

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SEVERNDALE SCHOOL**

Shrewsbury

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123634

Headteacher: Mr Chris Davies

Reporting inspector: Mr Tom Smith  
21044

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 January 2002

Inspection number: 192250

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:	2 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lynn Hough
Date of previous inspection:	27.01.97

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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21044	Mr T Smith	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9883	Mr B Silvester	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18206	Ms E Mildner	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18354	Mrs R Onions	Team inspector	Foundation Stage	How high are standards?
23886	Mr D M <sup>c</sup> Carthy	Team inspector	Music Religious education	How well are pupils taught?
22729	Mr R Arnold	Team inspector	Science Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
16747	Mr A Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Post-16	How well does the school care for its pupils?
15606	Mrs C Hill	Team inspector	Design and technology Art Equal opportunities	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Severndale is a special school that provides daily education for pupils aged from 2-19 years who have a range of needs. These include: moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; profound and multiple learning difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; autistic spectrum disorders; physical disability and speech and language disorders. Some pupils also have severely challenging behaviour. There are 206 pupils on roll who are drawn from the county of Shropshire. This is a large special school when compared nationally. On admission, the majority of pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN). Some children within the Foundation Stage undergo assessment prior to a statement being issued. The majority of pupils are of white European origin and no pupil has English as a second language. On admission, all pupils have very low attainment; they are also admitted at all times of the year as well as into all Years of the school. The school has an active policy of placing pupils into mainstream schools wherever possible. The school, based on two sites, is the result of an amalgamation seven years ago of two previous schools that were located in close proximity.

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

Severndale is a good school and has many strengths, which it uses to benefit its pupils. Pupils achieve well overall in relation to their special needs. The quality of teaching is good and this makes a positive impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher sets high standards and provides clear and purposeful leadership that has improved the school since the last inspection. He is well supported by a talented senior management team. Together they set a strong emphasis on good achievement. This develops pupils' and students' communication, personal and social skills alongside their academic achievement. The majority of pupils who enter Severndale School have very low attainment and with limited experience of previous success. Staff are positive and caring in their work with pupils and by the time pupils and students leave they are thoroughly well prepared for the next stage of their learning or life. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher's good leadership and an effective senior management team create an environment in which all pupils and students prosper both socially and academically.
- The good teaching and care of pupils has a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Pupils and students have good attitudes to the school and they are willing to work hard because of the good relationships they have with teachers and support staff. These are underpinned by very good welfare arrangements.
- There is good provision for children under five as well as for students over sixteen.
- The systems for financial control and planning are very good. The procedures for establishing best value result in high quality resources that are used well to raise pupils' and students' achievement.
- Parents are very well informed about the progress made by their child and this impacts well on the involvement they have in the education of their son or daughter.

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

- The curriculum; so that it sets higher expectations for pupils and students, which teachers will use to further improve the quality of teaching.
- Assessment outcomes to be analysed more effectively so that standards of achievement can be raised further through better tracking and higher expectations.
- The current procedures for the funding of the school.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in January 1997. At that time there were a number of positive aspects reported. These included relationships between staff and pupils, the moral and social education of pupils and students and the leadership of the headteacher and governing body. Since that time, the school has successfully addressed all the key issues within the report and has gone on to develop further strengths. The overall standard of teaching is good and provision for children in the Foundation Stage as well as

post-16 students has improved. Weaknesses in providing a broad and well-balanced curriculum have been addressed, although the school recognises that further work remains to be done in enabling this to further raise standards. The accommodation has been substantially improved. Transport arrangements have improved and pupils and students arrive at school on time and are disembarked safely. Overall there has been a good level of improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By Year R	By Year 6	By Year 11	By Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	B	C	C	C	very good A
reading	B	C	C	C	good B
writing	B	C	C	C	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	A	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Pupils and students achieve satisfactorily in relation to the degree of their special educational needs. Standards have risen in pupils' communication skills because of better teaching and the fact that these skills are a central target in their learning. Pupils' achievements in writing and reading are understandably not as obvious, although the progress made by the majority is satisfactory. By the time they leave, pupils and students have made considerable progress, considering their low attainment on arrival. The inspection team judge that achievements for Foundation Stage children and students in post-16 are better than those in the remainder of the school. This is because of the higher levels of challenge presented to these children and students. Achievement in mathematics is uniformly good throughout the school – this results from good planning and high teacher expectations. Achievement in science is satisfactory across all age groups. By the end of Year 11, pupils successfully undertake small-scale investigations that follow conventional scientific rules. Pupils and students use information and communication technology in support of their learning, but it is not taught as a separate subject. Whilst achievement by pupils is satisfactory overall, the lower expectations and challenge for the few relatively higher attaining pupils and students means that their standards of work are lower. Pupils and students achieve well in their personal and social skills when compared to their low attainment on arrival and make good progress in the targets set for them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils and students have good attitudes to the school and this shows in the positive way in which they go about their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; most pupils and students show genuine consideration and respect for one another as well as adults.
Personal development and relationships	Good; the positive relationships result in the growing confidence of pupils and students and this impacts well on the way in which they learn.
Attendance	Satisfactory; attendance is regular and punctuality good.

Pupils and students reflect the care and concern shown to them by staff. There are good relationships between pupils as well as with adults. These are the result of mutual respect and consideration and they impact well on the way in which pupils and students approach their learning. By the time they leave the school, students have developed into mature young adults. They understand the meaning of reliability and personal responsibility. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils and students clearly want to be in the school. Any variation in attendance is usually affected by illness or medical respite care.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and it successfully meets the needs of all pupils. There are particular strengths within the departments for Foundation Stage children and post-16 students, but examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen throughout the school. Just over one half of all English teaching was good, but the outcomes could be better if learning was more clearly targeted at pupils' attainment levels. Pupils learn satisfactory literacy skills, but for the majority their communication is more effective through speaking and listening as well as signing. There is a significant amount of good teaching in mathematics that has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The adaptation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been successful in enabling pupils to use number across a range of subjects. In science the quality of teaching was best in Years 7-11. It varied more for pupils in Years 1-6 and it was there that the only example of unsatisfactory teaching was noted. Teaching is good for those pupils with additional needs and it is also good in personal, social and health education. Consistently better teaching is provided by those teachers who have specific specialist knowledge, although it is not confined to that group. Good examples of this would be music and physical education (PE). Insufficient lessons were seen in French, geography and history to make definitive judgements, but in the case of history and geography, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Achievement and progress in French is insecure because some teachers lack appropriate teaching expertise. The overall good quality of the teaching is having a good impact on the rate at which pupils learn. The majority are glad to be learning and generate much enthusiasm and interest in what they do.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; the school now teaches the full range of the curriculum, but some aspects need further development.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall satisfactory, although the provision for social and moral development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is very good and ensures that the welfare of every pupil is well considered. There are satisfactory procedures to monitor pupils' progress.

The effectiveness of the school's links with the parents of pupils and students is very good. Parents are kept well informed and their involvement contributes positively to pupils' achievements. The majority of parents express confidence in the school as well as its leadership and management. These views are supported by the inspection team. The curriculum has good features and has improved since the last inspection. The outcomes to the use of the National Literacy Strategy are satisfactory, whilst those for the National Numeracy Strategy are good. These have raised standards since the last inspection. The curriculum for pupils with additional needs is satisfactory overall, although better for children under five. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its range of assessment opportunities, but these



could be more useful in raising standards if the data obtained was analysed more thoroughly. All staff take great care to ensure that the school is a safe place in which pupils and students flourish and learn.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher leads the school with considerable expertise and direction. Together with an effective senior management team, he has raised standards since the last inspection.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory; governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and carry out their duties with care.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; effective mechanisms are used to consistently evaluate performance and the outcomes to these are implemented well.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; these are used to raise standards and the school has very good systems to establish best value.

The headteacher provides good leadership. He is supported by a strong and effective senior management team who have complementary skills. The governors fulfil their duties and responsibilities satisfactorily. The school has a number of effective ways in which it judges its performance and these are used well to further raise standards. There are sufficient teachers to support the demands of the curriculum and their work is further enhanced through the deployment of support staff, who also make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Resources to support their work are satisfactory and the quality of some of these is good. Accommodation is satisfactory and used well to support pupils' learning, but one classroom in particular is wholly unsuitable. This has an adverse impact on the learning of these pupils. The school applies very well the principles of best value to its decisions and provides good value for money.

#### 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>• That their children are happy at the school and they work productively whilst they are there.</li> <li>• Many see good progress in the work done by their children and are often surprised at what the school manages to achieve on their behalf.</li> <li>• The good teaching.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard.</li> <li>• Information about their children is good and this encourages them to approach the school should they have any issues of concern.</li> <li>• The leadership and management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount and frequency of homework.</li> <li>• Some are concerned by what they see as poor behaviour by some children.</li> </ul>

The inspection team endorses the positive views of parents. Although the amount of homework is considered by staff and provided according to the needs of individual pupils there is insufficient information provided to parents about how they can become involved in work done at home. Whilst some behaviour of individual pupils may appear distressing to others, the inspection team views this as a symptom of their special educational need. All behaviour in the school is very well managed and the impression overall is of a calm and concerned environment.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school provides education for pupils with a wide range of special educational need and includes these within single year groups. The attainment of such pupils is generally very low. The school operates an active policy of inclusion, in which higher attaining pupils are referred to mainstream schools wherever possible. The result of this is that pupils in later years are generally those of low or very low attainment. The report makes no attempt to compare the standards achieved in the school with those found nationally. The achievement of pupils is reported in terms of what they know, understand and can do. The school is successful in enabling pupils to achieve satisfactorily in relation to their special educational needs. There are particular strengths in the achievement of pupils within the Foundation Stage as well as post-16 students.
2. The school is at an early stage in its use of data to set and evaluate progress towards targets for year groups of pupils. Pupils' attainment is now being assessed against National criteria (the 'P-Scales'), but there is at present insufficient data to allow detailed analysis of pupils' achievement or for the setting of realistic school targets. The development in use of this data is identified in the current school improvement plan. Evidence so far shows that pupils make good progress towards individual targets set for them in their individual education plans. Pupils and students are now achieving better than they were at the time of the last inspection in mathematics, religious education, art, physical education and design and technology. Achievement has been maintained at its previously satisfactory level in other subjects.
3. Children in the Nursery and reception classes achieve well in their communication, language and literacy, mathematical, physical and creative development and in gaining knowledge and understanding of the world. Because of the quality of teaching and other support, the children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. Children settle well into school life, learn to work and play alongside each other and how to be co-operative with adults. They enjoy learning and concentrate well even considering their low attainment. These important social and learning skills enable them to benefit from the education provided in later years. A significant national change in the curriculum for this age of child means that comparison with their achievements at the time of the last inspection is not possible.
4. Pupils within all age groups, except the Foundation Stage where achievement is good, achieve satisfactorily in English. They learn, to a standard appropriate for their capabilities, to improve their speaking and listening skills, enjoy books and stories and to read and write with varying degrees of support. Higher attaining pupils write short passages independently. Pupils could, however, do even better in English if the curriculum more clearly identified how skills such as spelling and simple grammar are to be taught and if different ways of communicating were more widely and consistently taught. Pupils with profound difficulties learn successfully to use gestures and sounds to indicate choices and preferences. Pupils in up to Year 2 respond to simple instructions and answer questions; for example, 'How are you feeling today?' and 'What is the weather like?'. The higher attaining pupils up to Year 6 listen carefully and talk about things they have learned; for example, about the Guy Fawkes story.
5. Older pupils, from Year 7 through to Year 11 develop their communication skills mostly through speaking and listening. A significant number of these pupils, however, have severe and complex needs and their achievement is noted through gestures, Makaton signing (a form of visual communication), symbols and eye movement. The achievement of some pupils could be made more effective if the use of signing was more consistent. Others follow simple instructions and take part in basic dialogue, although only the few higher attainers sustain this without the help of an adult. This is in-line with pupils of similar attainment in other schools. The most significant achievement is in their growing confidence to meet new people and their perseverance in dialogue.

