pupils' needs so that they make maximum progress. In English teaching is satisfactory; activities help pupils to improve their communication, reading and writing. In mathematics teaching is satisfactory and very often good. Staff are aware of strategies derived from the National Numeracy Initiative and are using them appropriately to increase pupils achievements in calculation and use of numbers. In science teaching is satisfactory with many strong features and pupils learn much about the world around them through practical work. Teaching and learning are very good in information and communication technology (ICT) and this is a major achievement by the teachers and support assistants as it was considered unsatisfactory in previous inspections. Teaching is good in physical education where pupils are increasing their understanding of teamwork. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects. Teaching is unsatisfactory in only four lessons where the organisation of the activities and/or the management of the pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory. Where teachers are unclear about what pupils should understand, or do not have high expectations that they will do well, the quality of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory because the teachers accept pupils' minimum efforts rather than challenging them to do better. A small minority of pupils are not well taught because the teachers do not use relevant strategies to maintain their concentration. Some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are not provided with sufficiently focused work and are sometimes distracted by

other pupils. Some pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are disadvantaged in lessons because they are not fully included in activities and sometimes miss significant portions of lesson time when their personal care needs are being met.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum meets requirements and includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. It meets the needs and interests of the majority of the pupils and offers an increasingly vocational focus to students over sixteen.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The five pupils who have English as an additional language are well supported by teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the school ensures that pupils are aware right and wrong, are respectful of the lifestyles of others. Use of local community facilities and the celebration of multi-faith festivals helps pupils to understand cultural differences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory: the school provides satisfactory support and guidance and effectively promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils despite not having conducted risk assessments for the pupils on and off the site. There are significant weaknesses in the school's assessment procedures.

Whilst the curriculum is satisfactory and provides a suitable range of learning opportunities for most, there are also weaknesses which limit the learning of a small but significant number of pupils. Pupils who have additional special needs receive good levels of care but on some occasions the staff are not able to use a full range of suitable strategies to promote learning. The school does not consistently use curriculum time effectively for some of its pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties because arrangements for care needs overlap into teaching time. The school has been slow in addressing these issues both of which were judged as unsatisfactory in previous inspections.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: the headteacher and senior staff ensure that the school runs efficiently and day-to-day routines are well established and understood. The pace of development since the last inspection has been slow and affected by the difficulties in appointing staff and long-term staff absence through illness.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good: the governing body includes several newly recruited members. The governors are interested in the work of the school and working in partnership with the headteacher to continue to raise standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: the school has developed systems for identifying its strengths and weaknesses but they are not yet used systematically and effectively. The governors and school do not therefore have sufficient information about the school's performance to make secure plans for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: resources are at least satisfactory and used well to support pupils' learning. All finances accruing to the school are spent wisely and for the benefit of the pupils. Administration procedures are sound and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory overall and provides a stable and positive learning environment. The headteacher and senior staff have maintained the morale of staff through a difficult time for the school. They have successfully shown their commitment to raising standards in teaching and learning. However, staffing difficulties and illness have prevented long-term stability. Management and administration tasks are not sufficiently delegated to other members of staff. The headteacher and senior staff are, therefore, not able to use their time effectively. As a result the strategic procedures necessary to improve the school's performance in the long term are incomplete.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• Feel comfortable approaching the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework and provision of reading books</li> <li>• The information provided by the school</li> <li>• Arrangements for loading and unloading school transport</li> </ul>

Parents are highly supportive of the school and can see improvements since the last inspection. They feel comfortable in approaching the school and are particularly pleased with the children's progress in work and behaviour. A minority of parents feel pupils' work is too easy and that they are not challenged. Inspectors agree overall with the parents' judgements. The provision of homework and use of the home/school diaries varies between teachers so that the information received by parents is inconsistent. Inspectors also agree that buses cause congestion at the end of the day, that there is no clear pedestrian access to and from the school at this time.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements**

1. Pupils enter the school with low levels of achievement as a result of their learning difficulties. Achievements are good for many pupils and satisfactory overall, as a direct result of much good teaching. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school but a small proportion of the pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorder and some of the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are not given consistently appropriate opportunities to ensure that they learn as much as they can during lessons.

2. In English pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall but good in speaking and listening. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has had a significant impact on pupils' involvement with books and text and they now appreciate class stories using big books. Higher attaining pupils are able to express their thoughts in straightforward sentences, sometimes with help from a classroom assistant. However, lower attaining pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorder and profound and multiple learning difficulties make less secure progress because they are not always provided with suitable tasks to promote their learning. In mathematics pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding the uses of number. Higher attaining pupils frequently make good use of the computer to calculate or manipulate numbers and data and by the time they leave the school many have developed a sense of value when using money for shopping.

3. In science pupils are increasingly developing their understanding and enjoyment of their immediate environment. They particularly enjoy practical activities and respond well when they are supported by exciting resources, for example they show immediate interest in the teacher's use of electrical and battery operated toys and equipment. In this way they see, hear and understand the relationship between cause and effect as a result of using a single switch. One pupil watched a moving toy then picked it up and put it to his ear the better to hear it squeaking.

4. All pupils' individual education plans include literacy and numeracy targets. The pupils make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them. Some targets do not clearly set tasks and skills against which the pupils' progress can be accurately assessed. Records show that some pupils' achievements have not been consistently recorded and progress over time is difficult to identify. The school's procedures for tracking pupils' achievements are not yet fully effective.

5. Pupils also achieve well in physical education where they enjoy both working in groups or trying hard to complete individual tasks. Examination of pupils' work and records show that in relation to their abilities and previous achievements, they make good progress in personal and social skills, developing their levels of communication and their experience of how to behave in the larger community. In all other subjects pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

6. Students over 16 achieve particularly well in their personal development and confidence. They show they are mature enough to cope with the responsibility of attending college and behaving appropriately. However, the achievements of some pupils at one college is limited because the opportunities and tasks provided are not well matched to their skills and abilities. The students cannot demonstrate their ability effectively and are unable to extend or enhance their learning.

7. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls or of those from different ethnic background and lifestyles. The needs of the very few pupils with English as an additional language are well met in lessons by trained support assistants. However, the progress of a significant number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties is very difficult to quantify. In lessons they are not consistently offered access to learning tasks through adapted strategies and, therefore, are unable to demonstrate their understanding. For example, when all pupils are required to undertake and write about the lesson, some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are not provided with sufficient help to allow them to do their best.

8. Similarly a number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are frustrated in their learning when they are taken out of lessons for changing. For example, in a very good information and communication technology (ICT) lesson one pupil had just shown an eager response to the teacher's question 'What do you think I have got in my box?' when he was suddenly taken to the bathroom for changing. His possible further response and reaction to this learning opportunity was unknown.

9. Approximately one third of the pupils and students at the school fall into the categories of autistic spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many of these pupils, are not expected to progress beyond the earliest levels of development, because of the severity of their learning difficulties. It is, therefore, essential that the school is able to detect and build on the smallest steps and fine nuances of learning. Although the school is beginning to adopt the most recent assessment strategies for such pupils, they are not yet able to identify with certainty, the precise outcomes of these pupils' learning. The newer, national assessment measures – known as the 'P' scales – have been adopted by many schools since their introduction in 1999. Nevertheless, at Kingstanding School, progress in identifying the achievements of these groups of pupils has been slow. This, together with the weaknesses in the annual reviews procedures means that the school has not effectively addressed these issues since the last inspection.

10. In its published aims, the school lays a firm focus on developing the pupils' independence and to provide realistic and relevant opportunities for all its pupils with a broad curriculum. The satisfactory progress and personal achievements made by the majority of pupils in Years 7 to 11 demonstrate the school's success regarding these aims. However, this is not so for the small number of lower attaining pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties whose needs are not met within current arrangements.

### **Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have improved since the last inspection and now have a positive effect on their approach to learning in classrooms. In over half of lessons the pupils' and students' response was good or better.

12. Virtually all pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and their work. They show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in what they are asked to do and apply themselves very well to their work. Pupils sustain high levels of concentration because teachers plan tasks that challenge and motivate them. Pupils and students take great pride and enjoyment in producing good work and are keen to share their results with others, for example when Year 12 students worked with energy and enthusiasm so that much very good work was achieved.

13. Behaviour, overall, is now good at school and at home. This is confirmed by the views of the parents. When they come to school, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and at playtimes, virtually all pupils show good standards of behaviour. Most pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and clearly understand what is expected of them. In

lessons, behaviour is almost always good and pupils conform to the high expectations even when not closely supervised. In the very small minority of cases where there are incidents of disruptive behaviour, they are often unchallenged or ignored. In these cases pupils decide for themselves how they want to behave rather than comply with classroom activities. There has been one recent exclusion in the last term where the sanction was applied as a very last resort. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for school property.

14. Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils form very constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work co-operatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and will try to understand the other person's point of view. This was well illustrated in the food preparation lesson where several students were sharing the limited space round the cooker. Pupils show genuine pleasure in the achievements of others. Virtually all pupils act in a mature and responsible way. They consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance, courtesy and respect for others, well demonstrated by the Year 9 pupil who without being instructed, moved a chair for a member of the inspection team.

15. Pupils' personal development is good. The school provides a good range of opportunities for the pupils to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that the trust is well placed. Pupils and students make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they perform jobs within the classroom. A number of opportunities were noted where pupils made independent progress because staff stood aside and let them hold a conversation between themselves. As they progress through the school greater degrees of independence are encouraged.