6. As pupils become older, their range of communication skills increases, although only the highest attaining pupils use computers to word-process simple stories or hand write these. Lower attaining pupils find pencil control very difficult. Much of the written communication is supported by accompanying symbols and where this is consistently used pupils' achievement in communication is better.
7. Because they are well taught, pupils throughout the school, given their levels of special education need, achieve well in mathematics and often reach levels of attainment that are in excess of those that might be expected. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been influential in raising achievement because the framework for learning is now much more clearly understood. Pupils learn about numbers and how to use their knowledge in practical situations and about other mathematical concepts such as shape and measure. Younger pupils learn to count, initially by rote and then to connect these numbers with corresponding objects. The higher attaining pupils recognise numerals and 'add one more' to a given number. As they progress, pupils use this knowledge in practical situations; for example, in shopping and making 'purchases' within the classroom using real money. Pupils also gradually gain an understanding of shape, developing an ability to sort and identify two and three-dimensional shapes, such as a circle, triangle, cube and cylinder. Through practical activities such as cooking, pupils gain, within their capabilities, experience and understanding of concepts such as 'heavy' and 'light'. The oldest pupils have had experience of presenting information as a graph; for example, tabulating the presents they each received at Christmas.
8. In science, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. The youngest pupils have an awareness of changes through time and most express choices when presented with items, such as different toys. By the end of Year 6, pupils continue to achieve at a satisfactory standard, although the progress they have made enables them to work at a more sophisticated level. For example, they make simple predictions in their experiments and record these using sign, symbol and gesture. The majority continue to need substantial adult help in producing such observations in written form. When compared to previous, very low standards of attainment this would be expected. By the time pupils are in Year 11, they have continued to make good progress and the standard at which they work is substantially better than when they first entered the school. For example, they carry out investigations, working in pairs or small groups and the knowledge gained is successfully used in other situations.
9. The school caters for pupils with a significant range of difficulties. Inspection evidence shows that good care is taken to fully include all pupils in activities at an appropriate level for each. As a result, pupils, regardless of their disability, make at least satisfactory progress in most subjects. Some pupils and students make good progress. Standards for individual pupils rise as they move through the school. However, the successful policy of integrating younger, higher attaining pupils into mainstream schools by the time they are eleven means that overall standards in the senior school are lower than they are in some of the primary classes. Pupils within this older age group have comparatively lower attainments, but within the context of their own learning most pupils achieve well and some make good progress.
10. post-16 students achieve well, within the limitations of their prior attainment and they are now working towards external accreditation in a range of ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) modules. These include communication, numeracy, ICT, sport and leisure, daily living skills, music and ceramics. In addition, students follow a vocational course in horse and stable management. As students currently in the school are the first year group in this scheme there are no formally accredited results, but scrutiny of their portfolios indicate good achievement by many.
11. Pupils in the senior school continue to make sound progress and it is common for older pupils to hold sustained dialogues with adults. All pupils, for example, greet those they meet or request an item that they might need. The school's policy of total communication - using as many different ways of communicating as possible; for example, signing and symbols as well as speech and writing - is successfully used in some classes. However, the policy is not always

consistently applied throughout the school. This reduces its overall effectiveness and, consequently, the achievement of some pupils.

12. During their time in the school, pupils reading and writing skills improve satisfactorily. For instance, they become interested in books, learn to hold a book properly and turn pages carefully. The few relatively higher attaining pupils, in both primary and senior departments, learn an increasing number of sight words and a few are able to read simple texts with some support. In writing lower attaining pupils learn to hold a pencil properly, to make marks and realise that these can have meaning. The few higher attaining pupils throughout the school write simple sentences independently. However, the lack of a planned series of activities and what will be taught and learned through them, depresses standards and achievement in both reading and writing because it means that teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils. Consequently, pupils do not always learn as much as they could.
13. Pupils throughout the school achieve satisfactorily in science, history, geography, ICT, music and religious education. In English, however, lack of detail and identification of what is expected of pupils, of different ages and ability, in schemes of work, restricts the pupils' achievement in the subject. This is because teachers are not fully aware of what has gone before and do not have clear enough goals for longer-term achievement for individuals or groups of pupils. There is insufficient evidence to judge achievement in French.
14. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, art, design and technology and physical education. In mathematics, pupils and students achieve well because the subject is well planned and benefits from a clear scheme of work that fully lays out the requirements for teachers. Teachers also consistently teach the subject within 'real' contexts and this has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. In addition, where the subject is taught by a specialist teacher, the pupils' achievement is significantly improved. This is because the specialist teachers have higher expectations of what their pupils and students should do.
15. The achievements of pupils are influenced by the quality of the teaching and since the last inspection this quality has risen considerably. Because the teachers know the pupils well they provide a good match for pupils and students between their attainment and learning. The achievement of pupils could be further improved if the procedures for tracking progress were clearer. This would provide better information for pupils as to what they should learn and also enable teachers to analyse secure data that would enable identification of expected pupil achievement.
16. The school ensures that pupils and students achieve well when considering the degree and complexity of their special educational need. There are effective strategies for promoting and developing the personal and social needs of pupils and students – there can be no pupil or student in the school who does not feel valued and respected. By the time they leave the school, at whatever age, they depart with a carefully nurtured confidence and appropriate maturity.

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

17. Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes to school and this impacts well on the way in which they go about their learning. There is no variation in the positive attitudes shown by pupils in different Years or key stages. When compared to the time of the last report this is an improvement overall. At the meeting held for parents prior to the inspection they clearly said that their children like coming to school. They particularly appreciate the fact that their children are obviously happy and secure. Even the youngest children, who have been in school full-time for only few weeks, show confidence and enjoyment as they settle down to life in the Foundation Stage.
18. In the great majority of the lessons, pupils show interest in their work, even on the few occasions where the content might not have been exciting or the pace rather slow. In all other lessons, pupils show keenness to offer their ideas and respond well to teachers' encouragement to be fully involved. There was real enthusiasm in some lessons; for example, when pupils in a senior

class took part in an exploration of sound through the use of musical instruments and when pupils in Years 5 and 6 were involved in pushing and pulling toys in their discovery of friction. Pupils' positive attitudes are also evident in the enjoyment they show when sharing their learning with strangers; for example, in a science lesson where work on how vibrations travel along homemade telephone lines. This was freely shared with an inspector.

19. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, around school and in the playground and has been maintained at this level since the last inspection. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff and the confidence this gives to pupils and students impacts well on their learning. Staff are good role models, being helpful, patient and polite, so pupils respond likewise. Behaviour was good in the greater majority of lessons and very good in some. Even when pupils are waiting for attention, or have finished a task, their behaviour is good.
20. Pupils play together happily at break-times. Lunchtimes are calm occasions where pupils relate well to one another and show respect for the adults who care for them. Although parents are generally pleased with the good standard of behaviour, some have reservations about the impact that negative behaviour has on the learning undertaken by their child. The findings of the inspection team indicate that pupils' behaviour is good, but where it might occasionally 'boil over' the outcome is managed very well by staff. There were no incidents of systematic bullying or oppressive behaviour, in fact, the opposite was the case. Pupils, within the limitations of their understanding, showed touching concern for the needs of others. For example, in one lesson where staff had to deal with a medical emergency, pupils waited patiently and with great concern for the individual.
21. Pupils understand that what they do can have an effect on others. In large measure, this comes about because of the respect given to them by adults, which they then copy. For example, in a PE lesson for very young children a pupil was heard to say, 'Thank you' as another pupil helped him over apparatus.
22. Pupils' personal development is good and there is no significant variation in this throughout the school. Pupils and students are confident enough to make their contribution; for example, by talking to visitors or joining in class discussions. Teachers actively encourage this confidence. Pupils work well in pairs and groups; for example, in literacy when exploring the formation of letters or in science when the properties of magnets were being investigated. Pupils listen to each other's contributions tolerantly and recognise others' successes. They also develop their personal responsibility through carrying out small tasks, such as returning registers to the office or giving out equipment to other pupils in the class. However, this type of activity is used inconsistently by staff, a point noted in the last report. Some teachers, ably supported by learning support assistants, promote personal development very well. In these classes pupils are encouraged to volunteer for a range of daily 'chores' and are then expected to carry them out, with the appropriate support, if required.
23. Attendance in Years 2000/2001 was 91.64 per cent, which is satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is very low. The number of exclusions is very low and any exclusion represents a rare event within the life of the school. Attendance has improved slightly since the last inspection. Generally, the main reasons for non-attendance are related to medical conditions and time spent in respite care. Also, the school operates a strict policy to ensure that pupils do not return before they have fully recovered from any infectious illness – this is to protect other pupils who could be vulnerable to such infections. In the previous inspection report, concern was expressed at the late arrival of some of the pupils' transport. This problem has been successfully tackled and punctuality is now good, with the majority of lessons starting on time.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory or better in eight out of ten lessons and good or better in three out of ten lessons. Teaching and learning throughout the school is now good with some individual examples of excellent teaching. Only in one lesson out of 82 seen during the inspection was teaching unsatisfactory. However, teaching was good or better in 64 lessons (79 per cent), at least very good in 22 lessons (27 per cent) and excellent in three lessons (4 per cent). Seventeen lessons (20 per cent) were satisfactory.
25. The best teaching occurred for children under five, where very good teaching was seen in approximately one half of all lessons and for students over sixteen where teaching was consistently good. These teachers especially plan highly relevant lessons and there is very strong teamwork between teachers and support assistants. Teaching in other year groups throughout the school also has strong features and, overall, the quality is also good. Whilst good teaching was seen in all subjects there are particular strengths in mathematics, art, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Individual science lessons for Years 9 and 11 were excellent. Where consistently good teaching was seen this usually related to the expertise of the teacher. Invariably teachers would be teaching the subject in which they were best qualified and as a result they had higher expectations of what their pupils could achieve and a subject knowledge that extended pupils' learning.
26. These very good improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have been due to a number of factors, including the very good leadership of the headteacher. He has, along with his senior management team, developed a good policy and practice for the monitoring of teaching and learning. The school also uses the National Numeracy Strategy very well. This accounts for consistently good teaching in mathematics when compared to English where use of the National Literacy Strategy has yet to be fully adapted to meet the needs of pupils. The very high quality support and teamwork provided by classroom assistants and therapists, as well as very good management of pupils' learning and behaviour, has also enhanced learning outcomes for pupils and students. This enables, particularly those with additional special educational needs, to participate more fully in lessons.
27. The greater majority of parents believe teaching to be good and the inspection confirms this. Teachers have effective group management skills and this enables them to not only manage challenging behaviour, but also to organise pupils into groups that encourage them to learn well. Where necessary, the better teachers vary their method of teaching, often within the same lesson. A good example of this was in a mathematics lesson for a group of Years 3 and 4 pupils. Having introduced the lesson well and making sure that all pupils knew what they had to do, the teacher divided them into attainment groups and ensured that the task they had was challenging and backed up with appropriate, adult support. Through carefully judged timing of the activities she maintained a good pace and finally brought the pupils back into a large group, where they showed their work to the other pupils. As a result, each pupil felt what he or she had accomplished to be very significant.
28. The good teamwork with learning support assistants is a common factor in many of the lessons and the quality of what they do is seen in the good balance they achieve in encouraging pupils to learn for themselves. This too represents an improvement since the last inspection where some teaching assistants were used in purely supervisory roles. Teachers now appear to be much more effective in acknowledging and encouraging the contributions made by support staff. These factors, when combined, enable pupils to learn effectively and behave well in lessons.
29. Skills of communication are well taught; for example, through the use of signing so that pupils communicate effectively in lessons. Some of this signing is not used as consistently as it could be, but teachers take full account of pupils' additional special educational needs and ensure that they are included in all lesson activities.
30. All the good teaching reflects the quality of planning. For example, the quality of mathematics planning is good and because it contains explicit intentions for learning, teachers readily identify

the most appropriate methods for their individual groups. This brings about clear lesson structures and good use of resources that promote pupils' learning. The impact is that pupils are more motivated to learn. Of the seventeen mathematics lessons observed throughout the school, sixteen were good or better.

31. Good teaching was also seen in other lessons. For example, in an English lesson for Years 1 and 2, the teacher's planning was well linked to advice given by the speech therapist. Use of everyday visual aids such as a scarf, hat, boots and coat helped pupils to read about how they might keep warm in cold weather. Other strong features of good lessons were the use of challenging questions to promote greater understanding, clear learning objectives, instructions and routines for pupils so they know what is expected of them. Some of these features were also seen in lessons where teaching was satisfactory.
32. Very occasionally, the expectations of teachers were too low and the use of overt praise, too readily given, devalued the effort of pupils. The challenge for some teachers is to ensure that pupils are given genuine encouragement whilst at the same time preserving the confidence and enthusiasm of all pupils to continue learning.
33. The use of ICT to support learning is inconsistent. Where its use is planned, such as a history lesson about Boudicca, the outcomes for pupils' learning are positive. In such lessons the use of ICT ensures that pupils are challenged appropriately, through the support of good software. Consequently, they generally retain higher levels of concentration. This makes their learning more effective. The competence of teachers to provide challenge through the use of ICT is variable. Some are skilled and they produce good resources that enhance pupils' learning. They also have the experience to know which software challenges and extends learning. Where this competence is insecure the opportunity provided to pupils to use ICT is less. The school should be able to substantially address this issue in its forthcoming staff training through National Grid for Learning (NGfL).
34. Teachers use a range of methods to assess pupils' progress and attainment. Whilst the strength of these is in the number of different and appropriate ways assessment is carried out, the weakness is in the use to which this information is put. Much of the assessment is used retrospectively, telling teachers what has been learned by pupils. There is little evidence to indicate that teachers use this information to plan future learning strategies for pupils, or draw up more rigorous targets in their learning.

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

35. The school has been successful in developing the curriculum since the previous inspection and there has been good improvement. Senior management and staff have worked effectively to address the key issues identified in that inspection. Teaching time is now at the recommended number of hours for all age groups and a consistent timetable is in operation throughout the school. There is now a whole-school, curriculum framework in place. There has been considerable development on the post-16 curriculum in the Continuing Education department and this curriculum is now satisfactory.
36. The quality and range of learning opportunities for all pupils from Year 1 to Year 11 is satisfactory and that for the nursery pupils is good. All statutory requirements are met. The curriculum for pupils in the Nursery is based on the expectations of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 11 experience the full range of the National Curriculum with subject planning based on the appropriate Programmes of Study. Religious education (RE) is suitably based upon the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE.
37. Time is allocated appropriately to give priority to developing literacy and numeracy skills and learning and use of ICT is incorporated into other subjects. Each age group has a timetabled half-day when a carousel of activities including sports, horse riding, art, design and technology, visiting places of interest, music and ICT, is offered. This enables pupils to experience a wide

range of activities over the school year as well as mixing with pupils and adults from other classes. This contributes well to their personal development. Overall, the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and satisfactory for those pupils from Year 1 to Year 11.

38. From Year 10 onwards all pupils begin to study modules of work for external accreditation and this study is continued through to the Continuing Education department. Pupils in Year 10 have started work towards the OCR National Skills Profile in Communications and Numeracy as well as the ASDAN Transition Challenge programme. This is developed further in Years 12 and 13 to include the ASDAN Towards Independence and the OCR Accreditation for Life and Living skills programme. All these courses are successfully developing students' understanding of the world of work and helping them to consider their future lives after they leave school. Thus far none of the students have completed the full Transitional Challenge programme, although the early results indicate good levels of success. All students also complete a National Record of Achievement before they leave the school.
39. Since the previous inspection the school has made considerable and successful efforts to establish a firm foundation for further curriculum development. There is an agreed policy in place for each subject as well as whole-school, long-term planning for each subject. Although art and design and technology are taught by specialist teachers in some areas of the school, the general responsibility for planning and teaching the full range of the National Curriculum rests with class teachers in all Year groups. Teachers plan each subject for the medium term (half-termly) and the short term (lesson). The current detail in the planning is insufficient to support all teachers who are not specialists in each subject and ensure that pupils maximise their progress. The detail does not include what work should be undertaken and the levels that different groups of pupils could be expected to achieve by the end of each unit of the medium-term plan. The outcome is that teachers are unsure as to what could be achieved by their pupils. The school is aware of the need to address this issue and work has been started in some subjects, notably numeracy, where full and clear expectations given to teachers is having a beneficial effect on the standards pupils are beginning to achieve. The level of guidance offered within numeracy provides a good model for the development of other planning.
40. The school has established satisfactory strategies for teaching literacy skills. The National Literacy Strategy is being developed throughout the school and there is a useful policy on Total Communication (using as many different ways of communicating; for instance, signing, pictures, symbols). Achievement in literacy is at present satisfactory and the school realises the need to develop these initiatives further to ensure consistent and progressive learning in literacy skills for all pupils. The strategies for teaching numeracy skills are good. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place and this is having a beneficial effect on the achievement of pupils.
41. Pupils' equal access to the opportunities of the curriculum is satisfactory. Class groups are arranged on the basis of teachers' assessments of pupils against performance levels (P-Scales) and the organisation of the curriculum ensures that all pupils experience the full range of the National Curriculum. There are some classes specifically designated for pupils with more complex or behavioural needs, but the school is pro-active in ensuring that individual pupils integrate with their peer group in other classes as and when appropriate. One pupil, for instance, attends literacy and numeracy sessions in another class whilst another is supported to be a full-time member of a senior class.
42. The school has a strong ethos for developing pupils' social and personal development. A recently established, formal scheme of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) ensures that important areas of knowledge and understanding are taught throughout the school in a consistent way. This PSHE programme includes elements of health, keeping safe, citizenship, sex education and the benefits and dangers of drugs. The provision for PSHE is satisfactory overall, with a need to ensure that pupils, especially those from Year 10 onwards, have sufficient information and understanding about sexual issues and the dangers of drug and other abuse, so that they are fully prepared for adult life.



43. The provision for careers education is satisfactory. Discussion of the world of work is part of the PSHE programme for all ages and this area is further developed for older pupils from Year 10 onwards. In the Continuing Education department pupils have a full careers programme that includes visits from outside speakers. There is the opportunity for work experience both in and out of school. A small careers library has recently been established.
44. The majority of pupils live a good distance from the school, so after-school activities are not easy to arrange, but the range and quality of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There are a small number of lunchtime clubs including computer and table tennis. Some pupils are able to attend canoeing and swimming sessions organised by staff from the school. There is a successful summer holiday club at the school organised by staff from Severndale and this is attended by a substantial number of pupils.
45. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good and this enhances pupils' achievements and promotes their personal development. The links include support for a soup kitchen and raising money for local charities. A variety of local charities and businesses support the school's fund-raising. Local, elderly residents are invited to Christmas productions and receive produce from Harvest Festivals. The local clergy visit the school and pupils, in their turn, visit local churches. Some pupils participate in mini-enterprise schemes, with local business support. This involves pupils in washing cars and making hanging baskets that they then offer for sale.
46. The relationships with partner institutions is good. There are good links with the adjacent primary school and local secondary schools. Pupils use the facilities in these schools and are invited to special events. Some pupils participate in work experience opportunities at local colleges as well as within the school. The school has achieved Beacon status for its SEN outreach work with other schools in Shropshire. This work also benefits those Severndale pupils who eventually go to mainstream schools in the county.
47. The provision for spiritual education is satisfactory and the school complies with the requirements relating to acts of worship and religious education. There are frequent opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, but they are not consistently identified across the whole curriculum. Acts of worship are planned and held on a department basis and the music played links to the theme for the occasion. These assemblies are multifaith and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on how they can help others. In a religious education lesson, pupils had the opportunity to reflect on special days, birthdays and sit quietly with their eyes closed and think of friends. Pupils develop a satisfactory awareness of how to relate to one another through the programme of personal and social education.
48. The provision for moral development is good. The behaviour management policy, based on positive reinforcement of actions, is enhanced by positive role models provided by the staff. All staff successfully encourage pupils to have a good sense of right and wrong. Pupils' behaviour management plans are shared with parents and there are clear procedures for pupils who exhibit challenging behaviours. Moral issues are addressed throughout the school day and through pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. The ways in which this is done are good. The lack of deliberate confrontation ensures that pupils learn from these experiences. The personal and social education targets on pupils' individual education plans include opportunities for moral development at breaks and lunchtimes. The programme for personal, social and health education lessons provides good opportunities to address wider issues, such as rights and wrongs and how to be fair to others.
49. The school makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. The end of day transport requirements curtail opportunities for after-school clubs, but there are other opportunities used during the school day when pupils are encouraged to work together and help one another. There is an out-of-school activities club during the school holidays for a very large number of pupils and it is much appreciated by parents. Themes in assemblies encourage pupils to understand the idea of sharing. All staff encourage pupils to work together and, where there is a conflict of

personalities, pupils are encouraged and guided to work it through. The programme for personal, social and health education includes planned opportunities for pupils' social development.

50. The opportunities for pupils' cultural development are satisfactory. In French lessons pupils extend their knowledge of French culture. In music they listen to and play African drums and experience dance through Greek music, Scottish reels and Russian ballet. They contribute to displays of Hindu and Christian weddings and celebrate festivals of other cultures and from their own culture. In art they study the works of other artists from different times and cultures.

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

51. The school has very good procedures to ensure that pupils are safe, cared for and protected. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made in the training of staff in issues of health and safety. A member of the senior management team is expert in such matters. There is now a member of staff on each site who is a fully trained first-aider. In addition, there are twenty-four staff trained in emergency first aid. Staff have also received training in the movement and handling of pupils and in swimming pool safety, thereby ensuring a safe environment for the pupils. There is clear and detailed guidance available provided by the medical staff about what medication is required by pupils and how and when it is to be administered. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of pupils' emotional physical and other personal needs and all staff are aware of the importance of child protection procedures.
52. The work of teachers and teaching assistants is very well supported by speech therapists and physiotherapists who also have a good knowledge of the needs of the pupils with whom they work. They make a good contribution to the welfare and care of pupils and students.
53. Since the last inspection the school management has worked very effectively, in conjunction with the local education authority, to ensure the punctual arrival of pupils at school. Except for occasional times when transport may be unavoidably delayed the management have successfully addressed the issue. The arrival and departure routines are very safe. Pupils are dismissed from a central hall, on both sites, in such a way that guarantees they are placed on the correct transport. A safety officer ensures that buses manoeuvre safely and slowly.
54. There are clear policies on appropriate behaviour and behaviour management. The latter provides good guidance on ways in which teachers and teaching assistants might deal with challenging behaviour and on how any incidents need to be recorded. These records allow staff to monitor incidents and, when necessary, draw up behaviour management guidelines for pupils to improve their behaviour.
55. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Attendance is monitored by class teachers and the office manager. Any concerns are identified and parents or carers are contacted as necessary. Where home visits are thought necessary, the involvement of the local authority's educational welfare officer is sought. A scrutiny of registers showed that in only a few minor cases they were incorrectly completed.
56. Whilst good records are kept of what pupils can do, know and understand as well as their responses, there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the school's assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development. These inconsistencies lead to reduced effectiveness in the school's systems of educational support, personal support and guidance and in raising pupil's achievements. In particular, the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning, although satisfactory, needs further development.
57. Staff know pupils well and their committed, caring and sensitive approach to meeting individual needs is good. An example is the high degree to which staff are involved when on duty at break-time. They do not just supervise, but play with the pupils and actively encourage them to explore outdoor apparatus and interact with each other. This has a positive impact on pupils' social development.

58. Provision outlined in Statements of Special Educational Need is fully implemented, with good progress being made against targets set in annual reviews. The common format of well-organised, readily accessible individual education plans (IEPs) is a useful way of identifying progress in pupils and students. Good use is made of IEP targets in mathematics, with clear links to anticipated learning derived from lesson planning. There is inconsistent use of IEP targets in English/communication and variation in the existence of targets in science. Targets for aspects of personal and social development are not on every pupil's IEP and the school recognises the need to have the monitoring of personal development more solidly in place.
59. With the wide range of needs within the school, an equivalent, relevant range of assessment records are kept. Evaluation of daily lesson plans is carried out by many staff and includes comments on pupils' responses and achievement when these are significant. There are weekly and termly evaluations. Pupils are involved in compiling their own profiles that contain annotated samples of work and photographic evidence. The latter is also included in the annual report to parents, which provides clear information on what their child can do, know and understand and the level of support required. Extracts from curriculum plans, as records of experience, are also included in reports to parents.
60. Achievement certificates given to pupils in the weekly, celebration assembly encourage progress in learning and personal development. ASDAN records of achievement for older pupils and students involve them in self-evaluation. Assessment through P-Scales is used by senior management and teachers to determine the placement of pupils in a class group. The outcomes to the 2001 P-Scales are being developed as a benchmark from which to measure pupils' progress. A moderation process is in place and the use of P-Scales is being appropriately developed by the school. The school is part of a pilot project that is examining the use of P-Scales to analyse performance in schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
61. Teachers are generally good at evaluating lessons and with contributions from teaching assistants they record outcomes clearly, using the range of systems mentioned above. They provide a good history of what pupils achieve, but the use of assessment for overall planning and curriculum development is unsatisfactory. There is some good practice in mathematics, with clear links between IEP targets, lesson planning and reference to longer-term planning, which is appropriately related to the scheme of work. In English, ongoing recording of achievement is not firmly bedded against scheme of work expectations throughout the year. In science, planning for skill development is lacking and assessment opportunities are not identified in the scheme of work or teachers' planning. Subject specific assessment linked to schemes of work is not securely in place across other subjects. This reduces the effectiveness of opportunities aimed at raising achievement and, as a result, the expectations of what pupils might achieve are lower than could be expected. Assessment and its use to inform planning is satisfactory in regard to accredited courses in Year 11 and for post-16 students.
62. Teachers' analysis of records to establish the next step for planning and setting subject targets is underdeveloped. Equally, the school is insufficiently analysing its assessment data to provide performance information for different groups of pupils. A useful addendum to this would be if the information gained was used to determine the most effective way in which individual pupils and students learn.
63. Good guidance and support are provided by specialist staff such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. They contribute substantially to raising achievement in communication skills and personal development. The monitoring and support to manage and improve pupils' behaviour is good. There are clear and appropriate behaviour guidelines provided when necessary for individual pupils. The consistent approach by staff enables pupils with behaviour difficulties to be increasingly involved in a wider range of learning opportunities, as well as making good progress in improving their behaviour.