16. Attendance and punctuality continue to be consistently good. There is no unauthorised absence. Virtually all pupils are punctual. They arrive at school, eager and ready to learn, enabling the school to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

### **Teaching**

17. The school has made significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection when over a quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching is now good overall. It is good or better in five out of every ten lessons. In less than one in ten lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory.

18. In the best lessons all the pupils' needs are met through individually planned activities. However, the learning needs of some pupils with additional special needs are not consistently well addressed. Whilst pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have their physical needs catered for effectively, they are frequently disadvantaged because the support for such needs takes place during lessons and they regularly miss significant learning opportunities. Pupils on the autistic spectrum do not benefit from any specific focus towards improving their interaction and communication skills. Despite the school being aware of specialist provision and techniques these are not consistently and effectively implemented.

19. Teaching is satisfactory in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching in English is satisfactory across the school with much that is good or very good, but with one poor lesson. Teachers use a range of material such as poetry, stories and factual text to emphasise the importance of reading. All staff have recently received training and introduced appropriate aspects of the National Literacy Strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Most teachers are conscious of the need to reinforce and emphasise the use of literacy

in all lessons and to ensure that pupils recognise its importance. In all lessons pupils are given good opportunities to understand the uses of reading and writing. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to express their thoughts in writing. There is good work in reading and the developing focus on big books in the classroom is furthering pupils' enjoyment of stories. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are well promoted through good opportunities for discussion. Despite these strengths, however, there are weaknesses in the identification of individual learning targets and in the pupils' individual education plans so that the expected amount and pace of their learning is not clearly specified.

20. In mathematics teaching is satisfactory overall, with many good features. Where teachers use strategies from the National Numeracy Strategy, pupils are enjoying and improving their work in numbers. There is a good balance between difficult work where pupils are expected to concentrate independently and group work where the adults encourage pupils and students to share ideas and solutions. Some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour which is not consistently well managed throughout the school and in these lessons some disruption to other pupils' learning is inevitable.

21. In science teaching is satisfactory and includes an effective, useful focus on the needs for pupils to understand and recall the key vocabulary connected with each lesson. Pupils are very motivated by practical science activities particularly where they include objects that they recognise, such as fruit or other foodstuff. Teachers use resources well, experimenting with liquids and solids including whisks, beaters and food processors to identify how material changes.

22. Teaching is also good in physical education, food technology and personal, social and health education. Teaching ensures that pupils develop their social skills well. They provide them with small tasks as they move up through the school. In lessons with older pupils it is clear that teachers expect them to behave in a mature and adult fashion and plan lessons which reflect the pupils' ages. On occasions, however, teachers resort to songs and rhymes which, while popular with the pupils, are not appropriate such as older pupils singing a nursery rhyme. Teaching in the further education unit within the school is good. Teachers plan activities and lessons which promote the pupils independence and help them prepare for life after school.

23. In the very best teaching pupils are highly motivated by the activities presented to them and become instantly involved in their learning. For example in an excellent ICT lesson Years 8 and 9 pupils were immediately alerted to the concept of cause and effect by the teacher switching on lights and a radio on and off and reinforcing the message of 'making things happen'. Then, using a number of electrical or battery-operated appliances such as a lamp, revolving globe and a tape recorder, the pupils were challenged to 'make things happen' themselves. To do so pupils are equipped with a range of switches, chosen according to their physical ability to react. Some have a large single switch, others use a mouse to control images on the computer. From such a range of activities with many different appliances and toys the learning needs of each pupil were met. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were able to interact with toys, games and equipment which moved, sang or made a loud noise and they clearly showed their awareness of such stimulation by increased reaction such as smiling or increased body and arm movements. One pupil picked up a talking puppet and put it to his ear several times the better to hear the noise – an achievement that staff had not observed before.

24. Similarly in an outstanding French lesson with Year 8 and 9 pupils, the teacher persistently reinforced their use of adjectives and a noun so that they said 'des chaussettes rouges' or 'une voiture jaune'. There was plenty of time to practise and less confident pupils used touch-operated speakers to identify colour or number if they did not wish to speak. However, before the end of the lesson all had sufficient understanding and confidence to

take part in a simple role-play and asked in the shop for 'des T-shirts rouges' or 'un fleur bleu'. The pupils were totally engrossed in such active learning and, with the excellent spoken French from the teacher and such stimulating resources, made excellent progress.

25. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, or in one lesson, poor, the activities are not well matched to the pupils' needs and abilities. As a result their concentration is limited and they quickly drift away from the task they should be doing. For example in a science lesson on the effect of 'forces', the pupils quickly lost interest when they were unable to use the levers on a marble run game successfully. Some pupils were quickly disruptive and distracted the work of other groups and the teaching.

26. In a poor English lesson, the tasks planned were inappropriate both to the pupils' abilities and their ages. Pupils were patronised and demeaned by a task which lacked a purpose or structure. Because they were not clearly directed the pupils completed little meaningful work. The needs of the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder were not met because tasks were not sufficiently well planned to enable them to do their best. For example a pupil with autistic spectrum disorder did not participate in the writing activity effectively because he was distracted by the movement of other pupils in the classroom.

27. Teachers know their subjects well and generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching overall for pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, different classes within the school, or for meeting most pupils' ability levels within the classes. The needs of the pupils with English as an additional language are well met by support staff in classes. There is, however, an ongoing weakness concerning the teaching of some pupils with additional special needs such as autistic spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although teachers and classroom assistants know the pupils very well, they are not always aware of a suitable range of strategies to help the pupils learn most effectively. For example where pupils with autism are unable to settle because they are over excited, staff do not consistently plan structured activities and strategies which help them to work effectively or systematically. Where these pupils undertake similar activities to noisy and more ebullient pupils, they are unable to concentrate fully. They cannot work well because they are distracted by the general hustle and bustle of the classroom. Although teachers and classroom assistants have received training in the management and teaching of pupils with such difficulties, there is little evidence that this training has impacted upon all the work in classrooms.

28. Where staff have very good levels of awareness they ensure their activities and the organisation of the classroom supports pupils with additional needs effectively, and that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are fully involved in the same activity as the rest of the group. Staff ensure this full involvement in learning by placing pupils appropriately in the centre of activities so that they are physically and academically involved. They then ensure that they can participate in the class activity at an appropriate level – so while higher attaining pupils may be manipulating objects and working at a higher level, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are exploring the same, or closely related, objects and materials. As a result of such good teaching the pupils have equal opportunities to participate rather than being contained within an alternative activity which does not challenge them in the same way or to the same extent. However, the good practice of such teachers is not shared effectively across the school.

29. Where teachers have good relationships with the pupils and understand them well, they are also able to manage any incident of unacceptable behaviour effectively and most lessons proceed without disruption. Pupils know what teachers expect and act accordingly. It is only in a small minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils are not well motivated that their behaviour becomes unacceptable.



30. Teachers make good use of resources in lessons to stimulate the pupils' imagination. A sense of fun is a frequent feature of lessons, such as when the teacher holds up a closed box and asks the pupils 'What do you think I have in my box?' Their sense of excitement means that they pay good attention to the teacher as she reveals a range of toys and other equipment to promote their learning. However, all teachers and classroom assistants have improved their competence significantly and are able to give good, informed support to the pupils. The use of information and communication technology as a tool in other subjects of the curriculum is developing well as a result of staff confidence and the school recognises this as an area of continued development for teachers and classroom assistants. Teaching in specific information and communication technology lessons is very good and learning support staff are skilled in directing pupils' attention to the screen, explaining how to operate the mouse or find their way around the screen. The accommodation limits some aspects of teaching in design and technology but teachers are coping well until the specialist room is refurbished.

31. Despite the significant improvement that the school has made in the standards of teaching and learning, including a significant number of outstanding lessons, some significant weaknesses remain. Most of these have not been effectively addressed since being highlighted at previous inspections and include specific teaching strategies for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Together with the weaknesses in assessment and target setting these issues represent a major area for the school to address with urgency in the future.

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

32. With few exceptions the school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities relevant to the needs of the pupils. It meets statutory requirements in giving pupils a broad experience of the National Curriculum and religious education. However, although internal certificates celebrate the pupils' achievements, there are few opportunities for 16-year-olds to gain nationally recognised accreditation.

33. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs and individual education plans, and these are used well by teachers in planning their lessons to cater for specific needs. Signs and symbols are used well by pupils and staff to ensure equality of access to the full curriculum. However, those pupils on the autistic spectrum or with limited vocal abilities are not always well catered for. They have little access to specific strategies to develop their communication skills, which leads to their frustration and anger. On several occasions, lessons are interrupted by toileting procedures and in some lessons, preparations before and after break-times encroach too heavily on learning time.

34. The school has developed a range of schemes of work which guide lesson planning and pupils' learning through National Curriculum subjects. The school has not completed its work on policies, however, but is currently reviewing them all in the light of recent curriculum requirements. Termly planners are used well to inform lesson plans and these cater well for individual learning needs. National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced, and although numeracy is in the earlier stages of development, literacy is developing well across the curriculum, and some teachers use the recommended lesson structures effectively in teaching other subjects.

35. The school's provision for personal and social education is satisfactory. In addition to specific lessons on personal development, health, hygiene and independence are integrated into all aspects of the school day. For example, pupils are encouraged to tidy up and get their materials ready for lessons after breaktime snacks, which help them to develop their social skills. They learn how to care for and respect their body, and know that personal

hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of germs. They learn to care for others, such as spontaneously checking to ensure that the brake of a wheelchair is properly set. Less mobile pupils develop their self-reliance by transferring themselves from a mat to a chair in physical education, or by getting themselves from one location to another unaided. Sex education and drug use is taught appropriately in relation to the ability and understanding of individual pupils. Citizenship is not yet taught, but relevant aspects are covered in the provision made for careers guidance for 14-year-olds and above.

36. Careers education for pupils aged 14 to 16 years is satisfactory. They receive one lesson per week, which sometimes includes visits from local people such as a school crossing patrol staff or kitchen staff, who talk about and demonstrate their work. There is limited input from the local careers office, but by the age of 16, most pupils participate in work experience within school, such as working in the grounds, the offices or the kitchen. More able pupils occasionally work in classes with younger pupils. All 17 and 18-year-olds participate in college 'link days' to give them a feel for further education.

37. The curriculum provides an effective framework for preparing students for life after school. Despite some weaknesses in the curriculum content of some off-site provision, overall the opportunities for students to study in a mainstream college is a valuable addition and enhancement to the school curriculum. The greatest benefits are the opportunities for students to develop their independence in a larger, busier environment than that of the school.

38. In addition to visiting speakers, the school has developed links with Aston Villa football team, and football coaches regularly visit the school. Pupils receive tickets for football matches during the season and are invited to an annual Christmas party, sponsored by a multi-national company.

39. External agencies also support the curriculum with weekly input from speech therapists and physiotherapists who work with and alongside classroom teachers in developing programmes of work relevant to the personal and physical needs of the individual pupils. This teamwork allows teachers to reinforce the work identified by the therapists throughout the week.

40. The school is limited in the amount of extra curricular activities it can provide because almost all pupils are transported to and from school by local authority transport. However, within these limitations the school provides a satisfactory range of activities including residential visits, day trips and opportunities to join pupils from other schools for sport, music and art events.

41. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. For example, in addition to providing spiritual experiences through assemblies and religious education lessons, pupils in all years are given time to reflect on the feelings of others through drama, where they re-enact the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' or listen to the music of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat' and imagine the feelings of Joseph's father. Where pupils experience the feel of soft materials against their skin in a sensory approach to physical education or English, some normally non-responsive pupils smile with pleasure and indicate they want to enjoy the experience again. Higher achieving pupils, studying the story of Anne Frank, express how they would have felt, what they would have wanted, and compare her conditions to the topical story of a similar Afghani girl.

42. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop a clear understanding of right or wrong, and they often show support to each other in making the right choice. For example, when one girl was being particularly noisy in Year 10, she was gently reminded by a fellow pupil that she needed to listen to the teacher, which indicates a

good awareness of behaviour expectations and consideration for others. In Year 9, pupils orally classify a range of actions as good or bad, and reinforce their learning, by practical classification exercises. The pupils' cultural development is promoted through a study of different countries and ways of life. Music from around the world is used well to create mood in a number of lessons, and pupils listen carefully nodding or tapping to the rhythms. Religious instruction covers a diverse range of creeds and cultures. For example, pupils dress up in saris and taste Indian traditional foods to celebrate the festivals of Eid and Diwali. They have a good knowledge of their own cultures through history, when they re-enact Tudor or Victorian times or celebrate Christian marriage.

43. Although policy documentation is still incomplete, the school has made a great deal of progress with its curriculum since the last inspection. Schemes of work are used well to inform lesson planning. Individual needs are mostly well met and the timetable imbalance has been addressed. The balance of the curriculum is now satisfactory, and the pupils now have access to the full National Curriculum. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.

44. The school has a clear policy on equal opportunities, and most pupils have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum. However, because of the school's organisation of their personal care, some of the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties miss part of the first lesson after lunch. This often means that they miss either the introductory explanation of the lesson, or that they are removed from the classroom when they have become engrossed in an activity.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?**

45. The school continues to provide appropriate support and guidance and properly promotes the welfare, health and safety in a warm and secure environment. All staff show great concern for the well being of pupils and a range of measures exists to promote their development. All staff know the pupils well and have a clear picture of their personal strengths and weaknesses enabling them to provide effective counselling and support. The level of support continues to be supplemented well by the wide range of external agencies. Good levels of co-operation and consultation ensure that the best use is made of their time to support the particular needs of the pupils. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of the pupils and consistently monitor well their personal development and their ability to cope on a day-to-day basis.

46. The school provides satisfactory levels of support, guidance and assessment for the pupils and students and does its best to ensure that they enjoy school and do their best. Staff work together closely to provide pupils and students with a learning environment that is caring, supportive and warm.

47. The school has worked on improving its procedures for planning and assessment across the curriculum in all key stages, particular in its work on the Foundation and Access Curriculum and related baseline assessments. These use the performance descriptions (P scales) to describe early learning and attainment before Level 1 of the National Curriculum to clarify attainment against the Foundation and Access Curriculum. A reasonable start has been made in using this system for on-going assessment in some subjects, e.g. mathematics, but this also is inconsistently applied across the key stages.

48. Some progress has been made in establishing baseline assessments and the on-going assessment of pupils' performance towards their individual targets. However, individual education plans are unsatisfactory. The targets identified to steer pupils' learning are not consistently written in achievable and measurable terms and pupils' progress is therefore difficult to qualify. More importantly, however, are the weaknesses in assessment

concerning the annual review of pupils' needs and statements. These documents are not fully completed, for example, some still identify primary-aged placements and work for pupils who are now approaching 16 years of age. Pupils' individual education plans are reviewed on a termly basis. Parents are invited to become involved in drawing up their children's individual education plans. Because the annual review process has weaknesses, the information which forms the basis of these decisions is insecure and does not help these pupils and students to make progress.

49. The school's assessment, recording and reporting policy does not match current practice. Staff lack the necessary format to identify and assess pupils and students progress effectively. The school has not developed a marking policy. Marking seen is variable in quality and inconsistently used by teachers.

50. Teachers' daily planning is satisfactory and sometimes good. Some plans are detailed and thorough with work that carefully matches pupils' and students' individual needs. On-going records of pupils' progress are often too general to allow teachers to make informed decisions about curriculum planning to meet the needs of individual pupils. Planning, records and other documentation do not consistently identify the role of the classroom assistants or the level of support and guidance they should provide for the pupils.

51. National records of achievement are in place and pupils and students maintain a folder containing examples of good work, certificates, and photographs of their achievements. This provides a unique reference for them during school and after they have left.

52. The school continues to have effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Registers are marked speedily, correctly and efficiently at the start of the school day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact made with parents to explain the absence. Attendance figures are properly aggregated and emerging patterns of absence are noted for follow up. The high level of unauthorised absence was caused by repeated absence from a few pupils.

53. Effective procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are in place and consistently applied by most staff, but there are occasions when inappropriate behaviour is not challenged. The school's policy on restraining pupils features appropriate strategies, although they are rarely necessary. However, the school does not have a specific policy to guide staff on procedures for handling pupils, such as when they need to help them up from the floor or hold on to them for safety reasons. It is important that the school agrees consistent practice in such circumstances and that the dignity of staff and pupils is maintained at all times.

54. Child protection issues continue to be handled effectively. All members of staff are aware of the designated officer and alert to procedures. Health and safety is handled well in the school despite the absence of risk assessment. A policy is in place but the assessment of risk for the pupils and the site has not been undertaken. This is an issue that should be completed without delay. All staff members are safety conscious, as shown during the design and technology lesson, when the use of sharp knives was very well supervised with clear direction and monitoring a strong feature. All members of staff work hard to create a secure environment in which the well being of pupils is promoted effectively. Whilst the school environment is safe there is no appropriate pedestrian exit from the school when the school transport is loading.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

55. Parents are very supportive of the school and confirm that it has many strong features. Virtually all those responding to the questionnaire agree that their children like school. They believe that the teaching and behaviour are good. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. A very high proportion feel that the school works closely with parents and is well led and managed. They also believe that the school expects the children to work hard and is helping them to become mature and responsible

56. A very few parents expressed reservations about the amount of work to be done at home and some did not feel well informed about how their children are getting on. Inspection evidence supports the positive features, but also supports parents' concerns about the information provided. Information to parents varies in quality. The school prospectus is clear and comprehensive. It gives parents a good overview of the school's values and its curriculum. This information is well supplemented by newsletters each half term. In addition meetings are organised to advise parents about the curriculum being covered. Reports to parents provide some good information about what the children understand, know and can do. Difficulties with the assessment of pupils' needs over time results in some parents not being fully informed about their children's long-term achievements and about best possible future provision.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

57. The school has experienced significant difficulties since its inspection in 1998 regards to appointing key staff and in coping with long-term staff illness. The headteacher, governors and key staff have demonstrated their commitment to the school by steering it through the weaknesses identified in previous inspections. They have retained the respect of staff and maintained their morale. The headteacher manages the school well on a daily basis while ensuring the staff and pupils understand the routines of the day. The school runs as an efficient organisation.