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

64. Parents are supportive of the school and the links between them and the school have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Parents who attended the meeting held prior to the inspection expressed considerable satisfaction about what the school does on behalf of their children. One parent expressed the view that had the school not taken on its present organisation and management, she would not have placed her child on the roll. Although many parents have not articulated their views, it is reasonable to deduct that the almost doubling of the school roll within the last five years is indicative of the confidence they have in the school and the provision it makes. Since the last inspection the school has continued to foster the good relationships seen at that time.
65. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Half-termly newsletters and regular, informative letters are sent out. The pupils' annual reports are very good. They tell parents what their child knows, understands and can do and some targets for improvement are given. Also the report has a photograph of the child as well as photographic examples of them at work. These let the parents know the type of learning their children are doing and illustrate clearly what they achieve. The home/school book is also used as a communication link in a written and symbol form. A 'Plan for Learning' is provided at the beginning of the academic year for each child, which is updated each term and this ensures that parents are fully involved in understanding what their child will learn.
66. Annual questionnaires are sent out to parents with the intention of canvassing their views about the quality of service provided by the school. Whilst the school acknowledges that the statements it contains are general in nature, the questionnaire offers a genuine opportunity for parents to increase their involvement in the school. Other initiatives undertaken by the school include the sharing of any behaviour management plans and information relating to how parents can become involved in the learning of their children. In this regard, the information provided by staff in the Foundation Stage has been particularly effective.
67. There have been some minor omissions from the school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents. For example, the figures relating to finance are not included within the governor's annual report to parents, although reference is made to the fact that such figures would be available to any parent who attended the meeting arranged for them. In the parental questionnaires returned prior to the inspection almost one in four parents believed that their child did not get an appropriate amount of homework. Discussion at the pre-inspection meeting for parents indicated that parents have different views about the requirement for homework. Some believed that it would be helpful for higher attaining children, whilst others considered it unnecessary. These views are not unlike those held by parents of children in similar schools. In a written response, one parent commented, 'I think children like ----- don't need to be pushed too much as they have a lot to cope with, i.e. day-to-day skills such as dressing, generally taking care of themselves, so I think homework just adds to the pressure of all that.' Another parent confirmed the view of the inspection team that homework is appropriately given when she expressed the view that: 'Work at home – is mainly us helping with physio exercises etc.' The inspection evidence shows that provision of homework is satisfactory.
68. The parents' views of the school are very positive. The school actively fosters its links with parents and, as a result, their involvement has a sound impact on the work of the school. The contribution of parents to children's learning, at school and at home, is satisfactory overall.
69. Further evidence of parents' active involvement in the school comes through 'The Friends of Severndale School' (FSS). Although a small group, they organise a number of fund-raising events; for example, the money they raise has been used for the further development of the school swimming pool and the provision of Christmas presents for all pupils.
70. Parents and carers are invited to meet their child's class teacher and classroom assistants in the autumn term and at the end of the academic year, in order to discuss their progress. Annual review meetings are held and over 90 per cent of parents or carers attend. Progress about each pupil's individual education plan is discussed at these meetings. Documentation for these meetings is provided well in advance and parents feel fully involved in this process.

71. Parental support groups meet in the school. Parents are given guidance on how they can help their child's progress and/or behaviour. The Conductive Education Programme for children from birth to five, 'Ladderbacks', is based at the school.

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

72. The leadership and management of the school is good overall. The headteacher, provides a clear sense of direction and purpose that has an emphasis on raising standards and preparing pupils and students for their future. He employs considerable skill in leading and managing a complex organisation. As a group, the senior management team has a clear emphasis on raising standards and achievement and they have enabled the school to become a well ordered and purposeful organisation. Day-to-day operations and procedures run smoothly and there is effective delegation of responsibilities. This delegation enables the complex workings of the school to run efficiently and regular meetings of departmental heads ensure that the senior management have a good overview of the work of the school.
73. The aims of the school as set out by the governors and senior management are fully reflected in the work that the school does. These focus on raising the standard and quality of communication that pupils use and preparing them as well as possible for their next stage of learning or life. The leadership has ensured that there is a clear focus on providing for the needs of individual pupils and students, with the result that they are all fully included in the life of the school. The positive and caring manner in which staff provide for pupils is a hallmark of the school's provision overall.
74. Two deputy headteachers, along with the headteacher, form the core senior management team. The management skills they have are complementary to those of the headteacher and within their respective roles they make positive contributions to the good quality of education provided by the school. Departmental heads also provide satisfactory quality management to their respective departments, although within the overall management structure their skills need further development – particularly within the context of departmental development and use of data in order to further target higher standards. Subject leaders and the provision they make has improved since the last inspection and their roles are much more clearly defined. Consequently, they give a positive lead in the development of their respective subject but, as with the middle management tier, their skills in the use of assessment and other data could usefully be further developed.
75. There is a secure performance management process in place and part of this involves scheduled observations of teaching. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved by almost 20 per cent overall and 40 per cent within the category 'good and better'. This has resulted from clear criteria and the high expectations of the senior management team that have been substantially met by the majority of staff.
76. The school's priorities for its development are good. These have been enhanced by the commitment of staff throughout the school. The inspection evidence indicates very good levels of team spirit within the different departments as well as an ethos of commitment to the individual needs of pupils. Because of this there is a very good capacity for further success and improvement. Although most staff are determined and enthusiastic to raise standards there remains a small minority who appear anxious about change.
77. The members of the governing body are active supporters of the school, despite the fact that the majority of them have other full-time commitments. They fulfil their roles satisfactorily. Through their sub-committee structure, as well as twice termly full meetings, they have developed a good understanding of the strengths of the school as well as those areas they would wish to strengthen. When combined with the senior management team they represent, overall, a well-informed group who work hard on behalf of the school and offer their considerable talent to the raising of standards.

78. There are a suitable number of well-qualified teachers. Many have specific and additional qualifications in their expertise and these are particularly beneficial to pupils. The school also has a satisfactory number of teaching assistants who are appropriately deployed. This latter group is becoming increasingly effective as they are more and more involved in the educational provision of pupils. Teachers are generally experienced in the subjects they teach, but where they teach the subject of their initial qualification the impact on pupils' learning is noticeably better. In subjects such as French, where teachers are required to teach outside their expertise, the impact on pupils' learning is less effective. Within the last year the school has experienced noticeable difficulty in the appointment of teaching staff. Whilst those staff who are new to the school have brought appropriate expertise and energy, the difficulty has imposed restrictions on the governing body in its attempt to strengthen and reorganise the senior management team.
79. The school has a wide range of staff development opportunities and this has contributed to a rise in standards of teaching. Good use is made of meeting time and professional development days for training sessions for all staff. The link made by school management with Manchester Metropolitan University, to provide additional training for staff, has had good outcomes within the teaching of English, mathematics and science as well as the management of these subjects. An additional bonus for staff is that this provision of training can lead to external accreditation, which is a useful addition to individual professional portfolios. Arrangements for the induction of staff, new to the school, are good and these ensure that they are well briefed about the school's policies, procedures and practices.
80. Teachers working with pupils with visual or hearing impairments receive satisfactory support in the use of communication devices for pupils, but the guidance on how such pupils may learn needs further development. The school has begun to address this issue by inviting representatives from the external agencies responsible for this area to professional development days.
81. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is very good for art and design and technology and good in the Foundation Stage. Both upper and lower school sites are well maintained and cleaned daily to a high standard. Throughout the school, staff use many opportunities to display the work of pupils and students and the standard of this is good. A good example of this is the art work hanging on the walls in both buildings, which both celebrates pupils' achievements and stimulates their further learning.
82. The lower school site has been the subject of a substantial re-build that has had a positive impact on the overall provision and quality of pupils' learning. Despite considerable expenditure on refurbishment there remain parts of the upper school site that are very poor. In particular a temporary building for one of the senior classes adversely affects the learning that these pupils undertake. This accommodation is cramped and any variation in teaching methods occasionally requires whole-scale movement of furniture in order to create the necessary space. Pupils also lose learning time moving from this room to other areas on the school site, such as the art and craft facilities. Governors and senior management are acutely aware of this very poor accommodation, but plans to replace it have been temporarily halted through lack of secured funding and the additional pressure on places as the school roll increases. The governors, however, continue to pursue this issue.
83. The level of resources for learning is satisfactory overall although there are variations in different subject areas. The quality of learning resources is generally very good and reflects the senior management policy to purchase good quality items wherever possible. In conjunction with the considerable skill of negotiation used by the headteacher and the 'best-value' practice of the governing body the school has nurtured a considerable base of good quality resources.
84. Financial planning is very good and ensures that there is a close match between funding and current educational priorities. However, the arrangements for funding pupil places are unsatisfactory. For the majority of the academic year, the school has more pupils on roll than is provided for by the overall budget allocation. This has led to a continuing deficit budget. Prudent

management and the financial skill of the governing body sub-committee have ensured that the impact on the school's ability to pursue its chosen priorities for development are minimised.

85. Specific grants are very well used for staff development and training as well as school improvement. The school controls income and expenditure extremely well and school administration is excellent. In this regard, the administrative staff provide an outstanding service. Accounts are fully computerised and procedures for ordering and paying for goods and services fully comply with LEA guidelines. Very good use is made of staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
86. ICT is used well for school administration. For example, staff communication is enhanced through the use of the school Intranet. It is also used more consistently to support teaching and learning because all classrooms now have at least two computers linked to the World Wide Web. Teachers and learning support assistants are deployed well and they work very effectively to support the curriculum and enhance pupils' achievements.
87. The school is very good in achieving best value in its spending decisions. For example, governors and senior managers almost doubled its expenditure for support staff in appointing enough support assistants to ensure that the school could adequately provide for the needs of pupils with more complex and challenging needs. The headteacher also managed to obtain free ICT consultancy, management consultancy and purchase computers at substantially reduced prices for the benefit of pupils.
88. There have been good improvements since the last inspection and strengths identified at that time have been sustained or further enhanced. In view of pupils' all-round achievement, the good and sometimes very good progress they make in their learning, the much improved quality of teaching and improvements in the curriculum, the school now provides good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. The governors, headteacher and staff should continue to further improve the achievements of pupils by:

- (1) making further improvements to the management of the curriculum, especially that of English by:
  - setting expectations for pupils' learning that are linked to prior attainment and use these as expected outcomes for learning and teaching;
  - including within each subject scheme of work more clearly defined assessment criteria;
  - identifying within each scheme of work the intended level to which each pupil should work according to their attainment;
  - developing the current role of subject leaders so that they disseminate good practice throughout the school.

Refer to paragraphs: 4-5, 12, 58, 62, 74, 80, 97, 115, 139, 187 and 194.

- (2) using assessment practice more effectively across all subjects so that it has a greater effect on teaching methods and the range of learning opportunities undertaken by pupils; this should:
  - rigorously track individual pupils' learning and achievement;
  - require staff to analyse outcomes of assessment and include appropriate responses in their future teaching plans and intentions for pupils' learning;
  - use the outcomes to identify the most effective ways in which individual pupils learn.

Refer to paragraphs: 13, 15, 34, 39, 56, 61, 74, 115, 140, 146, 148, 155 and 175.

- (3) continue negotiation with the local authority with the intention of putting in place secure funding arrangements that accurately reflect the total number of pupils on roll at any given time.\*

Refer to paragraphs: 82 and 84.

\* The school already recognises this issue and these negotiations are continuing.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	22	39	17	1	0	0
Percentage	4	27	48	21	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point. The total figure does not add up to 100 because of rounding.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	206
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	42

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.27

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.03

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	14	6	20

Results of tasks and tests undertaken at the end of Year 2 indicate that the majority of pupils are working towards Level 1 in English, mathematics and science. The exception to this is a small number of pupils who have reached Level 2 in mathematics and Level 1 in science.

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	5	11

Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 indicate that the majority of pupils are working towards Level 1 in English, mathematics and science. The exception to this is a small number who have reached Level 1 in science.

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	4	4	8

As the number of pupils undertaking tests and tasks is below ten, their attainment is not reported.

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 and post-16**

In 1998-9, four students attained accreditation in one module of ASDAN 'Towards Independence'.

In 1999 – 2000, six students gained accreditation in four modules of ASDAN 'Towards Independence'.

In 2000-01, six students gained accreditation in five modules of ASDAN 'Towards Independence'.

In 2001, nine pupils attained accreditation in the ASDAN Transition Challenge (Independent Living Skills).

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	202
Any other minority ethnic groups	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	0	1
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: YN – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	29.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.9:1
Average class size	7.3

**Education support staff: YN – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	74
Total aggregate hours worked per week	2202

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	1,831,789
Total expenditure	1,887,614
Expenditure per pupil	10,041
Balance brought forward from previous year	73,652
Balance carried forward to next year	17,827

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	206
Number of questionnaires returned	96

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	21	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	41	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	38	3	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	42	8	6	17
The teaching is good.	81	18	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	28	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	20	1	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	34	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	62	29	5	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	63	34	0	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	28	3	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	19	1	2	9

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

90. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught in three classes. Children begin in the nursery class, initially attending for two afternoons a week and this time is gradually increased until they attend for five mornings. As they reach the age of five, they transfer, either into the reception classes in the school or into classes in mainstream schools. At the time of the inspection there was only one reception class in the school, but this will increase to a second in the summer term. The good quality of the provision has been maintained since the last inspection particularly in regard to the general quality of the teaching and its effect on learning. Improvements have been made to the accommodation and the environment overall provides a stimulating place in which children are well challenged in their learning. Externally, the play areas have also been improved and these now provide motivating areas in which children can use their imagination.
91. Overall, the education provided in the Nursery and reception classes is good and provides the children with a good start to their education. Teaching and learning is good in most aspects of the new curriculum drawn up nationally for children of this age. It is very good in the development of the children's personal, social and emotional development. There is however, variability in overall teaching, with about one third being satisfactory, one third good and a further one third being very good or excellent. Generally the better quality teaching was seen within the Nursery class.
92. This variability is in part due to differences in teachers' knowledge of how to manage children with the most challenging behaviour. It is also, in part, because there has not yet been sufficient time since the introduction of the new Foundation Stage curriculum to allow planning to be developed in order to show what individuals or groups of children are expected to learn from the activities provided. The further development of the new planning is identified in the current departmental improvement plan. The current lack of such planning makes precise teaching towards clear goals more difficult, especially for the members of staff who have not directly planned the activities. In addition, the assessment of the children in these classes is in the process of being changed to indicate progress against the new curriculum. The development thus far is good, but understandably, it is yet to have a full impact on the planning of targets for the children and on activities designed to meet these targets. As yet, it is insufficiently developed to be used to monitor and evaluate the progress made by the children or the success of the overall provision.
93. Overall, the leadership of the department is good, but there is a need to provide the Foundation Stage leader with more opportunity to monitor the work of the department in order to identify and share strengths and improve areas of relative weakness. The children's learning benefits from the good accommodation. This provides them with a good, very attractively presented environment both indoors and outdoors. This has a good impact on their learning. Children in the nursery classes have daily opportunity to be involved with outdoor activities. The purchase of good quality resources, such as small games, construction equipment, toys, computers, climbing equipment and larger ride-on toys assist teachers to plan an interesting and stimulating day for the children.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

94. As a result of the overall very good teaching, the majority of the children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. Children enter the school at a young age and, in the main, have very limited experience of being away from home and their main carer. A sensitive, thoughtful approach is taken towards the children. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) use the interests of the children to encourage them to relax, enjoy learning and to learn the routines of the classroom. This benefits the children by enabling them to settle quickly into school life and develop good learning habits.

95. Carefully thought out activities successfully promote curiosity and exploration; for example, in the nursery class one child explored the snow brought in by the teacher and experimented with moving and shaping it. In the reception class children were engaged by and interested in the different types of clocks on display. Such interesting experiences promote good concentration and reception class pupils showed themselves capable of sitting and showing interest in activities for as much as twenty minutes. The level of co-operation of the children with adults varies rather more. This is, in part, because of their different and individual needs and in part due to differences in teacher expertise. Overall, however, by the time they are in the reception class, the children co-operate well and are therefore able to continue and develop their learning.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

96. The teaching of communication skills is given particular importance in all three classes. All adults are very good at judging the level of talk that will engage a child's attention and move him or her to the next level of communication and language development. The attainment of the children vary very widely. Some children seek attention through gestures and actions whilst others speak and communicate in short sentences. The good teaching means that each child achieves well despite this variation.
97. Children are actively encouraged to use pencils and crayons to make marks and the progress they make is clear in the drawings and 'writing' produced. Good opportunities are provided for children to learn about books. In the nursery classes, dedicated 'story time' successfully encourages skills such as attention to pictures, understanding that a book tells a story and 'reading' from the beginning of a book. All children are encouraged to enjoy books. In the reception class, the teacher makes good use of elements of the National Literacy Strategy; for example, in teaching higher attaining children how to identify important points in a text and to begin to use initial sounds of words when reading. Some of the highest attaining children recognise written words that they see on a regular basis; for example, days of the week and types of weather. This good quality teaching could be further improved if the communication, language and literacy work for the week was planned in a more co-ordinated way so that clearer links exist between reading and writing, the teaching of the group and the follow-up work done by individual children.

### **Mathematical development**

98. Early mathematical development is well taught and children achieve well. Children in all three classes are given regular practise at counting, recognising numerals and using the language of number in practical situations. In the Nursery, for example, the class post office is usefully equipped with a till containing real money that is used for buying stamps. Many opportunities are used to encourage children to count people and objects when they are engaged in play activities. The higher attaining children count up to five with varying degrees of help and recognise numerals to at least this number. In the reception classes this ability continues to be developed and some children use numbers up to ten. Children also recognise counting songs and rhymes and a few of the more experienced and higher attaining children join in. Children are given good opportunities to understand about shape through such activities as building with bricks, cutting dough and doing jigsaws as well as through more direct teaching of shape names and simple properties such as the number of sides they have.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

99. A wide variety of activities are provided to help children to develop a sense of time and place as well as a curiosity about the ways things work and living things. The children use these opportunities productively and as a result they achieve well. During the inspection, reception class children were fascinated by looking at an old oil lamp burning and by touching and smelling a wide variety of candles. In the Nursery, experiences of touching and playing with blocks of ice and with snow produced reactions of wonderment that demonstrated the impact the experiences had. In each class, the children have opportunities to begin to learn about the lives of others. For example, they pretend to be a postman or somebody going shopping.

100. Computers are well used and most of the children understand that using a switch or touching a screen will effect a change on the screen. Some are very adept at playing educational games on the computer! Children are given opportunities to cook, build with construction kits and experiment, for example, to look at what happens when a torch is shone on different surfaces. All this adds up to a challenging learning environment that, occasionally, is further extended by activities outside school; for example, a trip to the shops. The overall provision ensures that children learn successfully in this area of their development. The quality of such teaching is at least good.

### **Physical development**

101. The teaching of physical development is good and they achieve well. Children swim, use large gymnastics apparatus, small equipment such as balls and have opportunities to run, climb and ride on toys outside. As a result, they learn well and, within their physical abilities, show increasing control over the required skills. Some Reception Year children, for example, were able to imitate the teacher moving in a variety of ways, such as, sliding or wriggling on their backs or tummies. Children with greater degrees of physical handicap are fully integrated into such sessions and gain both enjoyment and control over their bodies through working with an adult performing the same tasks. Good emphasis is given to children learning to use their hands and to practise smaller physical skills. Children learn to play constructively with dough or clay, to use paintbrushes and other mark-making equipment with varying, but lessening degrees of support.

### **Creative development**

102. In both the Nursery and reception classes, the children's creative development is taught well through the provision of opportunities to paint, use clay, cut to stick and make pictures and models in a wide variety of ways. Because of this, the children's achievement is good. They also sing regularly and enjoy this greatly. It is also beneficial when songs are used as a marker to different stages of the day; for example, in 'hello' songs. Children gain knowledge of these songs, some simply recognising that they are familiar and others to the extent where they join in. Imaginative play is very successfully assisted by adults who are happy join in to demonstrate to children how to play in this way; for example, by taking part in a shopping trip or playing with a child with a garage or dolls' house. In this way, the children gradually learn to extend the way they play and become more adept at amusing themselves constructively both at school and at home.

## **ENGLISH**

103. Pupils' achievements in English are satisfactory overall. There are a wide range of special needs within the school, which makes comparison with similar schools inappropriate. The school has started a process of assessing all pupils against nationally agreed Performance Scales (P-Scales) in English as well as the useful, school designed system of Communication Banding. This assesses pupils' speaking, listening and communication skills. Analysis of the information available from these assessments indicates that pupils' learning and achievements over time are satisfactory overall. The range of special needs within classes, year groups and the school as a whole leads to a wide range in levels of individual pupil attainment.
104. Pupils' achievements in communication, speaking and listening are satisfactory. In the classes for younger pupils, up to Year 2, there are higher attaining pupils who listen very attentively, understanding the nuances of stories such as 'The Three Bears' and they talk of Goldilocks's fears and ask her questions to find out what she thinks. Many of the other pupils are not at this level but they are able to understand simple instructions and follow them. They know their name and are extending their concentration span. Pupils with complex needs attend to a range of sounds, tactile materials and lights and are beginning to communicate using 'Big Macs'. By Year 6 the higher attaining pupils show good concentration in listening to a story about a naughty wolf and talk about how they think the story will develop. They share their ideas and

listen to the opinions of others. Lower attaining pupils watch the teacher and when this is accompanied with continual signing and other visual prompts they too follow the story.

105. The senior part of the school, pupils from Years 7 to 11, has a higher proportion of pupils with more complex needs and their attainment levels are often lower. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils have established better listening skills and some volunteer answers and ideas, as in a lesson on writing their autobiography. Others need more encouragement, but all are able to listen to and follow instructions for the lesson activity as, for instance, a group taking photographs in the sensory garden. By Year 11 higher attaining pupils, in a session with the speech therapist, showed that they understood good social behaviour in a game where they practised greeting each other, asking a question and politely listening to the answer. Lower attaining pupils could listen carefully and respond by finding the correct symbol to give their answer. By this age, pupils are confident to meet visitors and the majority have the perseverance to make themselves understood.
106. Pupils' achievements in reading and writing are satisfactory. The youngest pupils, up to Year 2, are already enjoying using books and having stories read to them. The higher attaining pupils read simple stories and are beginning to think about the characters in such stories, realising, for instance, why the tiger is so worried about having to baby-sit a baby crocodile with sharp teeth! These pupils also write simple sentences, sometimes with adult support. In a lesson on family life they were able to combine given words and phrases into a sentence and write it for themselves. In this case, lower attaining pupils used the computer whilst those with more advanced pencil control developed their handwriting.
107. Lower attaining pupils, in their reading, recognise a small range of symbols and point to corresponding words on a page. They -overwrite words provided by an adult. Pupils with more complex needs recognise symbols and match them with photographs of that object. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils read simple stories more fluently whilst lower attaining pupils have confidence to identify symbols with words written under them. This means that they can begin to 'write' stories on the computer - with the prompt of both word and symbol. They also use handwriting and are developing pencil control in overwriting and copying single words. Higher attaining pupils are able to retell a story and write sentences of their own. They have developed an extended vocabulary and their handwriting shows correctly formed letters and simple punctuation, such as capital letters and question marks.
108. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils have similar skills and, although they enjoy books and are happy to read, there are more pupils whose reading is dependent on the support of symbols or the illustrations in the book. Their writing also shows the need for supporting pictures and symbols with their writing of words being either a copy of the adult's example or overwriting. All pupils are confident in using computer programs that combine words and symbols and this extends their achievement in writing.
109. By Year 11, pupils who read books show good perseverance and concentration. They use clues from illustrations and have a range of known words that enables them to read stories. They do not have secure phonic skills, however, or strategies to self-correct when the sentence they read does not make sense. In Year 11, much of the pupils' work is related to modules for examinations. Pupils in Year 10 have started nationally accredited modules of communication skills. This frequently requires just single words or short sentences to complete worksheets or in one case a short letter of thanks. Handwriting for this is usually clear, neat and mainly copied from an exemplar. Pupils practise spelling simple words, but they are dependent on adults for more difficult everyday vocabulary.
110. As all pupils are taught by a class teacher during most of the week, their literacy skills are further developed within other subjects. In mathematics and science, for example, the correct vocabulary was consolidated so that pupils were able to say how they had decided whether a shape was triangular or square by counting the corners.