58. Despite these strengths, however, weaknesses remain in the leadership and management of the school. Following an earlier inspection in 1997, the school responded positively and speedily to address the weaknesses which placed it in special measures. This achieved an early positive re-inspection decision that special measures were no longer required. Nevertheless the monitoring report in 1999 identified several issues which had not been completely resolved by the school. Two years later a significant number of these concerns still remain. The school has not maintained the pace of improvement despite significantly raising standards of teaching and learning overall.

59. The headteacher and senior team have chosen to take personal responsibility for managing a large proportion of the school's work. Whilst this heavy involvement equips them with an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils and much support from their parents, it also results in a lack of delegation to other staff who consequently leave many tasks, which they could undertake, to the headteacher. Managing so much of the detail of school procedure and documents also means that the headteacher is overworked and, unfortunately, has not identified some weaknesses in the school which affect the quality of pupils' learning. For example the documentation required by the local authority for the review of pupils' statements is very often incomplete. Some areas are completely empty, whilst others, which could be used to improve the focus of teaching and learning, sometimes include just one or two words which do not adequately support the pupils' development. With more detailed completion, based upon an analysis of the pupils' work and progress in lessons, the forms would provide an improved focus for teaching and learning. In some cases, more detail in the documentation is required if the local education authority is to be alerted to review the provision it makes for some pupils.

60. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching have improved since the last series of inspections. The senior team have begun the task of classroom observation but further work in this area has been interrupted by staff sickness. The senior staff and governors have not yet enabled subject co-ordinators to share in such monitoring and a full picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning have yet to be identified. Nevertheless, senior staff are aware of the many strengths in teaching but have not yet put procedures in place to spread good practice throughout the school. Governors also recognise the importance of first-hand observations and are in discussion with the school as to how these should proceed. Other aspects of the monitoring are also unsatisfactory because the school has only recently introduced the recommended procedures for setting targets for its performance and analysing the results. The induction of staff is no more than satisfactory. Although they receive a warm welcome to the school, new or temporary members of staff do not benefit from formal mentoring or support procedures. As a result the development of their skills and any support needs are not formally seconded.

61. Other school-driven procedures for assessing pupils' progress, although improving, are unsatisfactory. The systems in place very often record pupils' experiences at the expense of recording their progress and achievements. Many records and work in files are undated and the amount, nature and frequency of help provided for the pupils to achieve the task, is not recorded. The school has introduced recently published assessment procedures known as the 'P' scales. However, they have not been in place for sufficient time for useful data to be generated. Assessment within these 'P' scales is closely allied to pupils' achievement of their targets, therefore the weaknesses in annual reviews and individual education plans will need close attention before the whole issue of improved assessment can be resolved. The weaknesses in these strategic procedures are partly concerned with the workload currently experienced by those members of the senior team who carry or are covering responsibilities. A significant proportion of such management tasks could be undertaken by other members of the school staff thus providing valuable experiences for them whilst relieving senior staff from their overloads.

62. The headteacher and managers are ably supported and guided by the governing body. Almost all governors are new to the role itself, the school and the pupils and staff. Governors have shown an early belief and commitment to the school. They visit the school regularly and are developing good relationships with staff. Given their unfamiliarity with many aspects of the school, their effectiveness is good. They know their responsibilities well and are, sensibly, moving gradually to their monitoring role. Governors are aware that their current involvement in monitoring the work of the school and identifying its strengths and weaknesses is unsatisfactory. However, the governing body includes several members with expertise and experience to hasten the pace of improvement. Governors have explicit and well know plans to support the school and are well placed to improve the quality of provision overall.

63. The school has sufficient teachers and classroom assistants to meet the needs of the students and the demands of the curriculum. However, recent and long-term staff absences have necessitated the school's reliance on supply teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator is a part-time teacher. There is currently no English co-ordinator and this post is shared between the headteacher and the curriculum co-ordinator on a temporary basis, which again contributes to their overload. Staff training is ongoing and matched to the school's overall needs, for example in first aid and medical training as well as computing skills and subject development. Training in National Literacy Strategies is current, with consultants working alongside teachers in the classroom. The match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

64. Performance management procedures for teaching staff are in place, although the monitoring of teaching is in the early stages of development. However, monitoring procedures for classroom assistants are too informal, which detracts from the value of their

contribution to the school. The school is adequately served by a range of visiting doctors and specialists, and has the service of a speech therapist on two mornings per week.

65. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. At the moment, there is no science laboratory and facilities for design technology are limited. However, the imminent refurbishment programme will significantly improve the current accommodation and storage space. There are adequate classrooms, a hydrotherapy pool, a dining hall, gymnasium, and a central library. The fair-sized sensory room is well equipped and there are adequate changing and toileting facilities. Overall, there is a bright and pleasant atmosphere, with walls attractively displaying photographs and pupils work, which reflects the warm nature of the school. Externally there are sufficient play areas. The overall standard of cleanliness and maintenance is very good, and is a credit to the hardworking premises manager and her staff.

66. Resources are satisfactory. They are limited in design technology, food technology, literacy and science. Although resources in information and communication technology have significantly improved since the previous inspection, the internal networking is not yet fully operational and the school currently has no Internet links. There is an adequate range of specialist lifting equipment and classroom furnishings, and the small but pleasant and well-organised library provides a broad and multicultural range of age and ability appropriate books.

67. The responsibility for co-ordinating special educational needs provision throughout the school rests with a part-time member of staff. However, the complexities of the task is such that this allocation of time is insufficient for the co-ordinator to undertake the role effectively. Annual reviews are all held in the early part of the Autumn term, but do not meet statutory requirements in terms of writing and circulating reports.

68. Financial procedures are secure and ensure that all ordering, administration and stock control methods are checked thoroughly. The school makes every effort to ensure that it gets best prices for any resources it purchases. One unfortunate exception to this good practice is the lack of information regarding the quality of college provision and this omission leaves the school unable to judge how effectively its money was spent. The governors have sensibly accrued a relevant standby sum in the school's budget to fund the planned refurbishment to the school's technology provision. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to raise standards further and hasten the pace of development, the governors and senior staff should:

- a) Improve provision for pupils with additional needs by:
- reviewing pupils' individual education plans and targets so these specific steps of learning are identified;
  - include details of teaching and learning opportunities for such pupils in all lesson plans
  - ensure all staff are equipped with specific skills to aid learning for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties;
  - require staff to keep records of pupils' progress to a consistent format so that achievement and skills are clearly and regularly identified; and
  - set all the above into a clearly defined timeframe which identifies roles and responsibilities and criteria for success.

*(Para refs: 1, 6-10, 18, 27-32, 73-76, 80, 84, 86, 92, 100)*

- b) Ensure pupils are present for all lesson time where appropriate by:
- revising staffing arrangements over lunchtimes;
  - addressing all pupils' personal care needs during the lunch break; and
  - including in individual pupils' educational plans, details of circumstances when they could be taken out of lessons.

*(Para refs: 6-8, 31, 34, 45, 73, 112)*

- c) Improve opportunities for the senior team to better identify the school's strengths and weaknesses by:
- reviewing the roles and responsibilities of all staff and delegating further management tasks where appropriate;
  - enhancing the roles of the subject co-ordinator so that they fully monitor, evaluate and report on standards in the subjects;
  - immediately introducing procedures to ensure that all aspects of the school's work are subject to evaluation and measured against clear criteria;
  - extending the role of the governors in supporting and working in partnership with the school in the above matters; and
  - introducing regular checking procedures to ensure that all agreed responsibilities are undertaken effectively.

*(Para refs: 58-63, 68, 71-76, 88, 93, 124)*

- d) Improve arrangements for annual reviews of individual education plans and targets by:
- extending and improving the role of the SENCO to include the provision of information and advice to staff on all aspects of special educational needs;
  - delegating responsibility for and organisation of the annual reviews to the SENCO with support from the senior team where necessary;
  - ensuring all documentation is fully completed as specified with sufficient detail to ensure that pupils educational needs are identified and statements amended as relevant;
  - establishing a clear, regular and focused approach to addressing pupils' targets in all lessons; and



- informing and consulting parents of such changes and seek their opinion of current provision and future work.

*(Para refs: 6, 7, 9, 10, 20, 31, 49, 68, 73, 75, 76, 87)*

- e) Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the draft health and safety procedures which the chair of governors has just introduced to the school.

*(Para refs: 55, 46)*

## **PROVISION FOR STUDENTS OVER 16**

70. The provision for students in further education is satisfactory overall. For higher attaining students it is good but for students with more complex needs it is no more than satisfactory with some significantly weak aspects. The number of students with complex needs has increased since the last inspection and the long-term absence of the co-ordinator has meant that their provision has not been monitored sufficiently.

71. Achievements are satisfactory overall. For higher attaining students they are good in all areas. For example in English they understand the plot of Romeo and Juliet. They write their own biography of a well-known person of their choice from research in the library. In mathematics they share and divide ascending numbers independently using a tally and record their results. They learn to use money within their Team Enterprise and calculate ingredients when making meals and snacks in 'Lifeskills' lessons. In ICT they open and shut down computers, open files, print and save, move windows on the screen, and use wordprocessing programs successfully without any help. They achieve well in other aspects of the curriculum. For example, they plan, cook and serve a meal such as a beef burger in a bap with salad and fruit salad, with minimal adult supervision. They take part in work experience, for example at a local library and say how it feels to be a worker with a supervisor. They take part in swimming and gymnastics. They know there are different types of news and can describe some of the stories shown on a news bulletin. They can state strategies of three things to do when a friend is upset. They attend college courses, such as painting and decorating, and gain some experience of college and the world of work. The students' achievements and experiences help them make significant preparation for life after school.