111. Pupils' attitudes to their lessons are good. They try their best and follow the instructions and advice of the teachers and support assistants. They behave well and work quietly so as not to disturb others. Their attention in whole-group work is generally good and as in the group reading of the 'big book' 'Suddenly' they take turns in suggesting what might happen next. Written work is done with care and notebooks kept neatly.
112. The quality of teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. In the better lessons teachers know individual pupils' strengths and potential well. They use a range of prompts including key words, symbols and puppets to challenge pupils who then respond with their own ideas. Expectations are high, both for good attention and output of work such as clear signing or letter formation. Behaviour management is good and any distractions by pupils with challenging behaviour are dealt with calmly. Such pupils are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others. When the focus and purpose of a learning activity is clear to pupils and backed up with high expectations, pupils extend their understanding. For example, a younger group of pupils with complex needs made a simple choice between two toys and selected the photograph that matched their choice. The consistent use of precise Makaton signing by adults encouraged good responses by pupils. The same combination of specific vocabulary and accurate signing by the teacher, whilst reading with the class from a 'big book', meant that a group of higher attaining pupils made good progress in their development of vocabulary. This included a pupil with very hesitant speech. All were able to go on and write their own interpretation of the character using words learned in the discussion.
113. In those lessons that were satisfactory, this level of communication support is not used sufficiently or consistently to ensure that all pupils, not just those with speaking difficulties, have the means to understand and make their own spontaneous contribution. The majority of teachers and many support assistants and nursery nurses are able to sign adequately, but the precision and use of signing is variable. In other satisfactory lessons a slowness of pace and the use of inappropriately complex language meant that pupils became restless and lost concentration.
114. Teachers generally use ICT well to support pupils' literacy skills. Older pupils, for instance, use a commercial program to develop their spelling, whilst pupils of all ages use writing programmes to consolidate their vocabulary and extend their writing about books they read as a group.
115. The co-ordinator has worked hard and successfully to complete a policy for this subject and the literature section of the school's English scheme of work. She provides good leadership for the subject. Many teachers are using the lesson format of the National Literacy Strategy, but the Strategy planning itself is not securely in place. It could usefully be further developed and adapted to more accurately reflect the wide range of the particular and individual needs of pupils. The school intends to develop a fully planned literacy strategy that will integrate anticipated expectations of what pupils will learn. This will include speaking and listening, reading and writing, along with the already established work on stories and other literature. The intention is also to integrate the objectives of the school's communication policy so that the aim of having a 'total communication' environment throughout the school will be achieved. Once established, this should enable teachers to track individual pupils' progress in English as they progress through the strategy. The current lack of this fully integrated English curriculum depresses standards and achievements, since teachers are not clear of the level to which they should be aiming, particularly in the development of skills in reading and writing. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much as they could.
116. Assessment is overall satisfactory with a sound start having been made to assess pupils' attainment according to P-Scales. Pupils' work is also kept to show improvements from year to year and the much improved reports to parents provide a useful summary of pupils' levels of achievement each year. The Communication Bands assessment and targets in individual education plans are useful in helping teachers to extend pupils' work in these areas, but teachers are not yet using the P-Scales in a developmental way that will extend pupils' learning.
117. The co-ordinator has begun scheduled visits to other classes, observing and working alongside other teachers. This positive response needs to be developed further so that good practice in

some classrooms and ideas from termly planning can be shared. She has ensured that resources are now adequate.

118. There has been a good level of improvement in this subject since the previous inspection and the department now has a firm foundation for further sustained development. The start made on establishing a scheme of work throughout the school means that teachers now use a range of literature that increases pupils' experience and ensures that their entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study has been broadened. ICT is now used regularly in all classes and benefits pupils' learning on a daily basis. The enhancement of the reading books available and especially the new library areas in both the junior and senior school, is a valuable resource.

## **MATHEMATICS**

119. Throughout the school, progress made by all pupils in mathematics is good. Across the full range of learning difficulties, pupils achieve well against targets set in their annual reviews and on IEPs. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when there was some satisfactory and a small amount of poor progress, with no progress occasionally being made by a small number of pupils with more challenging behaviour. The behaviour of these pupils is now managed better and they are fully included in mathematics lessons. Their achievement is good.
120. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 understand number skills at an age appropriate level. They count reliably and know number bonds up to ten, counting on in ones and reading and ordering numbers up to twenty. They name the days of the week in the correct order and order objects by their appropriate size. Higher attaining pupils are usually considered for transfer to mainstream school.
121. By the end of Year 2, lower attaining pupils with more complex needs explore differences between materials. They are actively involved and enjoy activities such as matching pairs of gloves, experiencing tactile shapes and observing changes of colour on a computer screen. Pupils of higher attainment understand 'big' and 'small', add two numbers using objects, say what is one more or one less and make accurate estimations of the number of objects up to twenty.
122. By the end of Year 6, pupils with complex needs make choices about shapes and colours, sometimes using ICT switch devices. They select the correct colour from a choice of two, decide a favourite shape and show interest in a range of mathematical activities. Higher attaining pupils, relative to this group, correctly match objects to the appropriate numeral and written number. They add and subtract up to twenty. These higher attaining pupils understand ten more and ten less by using a 100 square. A few pupils recognise coins and understand their value. They draw and name simple two-dimensional shapes and use non-standard and standard measures.
123. By the end of Year 9, pupils with complex needs understand a wider range of differences between colour, size, shape and time through experiencing a variety of mathematical tasks and demonstrating preferences. They match items such as pairs of shoes and colours to the clothes they are wearing. Most pupils gain accuracy in their counting and recognition of numbers above ten. They start to sort objects by more than one property, such as shape, size and colour and use non-standard measurements such as hands. Higher attaining pupils explore units of measurement using rulers, scales and measuring jugs, measuring length accurately in centimetres. They add coins and small amounts of money as sums, with increasing accuracy. These higher attaining pupils collect data, such as the type of Christmas presents they received and compile simple bar graphs based on this. They understand the difference between first, second and last and recognise time on an analogue clock on the hour and at half past the hour.
124. By the end of Year 11, pupils with complex needs explore three-dimensional shapes by being helped to make them with pliable materials and they explore contrasting properties of different objects. With support, they throw dice and match numbers. They use their handprints to experience non-standard measurement. Many pupils understand 'same' and 'different' across a range of properties. They reliably know the value of coins and days of the week. Higher attaining

pupils collect data, making tally charts and produce and understand well-presented bar graphs. They understand 'quarter past' and 'quarter to' the hour on an analogue clock. Everyday mathematical vocabulary such as 'most' and 'least' is used and pupils can talk about and explain their work.

125. The quality of teaching mathematics is consistently good throughout the school. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when both satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching was noted. The main features of good teaching in mathematics include:
- secure planning that is linked to IEP targets. This planning incorporates clear learning intentions that match individual needs;
  - a good balance of support and challenge that is linked to the range of pupil attainment;
  - good use of different teaching strategies and resources;
  - good management of behaviour. This enables sessions to proceed in a productive way for all pupils;
  - clear instructions and questions that challenge pupils' knowledge and understanding;
  - good relationships;
  - a working environment in which pupils are confident to ask questions.

In a lesson for Year 2 pupils, the good subject knowledge of the teacher enabled her to identify the most appropriate resources needed to develop the concept of simple addition. The lesson was based upon the format of the National Numeracy Strategy and this provided a good framework in which the teacher asked challenging questions to pupils that extended their learning. When combined with her high expectations, the lesson was particularly successful. A lesson for Year 9 pupils was also characterised by high expectations. In this lesson pupils were expected to substitute numbers with letters in simple algebraic calculations. The lesson was particularly successful because the teacher had identified the different attainment of pupils and also the ways in which they learned most effectively. Consequently, the variety of methods used by her supported what the pupils were learning. For example, ICT was used well to challenge the higher attainers of the group. Lower attainers were supported by simple worksheets and also given LSA support. She used group work to stimulate mathematical thinking as well as develop language. Overall, this lesson was very successful because the provision was closely targeted at the needs of the pupils. It was also presented with enthusiasm and teamwork with LSAs.

126. Pupils show an interest in mathematics, are productive, work at a good pace and gain knowledge and understanding as a result of the clarity of expectations and information provided through the use of consistent signing, symbols, reference to pictures, objects and songs. This varied approach to teaching and learning is very successful in engaging pupils' attention and it has a positive impact on their learning.
127. Good use is regularly made of ICT to reinforce learning. It is used to enable counting of objects and to understand the sequence of numbers in line. The range of commercial software also provides a full range of interactive activities that often also promote pupils' social development. Younger pupils enjoy participating in 'hands on' activities such as knocking over and counting skittles as well as singing number songs. Older pupils indicate good mathematical thinking in their data collection task in their response to questions to which they can relate, such as, who came first/last in a race on the playground and what type of presents were given at Christmas.
128. Time spent in mathematics lessons was judged to be very short during the last inspection. This has been well addressed and the curriculum is now well balanced. Assessment outcomes were not used previously by teachers in order to adapt their curriculum planning. There is now a clear link in mathematics between daily lesson evaluations, IEP targets and reviews and planning aimed at raising pupils' achievement. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection and it is derived from a curriculum that is planned better.

129. Other factors that have impacted on the good achievement of pupils include a scheme of work that draws substantially upon the National Numeracy Strategy and which reflects the needs of the different levels of learning difficulty experienced by the pupils. The development of numeracy skills is in place across the whole curriculum with opportunities regularly taken to develop mathematical vocabulary and understanding; for example, the size of balls in physical education lessons.
130. Literacy skills are developed by teachers through use of appropriate vocabulary. Speaking, listening and other communication skills are also encouraged. Inspection evidence suggests that teachers' skills in the subject have improved through training in numeracy and use of ICT in the subject. The National Numeracy Strategy and other funding have enabled time for the monitoring of teaching and the introduction of a whole-school approach to using resources; for example, real money. Parents have been involved through a mathematics morning and mathematics at home booklet. Mathematics has benefited substantially through good subject leadership.

## SCIENCE

131. Pupils' achievements are currently satisfactory across all age groups. This is a similar judgement to that of the last inspection.
132. By the end of Year 2, pupils of higher attainment listen well to instructions, compare different data and select features that identify changes over time. Lower attaining pupils express preferences for a favourite toy. These skills were seen during a lesson concerned with comparing photographs of babies and toddlers and when in a class for pupils with profound learning difficulties. When compared to their prior attainment the learning they undertake in lessons is good.
133. By Year 6, pupils make simple scientific predictions and they learn well in lessons. They explore and talk about observations and make recordings using a combination of written word and signs. Many need help with transferring their ideas into written format. They freely use role-play, drawing, art and exploration to reinforce their understanding. In a lesson for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties they undertook investigations associated with pulling and pushing. A few pupils, by means of eye movements, could answer questions about the effects of the surface on a moving toy. Higher attaining pupils carried out an investigation into freezing. They made simple predictions and recorded their findings, some doing this independently. All pupils required the help of adults through the use of signs and symbols in order to complete their task. By the end of Year 6, pupils have shown good progress in their learning.
134. By the end of Year 9, pupils' skills and knowledge have progressed to the point that they make more detailed and accurate predictions and sequence signs and symbols independently, which record their answers and the data they have collected. The learning they undertake is very good. They describe and name observations using words such as 'fast', 'slow', 'rough', 'smooth' etc. to describe effects. Most still need considerable adult help to record their information. In one very good lesson concerning 'sound', pupils could recall the word 'vibrations' and gave verbal explanations of the investigation carried out the previous day. They clearly understood that air moves in waves to make sound. Some could then draw and label diagrams explaining the outcomes of their research, but here again all pupils required a high adult input in order to complete the task.
135. By the end of Year 11, pupil's work co-operatively in pairs or small groups, carrying out scientific investigations. They discuss their findings and effectively transfer knowledge and skills to different situations. Their recording shows a higher level of writing skill. In a lesson concerning the effects of magnets, pupils successfully showed that they understood the concept of 'different poles attract'. Their further investigation of the properties of magnets led them to understand that some magnets are more powerful than others and that they will pick up metal objects. Lower attaining pupils explained magnets that attracted each other as 'good friends' and those that repelled as 'go away'. In such lessons the social skills of pupils are also enhanced through the opportunity to work in small groups. The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good.