72. The achievements of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and students with challenging behaviour are satisfactory overall. They make choices, such as requesting activities or particular drinks or food, with eye pointing and touching photographs and using 'Big Mack' switches to attract attention or say 'No!' They attend to 'cause and effect' programs in ICT showing a preference for those with music. They take part in the Team Enterprise for example, by smelling and feeling lavender bags that are being made to sell. Within cooking they taste and eye point to make choices. They take part in lessons with different music styles, such as Opera, Caribbean and Brass Band. Students with challenging behaviour also take part in college links and this gives them the experience of the provision most of them will attend when they leave school. However strategies developed at school are not always carried out within one of the colleges and this affects their progress in developing social skills and minimising less acceptable behaviours in certain situations. Their achievements are limited when they attend lessons alongside adults whose ages and abilities are wide ranging. This mixture does not help the students improve their skills or develop mature attitudes. Students with physical difficulties are unable to attend college, where there is no wheelchair access.

73. Teaching and learning are good overall and several lessons are very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned with very good use of resources. Activities are motivating and interesting and pupils show great interest. For example in a very good tutorial lesson students take part in an experiment with a cigarette that shows dramatically

how smoke can harm lungs which helps them to inform their choice of whether to smoke or not. The students sit on the edge of their seats as they are so involved in the outcome and they can discuss their decision not to smoke and their concern that some of their parents do smoke. Teachers' expect a high level of involvement from the students and they rise to this challenge by answering questions well. Respect is shown for all the ideas contributed by the students and as a result they feel valued and their behaviour is always very good and on occasions excellent. The involvement of students with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, challenging behaviour and other additional special needs is satisfactory overall, but staff do not consistently think about how each student learns and the tasks are sometimes inappropriate. The quality of education is better within the further education provision in school rather than off site. Staff do not have sufficient training or confidence to consistently carry out approaches for pupils with challenging behaviour. At times students join lessons with older students taken by temporary teachers and their learning is unsatisfactory. When they attend a nearby college, as they are unsupported by staff from the school, the tutor is unable to carry over targets and approaches that are being developed at school.

74. The curriculum is good overall. There is a broad range of relevant experiences, which includes key skills, a business enterprise, vocational opportunities, links with local colleges, work experience and life skills and leisure activities. This provides good opportunities for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A significant weakness within the further education curriculum is the lack of specific focus on improving the students' reading skills. Whilst the students are introduced to many opportunities for reading and writing, they are not actually taught to extend their skills by individual targets and regular opportunities to read to adults individually or in groups. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and challenging behaviour have adapted timetables. However there is a lack of specialist approaches for working with these two groups of pupils. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The students have their work accredited within the 'Towards Independence' and Transitional Challenge programmes and they undertake modules at the further education college and at school. However annual reviews, individual education plans and records of achievement do not give sufficient detail of students' targets or achievements. The number of students has increased and the accommodation is overcrowded and spills over into classrooms in the school, which detracts from the separate nature of the provision.

75. The leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory, despite the absence of the subject leader at present. There are good procedures in place and temporary teachers provide very good teaching. However, monitoring is unsatisfactory and as a result there is a lack of awareness of the unsatisfactory elements of the provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and the quality of college provision. Staff have insufficient training in approaches for those students with additional needs. The additional resources needed for these two groups of pupils are also unsatisfactory.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

\* 68 lessons were observed but only 56 graded on teaching quality as the remainder were not taught by school staff.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	12	14	21	3	1	0
Percentage	9	21	25	38	5	2	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	74
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	50

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.2

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

There were too few pupils to report key stage results. As pupils are working well below national expectations then results are not significant in terms of national data.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	67
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	8

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y14**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	576

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	865,780
Total expenditure	855,031
Expenditure per pupil	11,102
Balance brought forward from previous year	104,132
Balance carried forward to next year	104,881

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	74
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	14	25	4	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	29	46	7	18	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	64	7	4	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	39	14	11	24
The teaching is good.	36	57	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	36	0	12	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	0	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	36	7	7	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	50	0	14	0
The school is well led and managed.	43	43	0	14	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	35	0	11	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	36	0	11	7

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Inspectors broadly agree with the parents' views. Pupils and students generally achieve well but inspectors found that some weaknesses remain in meeting the needs of all its pupils. There is an inconsistent approach to homework which the school is currently planning to improve. Inspectors also agree that not all targets are relevant to either the pupils' ability levels or the work in lessons and that a small minority of pupils could do better. The school is aware that issues from the last inspection remain unresolved covering the needs of some pupils such as those with autistic spectrum disorder.

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

### **ENGLISH**

76. The pupils in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory gains in their overall knowledge and understanding of English. By Year 10, the pupils' achievements in speaking and listening enable them to engage in group discussions on what they did at the weekend or to express their likes and dislikes about storybook characters. Their hand-eye co-ordination skills improve and they begin to trace and follow letters and lines as a prelude to handwriting. Their reading skills improve through structured reading programmes, with poetry anthologies introducing pupils to the wider world of literature. Higher achieving pupils begin to write independently and read simple texts and words aloud, accurately matching spoken words to picture cards. For example, one pupil worked independently at the computer to produce a short passage, which he read to his peers at the end of the session. They listened and asked questions, to which he replied with confidence.

77. By Year 11, the pupils make at least satisfactory and often good gains. The majority make good progress in speaking and listening, and some engage in good two-way conversations with staff and visitors, demonstrating their understanding of the subject being discussed. They demonstrate concern for others, such as when one pupil checked to make sure the brake was correctly applied to another's wheelchair, or in polite prompts to listen to the teacher. Those pupils without vocal skills use electronic pads to communicate their answers. Listening skills are further promoted through story time and some pupils organise themselves to use story tapes. Higher achieving pupils develop their writing skills with short sentences on a range of topics, and they make good use of a range of computer programmes to support their learning. However, handwriting styles are unformed and much work is based on copied or traced exercises. The majority of pupils read or recognise words and texts with fluency and accuracy, and are happy to demonstrate their skills by matching picture cards to words or volunteering to read to visitors. Regular reading sessions, using commercial reading schemes, are well recorded and indicate steady progress over time. Literature is well promoted, for example, the pupils follow up their reading of Steinbeck's novel, *Of Mice or Men*, with their own drama presentation and theatre visits. They consolidate their current work on the 'Diary of Anne Frank', by keeping their own diaries or through newspaper articles such as that on the diary of an Afghan girl in similar circumstances to Anne Frank. By Year 11, a small number of higher achieving pupils are working at or near National Curriculum Level 1.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. One third of all lessons are good or better. One lesson was poor. The best lessons are well balanced and structured, and appropriately paced to meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, within a lesson, a range of English and literacy activities is well promoted through one-to-one and group work, with classroom assistants providing satisfactory support. Teachers adopt a multi-sensory approach, and their good use of resources and hands-on artefacts ensures that pupils of all ability levels are fully included in the session. Staff set suitable challenges and most pupils know and respond well to established routines, such as time to read, time to write or time to use the computer. In good teaching pupils having complex learning needs are effectively supported by classroom assistants. However, the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum are not always well met, and they do not have access to any specialist communications strategies to help them extend their skills and confidence. Teachers promote personal initiative and social skills by encouraging the pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning in organising their materials or clearing away at the end of a session. Where lessons are less than satisfactory, the lesson content does not match its planning, and the resultant lack of structure and balance impedes the pupils' learning. In all years lesson planning is good, and is well informed by termly subject

planners. Individual learning needs are generally well met through group and one to one work, and staff have a good knowledge of the pupils abilities. Relationships between staff and adults are very good, and pupils respond well to the atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Homework is set for reading and word recognition. Although parents are generally pleased at the steady overall progress which they observe in their children several felt pupils could complete more reading and literacy tasks at home.

79. The teaching of basic literacy skills is developing gradually in other subject areas, such as mathematics and science. Staff training is ongoing, with consultants occasionally working alongside classroom teachers in an advisory capacity. For example, most teachers structure their lessons to the recommended format of the National Literacy Hour, and key vocabulary in symbols and words is used to support a range of subjects in wall displays and during lessons. Literacy resources such as Big Books for whole class sessions are available for some subjects, but currently, the range of these is limited.

80. Due to recruitment difficulties, there is no English or literacy co-ordinator. The post is currently covered by the headteacher and the curriculum co-ordinator. Whilst this is satisfactory as a short-term arrangement, it has slowed down the development of the department. Currently there are no English or literacy policies although schemes of work are in place. Nevertheless, within their shared capacity, the management team monitor the development and teaching of both subjects and ensure that staff training needs are appropriately met. Procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress are in place and are satisfactory. However, there are no exemplars of the pupils work and their attainment is not yet matched against national standards or P-levels. Resources are satisfactory, and include a central library with computer facilities, although there is no Internet link. There is an adequate range of books and computer programmes to promote literacy and English at all levels. The subject is well supported by a speech therapist who attends two mornings a week and often works in classrooms alongside teaching staff.