136. Pupils' enjoy science and their attitudes in lessons are very good. They form very good relationships with all adults and this impacts positively on the standards achieved. From the earliest years, pupils are very interested in the topics they study and are excited by the tasks they are required to do. They are very attentive during the introduction to lessons and keen to share their ideas with the rest of their class. They also increase their social skill by being prepared to listen to the views of others. Behaviour in science lessons throughout the school is mostly good and never less than satisfactory. Pupils particularly enjoy practical, investigative activities.
137. Pupils learn well because of good quality teaching. Most lessons seen were good, but for pupils in Years 7-11 they were never less than very good. Two of these lessons were excellent. The overall better quality teaching of Years 9-11 results in more effective learning for these pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection, where teaching was judged as mainly satisfactory. In the best lessons, the skilful and clear planning of teachers ensured that the intentions of these lessons were made clear to the pupils. This was done by means of good introductions that set out for pupils what they would learn. In effect, this fully engaged the pupils in their learning. Discussions during the course of lessons were open-ended and challenging and a good range of activities maintained pupils' interest. These were provided at a frequency that successfully maintained pupils' concentration. Management of behaviour was positive, but firm and this resulted in effective learning by pupils who then co-operated well with each other. There was a conscious effort by all teachers to link scientific knowledge to appropriate vocabulary and include all pupils in every aspect and experience of science. Support staff made a significant contribution to pupil's learning in science through their skilled intervention and support.
138. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory there was a lack of organisation that resulted in wasted time. Resources were not well used and questioning, because it was insufficiently focused, led to pupils losing interest. As a consequence, behaviour deteriorated and learning by pupils became ineffective.
139. At the time of the last inspection the scheme of work was in draft form only. It outlined general areas of work that each group of pupils would be expected to do. Much work has since been completed on this and the current scheme is satisfactory because it offers teachers more detailed guidance on the work that should be completed within year groups. It could be further improved through identification of opportunities where ICT might be used to raise levels of pupils' achievement. The coordinator is aware of this and has plans to develop the scheme within the context of whole school provision of ICT. It is an expectation of school management that schemes of work are regularly reviewed.
140. The procedures for monitoring pupils' subject performance contain both strengths and weaknesses. Assessment of pupils' attainment is satisfactory, with a range of appropriate data being collected. This includes P-Scales or National Curriculum levels. Teachers know their pupils well and this means that teachers provide good reports to parents that explain what their child can or cannot do. The weakness is that the data collected is not used to influence future curriculum planning or methods of teaching. There are currently no mechanisms or systems that effectively use the data to predict possible, future achievement of individuals or groups of pupils. Teachers' planning generally reflects the next stage in the scheme of work rather than an expectation of what pupils would be expected to achieve. Individual pupil's skills and knowledge, curriculum development needs and areas for assessment are rarely identified. This weakness is recognised by the coordinator.
141. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The subject leader does not currently monitor teaching standards because senior management staff undertake this role within the context of performance management routines. Although the coordinator does not yet look at planning in other parts of the school this practice is scheduled to soon change. There is nobody currently ensuring that the scheme of work is being used across the school. In this regard the role of the coordinator is under-developed. The most significant change since the last inspection is the rise in standard of teaching. This has been brought about through better identification, by the

coordinator, of what pupils are expected to learn. Although resources are satisfactory the use of these could be better targeted to support pupils' learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

142. Pupils' achievements in art have improved since the last inspection when they were satisfactory. These are now very good overall, across a broad range of materials and media working in two and three-dimensional contexts.
143. Year 11 pupils produce very good quality work and their achievements are very good. They use string prints according to their own design to make a background on which they cut and shape materials to produce pictures in the style of Klimt's work, 'Expectation'. Pupils make very good progress against the targets set. By the end of Year 9 they work with increased independence and, with varying degrees of support, make decorated figures in the style of Giacometti. Year 6 pupils' achievements are very good. They use considerable skill in forming clay figures. They adorn these 'Pebble People' with distinctive features. Pupils finish these figures with hardener before painting, taking great care to get in all the awkward corners. Pupils in Year 2 use colour and shape to make patterns and identify these in their surroundings.
144. Across all Years, pupils are given good opportunities to use and develop literacy skills, especially where these are appropriate to an art context. Numeracy skills are also developed; for example, in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils were encouraged to recognise shapes and the sequence of activities when printing.
145. The overall quality of teaching, which was satisfactory in the last report, is now very good. This is because basic art skills are taught very effectively and the high expectation teachers have of all pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to extend and challenge the learning undertaken by pupils. To support this they also make good use of age appropriate materials and the specialist accommodation.
146. Because teachers know the pupils well, they provide good opportunities for learning that are well matched to individual attainment. This knowledge is supported by good planning and high expectations of both behaviour and work. Good use is made of different levels of language to make sure that all pupils understand what they are required to do. There is a positive philosophy of inclusion and all pupils are fully involved in learning activities and given choices where possible. There is effective liaison between class teachers and support staff, who provide skilled interventions and use their own knowledge of the subject. They make a significant contribution to pupils' learning with a right blend of support and challenge. Teachers' planning includes intended learning outcomes for groups of pupils and assessment focuses on what each pupil has achieved. However, P-Scale targets could be used more consistently to better inform the planning of new work that would meet individual learning needs, as well as to monitor progress.
147. Teachers and support staff work hard to sustain pupils' interest in their art work, especially with pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set by very good teaching. They watch and listen well and learn to work with greater independence. They are pleased with the results of their work and this does much to enhance their self-esteem. Pupils take pride in seeing their work displayed around the walls of the school. Where possible, pupils assist in mounting this work for display. Using information and communication technology pupils frequently write the captions using both words and symbols. They also use the Internet to research the works of other artists. They know when they have done something well and this encourages them to greater effort.
148. The co-ordination of the subject is very good. The subject leader is a specialist who remains informed about current developments in the subject. There is a good subject development plan that identifies appropriate targets and reviews progress towards these. However, assessment is not sufficiently detailed to enable individual pupil's progress in art to be monitored over time. The very good, specialist accommodation considerably enhances the quality of pupils' learning and enables the curriculum to be effectively taught. The quality and range of learning resources and specialist equipment is very good.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

149. Pupils' achievements in design and technology have improved since the last inspection when they were satisfactory.
150. Year 13 pupils' achievements are very good using a broad range of materials to both design and make artefacts. They design and make photograph frames using plastic and their success in this contributes to a rise in their self-esteem. The quality of work seen in Year 11 is very good. Pupils achieve well and make good progress against individual targets. They work with increased independence and, with varying degrees of support, create a mosaic from tiles, which they make to their own designs.
151. Achievements of Year 9 pupils are good. In a lesson on pneumatics, they understood that air coming from the neck of a balloon causes it to move. They took part in an experiment to control the movement and anticipated what would happen when the balloon was released.
152. Year 6 pupils achieve very well in their food technology studies. They measure and mix ingredients in order to make simple cakes. Lower attaining pupils manage to do this only with varying degrees of adult support. In Year 2, pupils choose and successfully put together different shapes to make an owl. This task was combined with their literacy studies about the book 'Owl Babies'.
153. Throughout all Years, pupils are given appropriate opportunities to use and develop their literacy skills, especially in the use of words that directly relate to design and technology. Number words are used, as are opportunities to develop the use of number within the context of measures. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils with complex learning difficulties had the opportunity to understand and use words to describe the texture and smell of the foods and to develop their understanding of the number one.
154. The overall quality of teaching, which was satisfactory in the last report, is now very good because basic skills are taught very effectively and high expectations exist in all years for pupils' learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make very good use of materials and the specialist accommodation. They know their pupils well and ensure, through good planning, that high standards are set for learning and behaviour. Teachers are alert to all opportunities for learning, even where these may be unplanned. In a lesson for Year 9 pupils, when a pupil with limited language called out, 'Air', the teacher quickly re-inflated the balloon so that the pupil could again experience the rush of air as it came from the balloon. All pupils, whatever their attainments, are fully included in the activities and encouraged to make choices and decisions.
155. Teachers and support staff liaise well about the needs of individual pupils. LSAs make a significant contribution to pupils' learning with a right blend of support and challenge. Teachers' planning includes anticipated learning outcomes for groups of pupils and assessment correctly focuses on pupils' achievements. Intended learning by pupils is not well linked to P-Scales and these are not used consistently to inform the planning of new work that will better meet individual learning needs.
156. Teachers and support staff work hard to sustain pupils' interest in their work especially with pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set by very good teaching. They watch and listen well and learn to work with greater independence. They are pleased with the results of their work and this does much for their self-esteem. Many pupils show good levels of independent interest and concentration and some anticipate what will happen when the teacher is trying something new. They know when they have done something well and are encouraged to do even better.
157. Co-ordination of the subject is very good. The subject leader is a specialist and he keeps up to date with developments within the subject through work with local and national groups. Staff benefit from in-house subject training so that they can better support pupils' learning. The department enjoys good links with other schools, both special and mainstream. There is a clear

development plan that identifies appropriate targets and reviews progress towards them. However, assessment is not sufficiently detailed to enable individual pupils' progress in design and technology to be monitored over time. The very good specialist accommodation significantly enhances pupils' learning and increases the range of projects that are taught. This, combined with a good range of quality resources, impacts well on pupils' progress over time.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

158. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection. The subject forms part of the timetable during alternate half terms and no geography lessons were thus available at this time of the year. Analysis of previous work, inspection of planning documents and discussions with staff indicate that a full geography curriculum is provided and that the achievements of pupils are satisfactory. This judgement is similar to that of the last inspection.
159. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 draw their classroom in simple map form and use simple signs to record weather observations. They develop these skills by the end of Year 6 so that they are able to draw simple maps of the school or the locality. Their knowledge and understanding has been built upon and they have completed work relating to rivers, different habitats and ponds. Higher attaining pupils have produced drawings of the water cycle. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use their senses to experience a wide variety of materials and other stimuli. The sensory and interactive garden is used to extend these experiences. By the time such pupils are admitted to the senior school in Year 7, they develop this knowledge through visits to Shrewsbury, where they investigate land use and village design. They link this with historical facts through making comparisons with Victorian times and comparing modern building materials with those of earlier times. Lower attaining pupils also 'experience' Shrewsbury by experiencing the sounds, smells and feelings associated with town life. By keeping pupils' learning as interactive as possible, teachers ensure that the outcomes to this are good.
160. The current co-ordinator has been in post for a very short time, but has already managed to produce appropriate plans to develop the subject. The scheme of work is good and ensures that the needs of all pupils are fully considered. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities are identified where the use of ICT could develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. The range of resources to support learning is satisfactory. These include maps, photographs and models; there are plans to increase these further. The whole geography curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of trips to local areas of geographical interest; for example, Wroxeter and the River Severn. Samples of pupils' work that resulted from these visits show a satisfactory understanding of geographical concepts.

## **HISTORY**

161. During the inspection week it was only possible to observe two history lessons, so no definitive judgement can be made about the quality of teaching. Other judgements are derived from discussion with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and consideration of other documents including teachers' planning. Pupils' achievements overall are satisfactory.
162. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are introduced to the concept of time by looking at timetables, simple time sequences and resources designed to show changes over time; for example, photographic sequences of how people change as they get older. Through this they gain a good understanding that change is a continuous process. This understanding is developed further by reference to daily routines. In an English lesson for Years 1 and 2, pupils showed that they had good recall of earlier learning about Guy Fawkes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 study the Greeks and pupils of all attainment learn about their way of life, religion, games and food.
163. Planning indicates that pupils' individual needs are considered within the context of the group. They use appropriate historical vocabulary, such as 'long ago'. Higher attaining pupils correctly sequence events from their own lives; for example, the timetable for their lessons. In one lesson seen with Years 5 and 6 pupils, they investigated the use of building materials through time. They were successfully being 'Time Detectives' and could use their observational skills, previous



learning and information collected from home to identify materials and fuel being used in the old pictures of buildings.