81. There has been good improvement in English since the last inspection. The standard of teaching has improved and the imbalance of English in the timetable has been redressed. The school has introduced its literacy programme, and this is developing well for Years 7 to 11, but is less effective for students at Post-16. There is now a central library, which is frequently used as a reading and literacy base.

## **MATHEMATICS**

82. The satisfactory standards achieved in mathematics by the school at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The current achievements and progress made by pupils in relation to their prior attainment and in relation to individual learning targets is satisfactory. The impact of the National Numeracy Strategy in Key Stages 3 and 4, and the development of the Foundation and Access Curriculum by the school have assisted in maintaining standards.

83. By Year 9 pupils have made progress in relation to their prior learning. They show an interest in number. Higher attainers can count confidently up to ten and perform calculations with number up to ten. They recognise numbers and sets and can record simple data in tally form. They use computer programs independently and with confidence to match and sort shapes and sets. Pupils with more profound learning difficulties are able to demonstrate choices of equipment by focussing on objects and tracking movement. They learn to touch and manipulate objects with growing confidence. By Year 11 pupils can write number bonds up to ten and count to 100 in fives and tens. They can perform simple calculations using these units. They understand the principles of measurement and can select problem-solving strategies to estimate distances. Where teaching is good pupils with more profound learning difficulties are able to respond to mathematical games with gaze and gesture. In shopping

games they are supported to indicate choices and to identify numbers of items from a list. Post-16 pupils can tell the time accurately to the hour and half past the hour using an analogue clock, they recognise and can name basic two and three-dimensional shapes. They recognise and can use numbers and perform simple division results. They can conduct a survey and record their results. They are able to explain and discuss their work. Students with more profound learning difficulties are able to share cards and make and match sets of small numbers when they are well supported. At other times they are less well included and are not realistically challenged.

84. Pupils' and students attitudes towards mathematics are always at least satisfactory or better and sometimes very good. Pupils from Years 7 to 9 enthusiastically participate in number games and songs at the beginning of lessons. This focuses their attention and promotes learning. In Years 10 to 11 pupils' response to mathematics is good. Pupils are able to stand in front of the class and show their classmates their examples of number bonds. They are praised by their classmates which enhances their self esteem. Post-16 pupils are eager to participate in mental arithmetic mathematics games and demonstrate obvious enjoyment. Most pupils and students are well behaved. They are able to apply themselves to their tasks and respond well to praise and encouragement from staff. Some pupils have individual behaviour programmes and are targeted with support from the teacher or learning support assistant. Where these programmes are consistently applied pupils are able to make good progress and are fully involved at an appropriate level in the learning activities in the lessons. When the individual behaviour programme for a pupil is not applied consistently opportunities for learning are not taken and the pupil or student disturbs the learning of others. Additionally pupils with autism are not consistently well supported and sometimes have difficulty concentrating. In most lessons, pupils, students and staff demonstrate good working relationships. Pupils and students are supportive of each other's learning. They listen carefully to staff and pupils and students in plenary sessions.

85. The quality of teaching is sound across the three key stages. Teaching is very slightly better in Years 7 to 9 when it is sometimes very good. Lessons are generally well planned and reflect the structure of the successful strategies for teaching mathematics identified in the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons begin with activities which focus pupils' attention on mathematics, usually a mathematics song or counting game, then the class divides into working groups to tackle the theme of the lesson at an appropriate level and finishes with a plenary session. On some occasions the songs and counting games within lessons do not reflect the actual age of the pupils and can be demeaning, especially when nursery rhymes are used. When lessons are well planned the learning objectives of all pupils are met. In their planning teachers identify the different learning needs of pupils within their classes and set work accordingly, however, teaching is not always consistently well targeted to ensure that learning takes place. Good planning also included tasks for the support assistants which is well targeted and promotes learning. The balance between whole-class and group or individual work is good when pupils' and students' motivation is well supported. Teaching assistants have a good understanding of what is required and who are effective in ensuring that pupils and students have equal access to the curriculum is satisfactory.

86. A curriculum co-ordinator for mathematics has been appointed since the last inspection and a draft policy has been produced. This is a good document which is planned to promote consistently high standards in mathematics and will support the delivery of the subject. Much hard work has been done in establishing a Foundation and Access Curriculum in mathematics which identifies the learning needs of most pupils in the school and enables staff to assess pupils' and students' progress from baseline assessments. The co-ordinator has identified the areas for further development and the curriculum is being modified to accommodate the learning needs and assessment of all pupils and students. A good start has been made on identifying the pupils' ability where they are working below



Level 1 of the National Curriculum and on their future work. However, the link between the targets within individual education plans and the learning objectives specified for pupils and students in lesson planning is not always secure and this impedes consistency and progress. Some learning support assistants are involved in on-going assessment of pupils and students within lessons, but this practice is not consistent across the key stages. When learning support assistants perform this function the teacher has a clearer picture of pupils' and students' attainment and progress. The co-ordinator has made a good start on monitoring the planning of mathematics by other teachers, but has not yet been able to monitor teaching or scrutinise pupils' and students' work.

87. Resources for mathematics are adequate. The co-ordinator has identified resources that will further develop the subject. In classrooms there are displays of numbers and mathematical symbols though there are few examples of pupils' or students' work on display. In almost all lessons some use is made of computers. The school has an appropriate range of software that allows some higher attainers to work independently for sustained periods of time and other pupils to work with the support of an adult. This assists in the development of mathematical concepts and increases pupils' and students' pride in their work and presentation.

## **SCIENCE**

88. Overall pupils' achievements in science are satisfactory. In lesson they often make good progress, especially when motivated by existing practical work.

89. By Year 9, more able pupils are aware of different materials for different uses, for example, for building houses or making shoes. With help, they carry out experiments to find out which materials are best for specific uses. They know that candles, light bulbs and torches all give out light. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can explore different materials, and some match symbols to these, when they receive relevant support to do so. They operate a torch and track the light. Pupils learn much about changing substances, the more able recognising that some change can be reversed, for example, melting chocolate, while other changes are irreversible, for example, when corn is popped. Photographic evidence records visits to a sea life centre and pond dipping, together with follow up work. Teachers and assistants do not regularly annotate work so that the quality and quantity of support is identified. Lack of annotation means that pupils' learning in these areas is not clear. By Year 11, more able pupils recognise some of the properties of leaves as being shape, size and colour. They identify roots, leaves, bulbs and seeds. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties have experiences of handling a variety of leaves, noting the different textures. In learning about forces, pupils know the terms push and pull, while less able pupils show understanding by demonstrating the movements. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their individual abilities and develop a basic understanding of how to conduct experiments and fair tests.

90. Overall teaching is satisfactory across year groups with many good features. Lessons range from unsatisfactory to very good. The best lessons are well planned to meet the needs of individual pupils. Language is repeated and reinforced with sign and symbol to enable pupils to become familiar with words and concepts. Pupils are fully involved in lessons, particularly in practical activities which both reinforces their learning and adds to their enjoyment. For example, in a very good lesson on change, pupils were looking at ways in which changes take place while a cake is made. Because they were encouraged to look at the different ingredients and were involved in mixing, they were fascinated by the changes taking place. One pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties was clearly aware of the 'disappearance' of the liquid into the mixture, while more able pupils realised that, once the cake was mixed, it would be impossible to take out the liquid. Because they are involved, pupils are interested and concentrated well, often for considerable lengths of

time. Good use is made of sensory activities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in the best lessons, so that they, too become involved. Pupils often work well together in paired and grouped activities and are well supported by learning support assistants where necessary. Several more able pupils volunteer to work with, and to help, less able pupils, which provides good support for their personal development. Where teaching is less successful pupils are not fully involved because the activities are not always appropriate. Challenging behaviour is not well dealt with, and the lesson is disrupted for all pupils. Some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are not always fully involved in the lessons, because of a lack of appropriate structures. When equipment does not work properly, pupils lose interest and concentration.

91. Since the last inspection a new science co-ordinator has been appointed. She has worked very hard to develop a scheme of work which meets the needs of all pupils. This is now almost complete. It is based on the advice from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority about the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, and links into the National Curriculum for the more able pupils. Assessments have been carried out this year to ensure that teachers are aware of exactly what pupils know, understand and can do in science. Recording of assessments at present is limited as the record sheets refer only to some of the targets for pupils. However, when the schemes of work are completed, a new format for also have been identified with a focus on all the appropriate targets. The co-ordinators role is being developed and, as recommended in the last inspection, she is able to monitor the curriculum and has started observing lessons. This role still requires further development to ensure that pupils have appropriate experiences and make good progress. The present timetable does not allow for the co-ordinator to teach the subject, so she does not have the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the new scheme of work at first hand and this is unsatisfactory. Progress is being made with resourcing the subject, and equipment is being collected as the scheme of work is completed. The co-ordinator is providing very useful support to colleagues in providing resources and other support materials for each module. The lack of a science laboratory places some limitations on the curriculum for pupils, and means that teachers have to carry resources around the school. Despite some difficulties with staffing, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection by providing an improved scheme of work.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

92. During the course of the inspection it was possible to observe only two lessons in Key Stage 4. Pupils' and students' work is displayed throughout most parts of the school. However, too often the display does not sufficiently promote work advantageously, therefore is not well placed to promote the self-esteem of pupils and students. Pupils' work is satisfactory overall and developed using a wide range of artwork in their portfolios and art books in all year groups. In Years 7 to 9 pupils explore texture and make collages using different types of coloured paper. They develop this work using a range of textured fabrics and materials. They examine the work of famous artists and match colours and textures against a painting. Art books contain evidence of good efforts to mix paints to make colours and use a range of brushstrokes to form patterns. Pupils have used a computer to effectively generate clipart images and to produce striking compositions using colour shape and lines. In work on landscapes pupils made good use of a digital camera to capture scenes to add to a collage. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have had experience of portraiture and have studied the proportions of the human body. They have produced clipart and used this in their collage work. They have examined colour through painted compositions. However, evidence in portfolios demonstrates an over emphasis on simple commercially produced colouring exercises which does not increase artist knowledge. Pupils in Years 10 to 11 are currently working on producing thumb pots. All pupils demonstrate enjoyment of the processes. Pupils with more profound learning difficulties are fully and effectively involved in the lesson, they manipulate the clay into different shapes and explore texture. High attainers

are able to produce a pot for firing and demonstrate a good awareness of most techniques. Behaviour is very good in lessons and pupils show interest and respond well to the tasks. The subject allows pupils the opportunity to explore a material in a calm atmosphere and celebrate the work of their classmates.

93. Teaching is satisfactory with some good lessons. Individual lessons are well planned and the activities are appropriate for the age and abilities of the pupils. In lessons resources are well organised and there is good use of praise. Learning support assistants are well used to support individual pupils who have the greatest physical difficulties. However, specific techniques to develop the skills of autistic pupils are not in place.

94. The curriculum fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. In both key stages work is planned and taught in themes for each term. There is a policy for art and design, this is dated 1994 and there is no evidence of any recent revision to this. However, a recent scheme of work for both key stages has been created including plans for appropriate areas of study, which are differentiated. Risk assessments are not carried out for art and design lessons.

95. The art room contains a good range of resources and materials including a kiln. However, the room is not sufficiently well organised to allow full use of all facilities for the benefit of pupils and students. The school has imminent plans to improve the provision and has maintained the satisfactory provision reported at the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. The provision for design technology and the improvement since the last inspection are good. The new format for the foundation, access and National Curriculum levels within the curriculum is almost complete and provides a good framework for teachers. Interesting projects motivate pupils and give them an interesting context in which to learn different skills. The absence of the co-ordinator has affected the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. There is a draft policy.

97. Achievements are satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils have experiences using resistant materials, textiles and food. In Year 7 higher attaining pupils make masks from 'Modroc' moulds over their faces and choose soft materials and colours and glue them onto their masks with some physical prompting. They hammer nails onto wood independently and varnish bird table trays they have been helped to make. Lower attaining pupils gain a tactile experience of a variety of materials such as felt, cotton and fur. They eye point and reach out to choose between soft materials and colours from a choice of two to make a mask and with hand-over-hand help they co-actively saw wood and sand paper their bird table. They make satisfactory progress and by age 16 higher attaining pupils make a sensory game, choosing and researching the theme, for example, of cars. They use a ruler to measure, drill and saw with verbal prompting. They express a preference for fabrics and types of hats. They select and prepare a number of different toppings to design their own pizza and chop the vegetables. Lower attaining pupils show a preference for hard or smooth surfaces to rub or bang. They co-operate in holding tools when making things and sample different foods showing preferences.

98. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in food technology. Expectations are high and all pupils are given the opportunity to try out different tools independently or with hand-over-hand help. Demonstrations are given on how to use or not use the tools and pupils show that they have remembered this from previous lessons. Clear instructions are given and pupils know what they are expected to do. They behave well and carry out tasks sensibly. On occasions pupils have to wait while others practise skills. They do this patiently but this reduces the amount of time they have to carry out practical

activities. In food technology there is a good emphasis on processes. For example, pupils of all abilities are able to handle packets, look at photos of packets, as they taste ingredients when they are preparing custard. All pupils are involved in discussions on food and cooking preferences including lower attaining pupils and questions are carefully targeted. The needs of all pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder are less well catered for.

99. A curriculum rewrite is almost complete and is proving satisfactory. There are interesting projects for the pupils to design and make using resistant materials, textiles and food. Assessment is also satisfactory and when plans to include the 'P' scales to the baseline assessment and end of module assessments have been completed they will ensure that work builds on skills, knowledge and understanding already acquired. The school is aware that ICT needs to be developed and staff are looking forward to the benefits of the Internet. The accommodation at present is in need of renovation and presents some health and safety risks which have not been assessed by the school. However, refurbishment is soon to take place for new food technology and design technology rooms. The resources are also unsatisfactory at present, but when the new rooms are being used and the curriculum is complete, resources will be purchased to match the modules.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

100. Pupils study Geography up until the end of Year 11. There was limited evidence available from pupils' work and teachers' records, but this indicated that pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In the one lesson seen during the inspection pupils made satisfactory progress.

101. By Year 9 the higher attaining pupils are becoming aware of the weather, and know about the changing seasons. They are able to say what the weather is like, and select a symbol correctly to display on the board. When learning about volcanoes, these pupils are able to use some geographical terms, for example, lava, flames, ash and eruption. Some are able to identify countries such as England and the USA on a map, and make sensible estimates of the time it would take to travel between these countries. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties react positively to stimuli which are hot and cold. Some listen to music which is linked to the theme being taught, and also briefly watch the computer screen when a volcano is shown or when there are pictures of different types of weather. However, they are highly reliant on help to take an active part in making a display about volcanoes. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils identify buildings in the locality; which are places of work, for example, a post office, supermarket, factory and bank.

102. Because of timetable constraints it was possible to see only one geography lesson during the inspection, so no judgement about teaching can be made. Some visits in the local area have been made to support understanding of the curriculum, for example, to shops, factories and rivers but, as at the last inspection, this is limited by transport difficulties.

103. Since the last inspection there has been a change in the timetabling of geography, and it is now taught throughout the year, rather than on a carousel basis as previously. This enables pupils to build their skills and knowledge on a more regular basis. Progress has been made with developing a new scheme of work with objectives for pupils of different ability levels. Topics selected are taught on a rolling programme over three years for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and over two years for those in Years 10 to 11. The contents of the scheme are suitably based on the advice from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority about pupils with learning difficulties, and link clearly into the National Curriculum for pupils who are more able. The topics, which have been developed by the co-ordinator with support from the special educational needs co-ordinator, give a good basis on which teachers can plan their lessons. Teachers are now clear about what pupils know, understand and can do, in

geography, having completed a baseline assessment for all pupils. At present, the recording system in use gives limited information, and work samples are not annotated to clarify the level of help a pupils requires to complete a task. However, a new system of assessment and recording is being developed in the school, for which introduction is imminent and will focus on all the objectives for a topic, rather than just on one or two. At present the role of the co-ordinator remains very limited. There is some opportunity for monitoring the curriculum, but no monitoring of teaching. Resources have increased significantly since the last inspection, and it is hoped to purchase more as the new scheme of work is developed.

## **HISTORY**

104. Pupils study history up until Year 11. Limited evidence available from pupils' work and records suggests that pupils' achievements overall are satisfactory. In the two lessons seen, pupils made at least satisfactory progress.

105. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils begin to develop a sense of time, talking about then and now, today and yesterday. They are able to draw up a timeline of different generations of a family. They know something of the way peoples' lives changed after Second World War, for example, in fashion and music. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties investigate artefacts such as gas masks, and show interest in these, and in photographs. More able pupils recall that they are learning about the Romans and understand that mosaics are made up of many pieces of tile. They identify from pictures which are mosaics. By Year 11, more able pupils know something of the Norman Conquest, and are able to name the Battle of Hastings, King William and King Harold, and are aware of the countries from which they came. They describe the clothing worn in medieval times, talking about materials and textures. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore objects linked to the topics by touch. Some use symbol and gesture to describe the clothing and are involved at an appropriate level.

106. Because of the constraints of the timetable, only two lessons were seen during the inspection, so it is not possible to make an overall judgement about teaching. However, in the lesson seen, which focused on the Romans, pupils listened carefully and enjoyed the activities which included 'digging' for, and then making, mosaics. There have been few visits to the local area in support of the curriculum, mainly because of lack of transport. As at the last inspection, this means that opportunities are missed which could enhance pupils' understanding of the subject.

107. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in the development of a scheme of work relevant to all the pupils at the school. The scheme is based on the advice from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in relation to pupils with learning difficulties, and links into the National Curriculum for more able pupils. There is now a cycle of appropriate topics for pupils, and the subject is taught on a weekly basis which is an improvement on the last inspection when it was taught in only one term in each year. Progress has been made in finding out what pupils know, understand and can do in history, with a baseline assessment having been completed for all pupils. Recording of progress is still limited, as record sheets do not refer to all aspects of the subject, and work in portfolios is not annotated to explain the context. However, there are now plans to use the objectives in the scheme of work as the basis of assessments, and this should give teachers a clear view of the progress which pupils make. The role of the co-ordinator is not yet fully developed. She is able to monitor the curriculum to some extent by looking at lesson plans, but there is no observation of teaching in the subject. Resources are being developed in tandem with the scheme of work, and these are much improved. Pupils make use of information and communication technology to obtain information and for activities which help their understanding.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

108. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the improvement since the last inspection are good. The curriculum co-ordinator together with the ICT co-ordinator have provided good leadership and management to improve resources, train staff and raise standards. All pupils have at least one lesson of ICT each week and are well supported by teachers and assistants. The profile of ICT within the school has been successfully raised and high attaining pupils' self-esteem has been increased by their awareness of their own abilities to use ICT. Lower attaining pupils have good opportunities to learn that they can effect things themselves by using switches.

109. Achievements are good at all year groups and by the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils explore the use of a CD-ROM independently. They close down the computer with a minimal of prompting. Lower attaining pupils are helped by partners to operate tape recorders with a 'Big Mack' switch. They operate 'touch screens' by reaching out and turn towards the pictures and sound on the computer, laughing with pleasure. They continue to make good progress in Years 10 to 11 and by the end of the key stage higher attaining pupils can start up and shut down the computer and use a range of software programs, accessing them from icons on the start up screen with very little prompting. They can word process their names and print them out.

110. Teaching and learning are good for all age groups, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Some teachers have very good subject knowledge and present work for pupils with different learning difficulties very well. The management of pupils' behaviour is very good. For example, in a very good lesson, the teacher helps the pupils to understand that ICT 'makes things happen', which is demonstrated with the use of light switches, fans, radio and tape and battery operated toys and computers. Pupils are very interested in their ability to affect things and they concentrate well and smile, clearly enjoying operating different equipment. Lessons are well planned with excellent choice and use of equipment, which is stimulating and motivating for the pupils who gain a good understanding that they are 'making things happen'. Lessons are planned for higher and lower abilities within sets of these abilities. Good questioning of more able pupils leads them to understand about batteries. Within other lessons, teachers support pupils to use computers to write and print out their 'news'. The achievements of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are severely restricted when they are removed from lessons so that their personal care needs can be met. In one ICT lesson a pupil missed the most exciting part of the teaching when this occurred. Over a sustained period pupils miss significant amounts of teaching time.

111. The curriculum and assessment are satisfactory overall. An appropriate curriculum is being written that incorporates communication, data handling, control and modelling and Foundation, Access and National Curriculum levels. Baseline Assessment has been completed and there are plans to incorporate the 'P' Scales and provide end of module assessment systems. The staffing is satisfactory. There are several teachers with good subject knowledge, combined with good experience of teaching ICT to pupils with learning difficulties. Training has been given to teachers and learning support assistants in the use of hardware and software applications and they are gaining in confidence. Some staff are becoming very skilled. Further training is planned for the Autumn term this year. The speech and language therapist works with pupils with complex needs incorporating communication and ICT. However there is no technician and as a result the co-ordinator has to spend time doing work of this level.

112. The resources have been raised from a very unsatisfactory position to appropriate for the curriculum with plans to develop further. All computers are part of a network and they will be on the Internet very soon. The use of 'touch screens', a good range of software, 'Big

Mack' switches, 'cause and effect' software and other switches to operate sensory activities is good. The accommodation is satisfactory. There is a sensory room and the school has prioritised the development of ICT well. There is a good strategic development plan for a four-year period, showing how much the school has achieved and how they intend to extend the use of ICT in the future.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

113. The school now makes satisfactory provision for teaching French to pupils in Years 7 to 11 and meets statutory requirements. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 study a range of basic French vocabulary which is meaningful to their lives. They make good progress when they are well taught and when teachers use resources imaginatively to help them understand. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make particularly good progress and identify a range of everyday items by colour and number. They take part in simple role playing exercises by asking another pupils for 'des fleurs bleus' or 'une voiture jaune'. In an outstanding lesson with Years 8 and 9 the teacher made excellent use of resources to help the pupils use two adjectives and a noun, such as 'des chaussettes rouges'. The pupils' use of the actual socks helped them understand and they were highly successful in identifying and using the target vocabulary for numbers and colours.

114. Less confident pupils use a touch controlled speech recorder to select the object or colour. The highest attaining pupils say 'Je voudrais les chaussettes rouges'. All pupils are highly motivated by such activities and behave very well, because they want to do well. The teacher is highly skilled in organising activities which cater for all the pupils' needs.

115. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievements are satisfactory. They demonstrate their knowledge of French vocabulary to the whole school in assembly. In a fast moving song they quickly pick up and display articles such as 'la gomme', 'le sac', 'le cahier' and 'les journaux'. The performance has been carefully choreographed by the teacher so that each pupil takes a full part and the whole school benefits from listening and joining in with some simple phrases. Such practical involvement boosts the pupils' self-esteem as they are aware of how much they have learnt and how well they have performed. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills in simple French, but the consistency of teaching and of pupils' achievements varies considerably within the key stages. The school has not yet provided consistently high quality teaching in this subject, but has made good progress in providing a realistic curriculum since the last inspection.

### **MUSIC**

116. It was only possible to observe parts of two lessons during the inspection and it is inappropriate to make judgements on such a small sample. However, inspectors were able to talk to staff, to see songs and instruments used to enliven stories and physical education and to talk to the visiting therapist.

117. The school does not provide sufficient focused and challenging opportunities for the pupils to develop and improve their skills and understanding. The music co-ordinator has only recently taken responsibility for the subject. Whilst she is an experienced teacher, there is no subject specialist within the school. Pupils are not challenged by music. Whilst they enjoy singing well and know songs repeatedly, the quality of current schemes of work and lesson plans show that teachers do not consistently identify small steps of learning for pupils to achieve higher standards. Lesson plans are not effective in promoting pupils' skills in singing, listening, playing and appraising their work.

118. The new co-ordinator has already started a review of provision and is well placed to improve the subject further. The school has begun to address the weaknesses found in music at the previous inspection but has not yet secured high quality provision for its pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

119. The provision for physical education overall is good and the improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The subject leader teaches some aspects of the subject but has only limited opportunities to observe others teaching and so is unable to lead by example and raise the profile of physical education in the school. As a result some aspects of the teaching for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties remain unsatisfactory. The provision for swimming and football coaching for higher attaining pupils is very good.

120. Achievements are satisfactory in all year groups. For higher attaining pupils they are good and for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties they are satisfactory. By the age of 11, higher attaining pupils can control a basketball and bounce it with the flat of their hands. They explore different ways of travelling across the floor and can sequence three movements with minimal verbal prompting. Lower attaining pupils respond to being helped to move their body parts, at a variety of speeds, and experience the rhythmic feel of different dance music. By the age of 16, higher attaining pupils are well co-ordinated and can hit a tennis ball or shuttlecock over a low net and have a short rally with other pupils. They can 'star jump' on the floor off a springboard and begin to control their landing. They show skill in throwing, running, jumping, javelin and long jump events in athletics. In swimming, they improve their diving technique and recover objects from the floor of the pool. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties roll balls towards other pupils while lying over a wedge. They improve their confidence in the water.

121. Teaching and learning are good overall. For higher attaining pupils they are good and excellent for swimming. For lower attaining pupils they are satisfactory overall. For example in excellent joint sessions with a swimming instructor and a teacher from the school, good warm up practice is followed by emphasis on safety implications and rules in the pool. Very good diving technique is demonstrated and as a result several pupils show immediate improvement in their technique. Individual objectives are met by both higher and lower attaining groups and the session is well organised to make maximum benefit of the pool instructor and the class teacher, who is in the water with the pupils. In other physical education lessons, the physiotherapist and her assistant lead work with lower attaining pupils. This provision helps the pupils with physiotherapy but both sessions in the week, one of which is timetabled as 'dance' session, are similar. Staff work on a one-to-one basis with the pupils and move their bodies and position them over wedges. Pupils tolerate this well and some show enjoyment. There is a good relationship between pupils and staff and much rewarding with praise. However, the session of 'dance' does not provide them with different experiences. On some occasions the dignity of the students is compromised when staff discuss them inappropriately with others in their presence.

122. The curriculum for higher attaining pupils is satisfactory, but schemes of work are not yet fully completed. There is provision for pupils to take part in gymnastics competitions and the provision for swimming is a strength. Aston Villa Football Club members come to the school regularly and coach the pupils and give the school tickets to visit matches. For lower attaining pupils the curriculum is unsatisfactory. These pupils do not have their entitlement to the full range of physical education experiences. 'Dance' sessions provide them with physiotherapy. Baseline assessment has been carried out and 'P' scales are being introduced. The leadership and management are satisfactory as the subject leader provides a good vision for the subject and leads by enthusiasm and commitment. However, there is a need to develop the curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.



## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

123. Due to timetable arrangements, only two lessons were observed during the inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to make a judgement on the standard of teaching. However, an analysis of the pupils' work in all years indicates that they make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of multi-faiths. They are aware of major religious festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Passover, Christmas and Easter, and photographs record their celebration of these events and the teachers' multi-sensory approach. For example, they taste festive food or dress in Hindi costumes. They know the difference between good and bad things, and classify these by matching symbol cards under relevant headings. Higher achieving pupils copy or trace words and simple sentences describing events from the bible, such as Joseph's return home. There is photographic evidence of role-play to reinforce learning, such as the re-enactment of the Good Samaritan.

124. Departmental documentation is satisfactory, and the curriculum follows the locally agreed syllabus. Modules of work are timed to coincide with major events, and the pupils' progress is efficiently recorded and matched against pre-national curriculum levels of attainment. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, and good wall displays of the pupils' work acknowledge the value of their achievements. The school has continued to provide the relevant curriculum and quality of provision found at the previous inspection.