164. In the other lesson observed for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils were organised into two different 'armies' of Romans and Britons. They were asked to explore feelings associated with these very different roles. Despite the very low attainment of some pupils they successfully entered into the spirit of the role play and identified with the concept of 'taking things by force' and how this upset their friends in the other army. Other historical areas used to develop these themes have included the Second World War and the Industrial Revolution. Pupils have also experienced the sight and sounds of a celebration day for Victory in Europe when senior citizens and local army personal brought memorabilia and vehicles to the school. This direct experience of items used in conflict has considerably enhanced the pupils' understanding of history. On the limited evidence available it is possible to conclude that pupils enjoy the subject and where teachers employ interactive learning the outcomes for pupils are more effective.
165. The subject is currently being well led by a member of the senior management team who has exciting plans for development. The scheme of work is good and plans are in place to enhance provision further with the introduction of improved assessment and recording and through the introduction of 'topic packs'. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection. These will include detailed planning linked to resource material and aimed at specific ability levels. The provision will be designed to establish the progress of individual pupils.
166. The subject is well supported through a wide-ranging programme of external visits as well as visitors to the school; for example, visits to Ironbridge, a working farm and Shrewsbury to look at items of interest connected to different historical times. Work is often linked to drama or music as seen in photographic evidence of pupils taking part in a Victorian Old Time Music Hall and a member of 'Shrewsbury Quest' playing a lute. The school has identified the fact that resources are not yet satisfactory to support the full range of learning needs. These will be developed in-line with the new topic packs to match the needs of both the scheme of work and pupils' differing needs.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

167. The school policy is to teach information and communication technology (ICT) as and when pupils or students need a particular skill. As a consequence, no individual ICT lesson was observed. Judgements relating to pupils' achievements have been gained through scrutiny of past work as well as observing pupils working with ICT within the context of other lessons. Overall, the achievements of pupils are satisfactory throughout the school and, unlike at the time of the last inspection, the progress they make is more consistent as they move from year to year. Progress made by pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is better than at the time of the last inspection because they now more ably interact with their environment. For example, all the devices within the sensory room are interactive and the degree of interaction is pre-set by staff, according to the needs of the pupils.
168. Children within the Foundation Stage, especially those who have been at the school some time, are confident users of computers. The higher attaining pupils among these know that by touching specific areas of the screen they can gain a response from the graphics. For example, one child set off an ambulance on its journey by pressing the icon labelled 'start'.
169. By the time pupils are in Year 2 they use commercial software programs to learn and consolidate mathematical skills, such as selecting the right number from a background of others that correctly identify the number of teddy bears on the screen. This and similar programs are regularly used for these pupils. Where pupils are of higher attainment more sophisticated programs are used. Pupils also use ICT generated symbols as an aid to their communication – composing simple sentences and making labels to describe their work. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning because in-line with the school policy, they use the technology for a clearly identified purpose.

170. Pupils in Year 4 show an increasing confidence in using ICT and, while the technology still supports learning through the use of commercial programs, the individual skills of pupils are developed better. For example, pupils are encouraged to type individual words and sentences on screen and in so doing show that they understand the use of keys, such as 'delete' and 'backspace'. For pupils of lower attainment, modified keyboards are used to help them to locate individual letters, although some pupils can only achieve this with considerable support from LSAs.
171. In Year 6, ICT is used to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. For example, in an English lesson that was aimed at getting pupils to predict storylines, computers were used by pupils to write simple sentences and extend their knowledge of vocabulary. It was particularly noticeable in this case that use of ICT extended the span of concentration by pupils and made their learning more effective. Lower attaining pupils within this year group learn to recognise colours through their work within the interactive sensory room and take part in limited communication through the use of 'Big Mac' switches that contain pre-recorded responses.
172. In mathematics lessons, Year 9 pupils use commercial software extensively in order to rehearse and consolidate addition and subtraction as well as choosing between different colours. In a history lesson, a 'smartboard' was used to fully engage the pupils' attention by using onscreen pictures to prompt and provide a lead for their re-enactment of a battle scene between the Britons and Romans. Through its use, the teacher enabled the pupils to understand the concept of 'battles' and how they might occur. For the lowest attaining pupils within this group, full participation was provided through the use of 'Big Mac' switches. In such examples the use of ICT considerably enhances the quality of pupils' learning.
173. Year 11 pupils, as in all other Years, show a range of skills in the use of computers and other technology. Higher attaining pupils word-process simple letters to their friends whilst other pupils operate a video, successfully moving the picture on frame by frame. Lower attaining pupils, as in other Years, continue to use large 'tracker balls' in order to gain a measure of control over the screen cursor. Where pupils are grouped by attainment, the challenges they receive are appropriately greater. For example, in a mathematics lesson, higher attaining pupils used data they had collected in order to compile graphs to display their results – these were based on 'presents we received at Christmas'. While different pupils received varying levels of support in this they collectively remained steadfast in completing the task and showed good levels of concentration.
174. Where use of ICT is planned for and used consistently, the attitude of pupils to their work is better. The best practice is where teachers routinely include ICT within lessons and its use has become a working tool rather than an occasional incentive. Where this was the case, teachers skilfully chose the most appropriate software programs to support and extend pupils' learning. Where pupils were seen using ICT as part of their regular work the levels of concentration were better and consequently they were more effective in their learning. Without exception, pupils responded well to the use of ICT and showed that they had developed good working habits. When judged by outcomes, as seen in pupils' learning, teaching is satisfactory.
175. The present co-ordinator is very new to the school and as yet has had insufficient time and opportunity to begin further development of the subject and provision. He has clear priorities for development. The current scheme of work is satisfactory, although its strength is in the fact that it focuses on the development of the communication skills of pupils. An aspect that could usefully be further developed is the recording and assessment of pupils' skills. Inspection evidence indicates that the use of ICT is not consistent throughout all classes and this outcome is linked to the confidence and competence of teachers and LSAs to use the technology. Consequently, not all pupils may receive their entitlement to the breadth of the curriculum. Where higher attaining pupils are matched with low teacher confidence this problem is exacerbated because pupils then have lower levels of challenge, which in turn affects their achievement. The co-ordinator is aware of this and intends to put in place better mechanisms to ensure that all pupils receive challenges appropriate to their attainment. The needs of higher attaining pupils should be a particular consideration. The school is about to commence whole-

staff training under the government scheme of National Grid for Learning. In itself this should address some of the more significant issues of staff competence.

176. Resources to support pupils' learning are very good. They are of good quality and the range available ensures that the needs of all pupils are considered well. In addition to a knowledgeable co-ordinator the school also enjoys the services of a full-time ICT manager. His considerable experience and knowledge is a significant factor in the development of the provision; for example, in the general reliability of the school Intranet and other hardware. In addition to his technical expertise, he also provides support for teachers either in lessons or assemblies. With such advantages the capacity for further improvement is very good.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

177. There was insufficient evidence available during the inspection to make judgements about standards in French throughout the school. There was one lesson of French taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection. There was also a very small sample of written work available for scrutiny. As a result, it is possible to make only limited judgements about what a small number of pupils in specific groups know, understand and can do. The inclusion of French within the curriculum represents an improvement since the last inspection.
178. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 recognise single familiar French words in both written and spoken form. They repeat words such as those that name colours and use these within simple phrases that ask for a particular colour of pen. A small number of higher attaining pupils recognise and use eight to ten words in French. They point to the appropriate food and drink pictures as the French word is said. This was a topic that they had studied in previous lessons.
179. These pupils, as well as some pupils from Years 7 to 9, match print French words to pictures so that they create illustrated menus or posters showing personal likes and dislikes. By the end of Year 11, pupils are expected to understand simple classroom instructions and respond physically or verbally, using sign or gesture. They are also expected to be able to copy a few familiar words with adult support, labelling pictures of vocabulary that they have learned.
180. There is a scheme of work, written by the subject leader for French, which provides detailed guidance to teachers of what vocabulary should be taught. There is also a good range of activities suggesting how the language might be taught. There is no indication in the scheme of work of how much time should be devoted to the learning of French each term. This is left to the class teacher to determine. This means that not all pupils spend the same amount of time learning French.
181. A strength of the planned programme is that it ensures that all pupils, including those who cannot, may participate in question and answer work. These pupils may answer with the support of aids such as the 'Big Mac' or similar switches. The programme for the pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are working towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is being developed by the class teacher with the support of the subject leader. This is not yet fully in place.
182. There is a good emphasis on the cultural aspect of the learning of French. Teachers have included food tasting or role plays set in a French cafe in their lessons. There is a bank of centrally held resources, but the simplified word and picture sheets for individual pupil's work are prepared by the teachers. Although these are word-processed and clearly presented they do not always offer pupils an accurate model of written French. Some words do not have correct accents or are written with the wrong definite article.
183. The scheme of work contains a range of anticipated outcomes suited to the different attainment of pupils. Although these are clearly described there is no indication of how these outcomes are to be assessed and no links have yet been made to the P-Scales in the scheme of work. Each

class teacher assesses pupils against these Scales on an annual basis, but teachers do not moderate their judgements with those of colleagues. As there is a commitment for all pupils in Years 7 to 11 to learn some French, all class teachers in these Years are, by definition, teachers of French. Although these teachers are supported on a regular, if informal, basis by the subject leader there had been no subject specific training for these teachers before they embarked on the teaching of French. Because there is no formal monitoring of the teaching it is therefore possible for teaching standards to slip and for incorrect learning to occur.

## MUSIC

184. Achievement by pupils throughout the school is satisfactory and is similar to the last inspection. Across the school, music is used effectively in other subjects to support learning. Action and counting songs were often seen to promote understanding and communication in lessons. Older secondary pupils with more complex difficulties performed a variety of dances from different nations in physical education, to the sound of music from different cultures, such as a Scottish reel, Hawaiian, Maori, Caribbean and Greek dances. These enabled pupils to experience and appreciate different cultural traditions in a thoroughly enjoyable and highly relevant way. In religious education, music is performed in celebrations and festivals, such as Diwali and Christmas. In one lesson for Years 3 to 6, pupils, developed a good understanding of a cold winter as part of their geography topic, by listening to the music of 'The Snowman' and then performing with improvisation using percussion instruments. In mathematics, pupils practise rhythm, patterns and counting.
185. In Year 2 pupils sing simple songs, often as markers to their timetable as they progress through the day. By Year 6, pupils sing as individuals, in small groups or all together. They understand opposites in music, such as 'quiet' and 'loud' and participate fully, clapping to a beat and improving their movement skills. By Year 9, pupils have further developed their musical ability. They know how to vary sound with speed and pitch and some pupils play bass guitar with a simple 'walking' bass line. Pupils throughout the school listen to and appraise different forms of music and realise how music can change their mood from happy to sad.
186. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but on the few occasions where the specialist co-ordinator teaches music, it is always very good. Particular strengths of this teaching include very good use of resources such as percussion instruments, taped music and compact discs for performing, listening to and appraising music. Flash cards and symbols are used very effectively throughout musical activities to promote better communication. Teachers ensure that music builds up pupils' self-esteem and confidence and contributes to pupils' progress in other subjects as well as their personal development. Pupils handle instruments with great care, listen carefully and nearly always behave well during musical activities because they have a positive attitude to music. In the very good lessons, teachers use a range of resources and techniques to ensure the concentration levels of pupils. For example, in a lesson for Nursery children the choice of songs, related to their story of 'Charlie the Chicken', quickly caught their imagination. The LSA provided good support in maintaining the momentum of the song and all children ended up singing with great gusto. The lower attaining pupils within the group were aided by the use of signing by the teacher.
187. Learning opportunities in music are satisfactory and planning for the subject has improved since the last inspection with the development of a scheme of work and a policy. 'The Musicians and Players' visit the school, adding to the range of musical experiences offered to pupils. Music also makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the curriculum needs to be further developed to ensure that skills are systematically built upon year on year. In this regard, the contribution that could be made by ICT has yet to be fully explored. The subject has been well led by an enthusiastic music co-ordinator who recognises the need to monitor teaching and learning across the school with the intention of improving systems that record pupils' progress and achievement. Resources that support learning are sufficient and used appropriately.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

188. Timetable restrictions limited the opportunity for observation of lessons, but judgements are also based upon discussion with staff as well as scrutiny of related documents.
189. Achievement of pupils is good throughout the school. They gain a range of basic skills and improve their performance through time. The annual reports relating to individual pupils indicate that targets within IEPs, as well as more general intentions, are well met. Younger pupils who have complex needs show satisfactory skill in their activities in the swimming pool. Most of the pupils within this group follow simple instructions on how to kick and as a result they propel themselves through the water. Higher attaining pupils develop this skill to propel themselves on their backs and develop further confidence in the water.
190. Younger pupils in Year 2 and up to Year 6, move from exploring basic body movements such as bending, kneeling and stretching and balancing and develop these movements using different parts of their body through imitation of adults. In these movements they show good control and coordination. They dance in time to music, changing direction and rhythm, respond to simple commands with accuracy and are aware of the space and others around them. They are able to collaborate collectively and in pairs.
191. By the end of Year 11, pupils with severe and complex needs experience changing direction and are aware of going forwards, backwards or around. As the majority of these pupils are incapable of independent movement the response they show to this is good. They extend their experience to include moving to the different rhythms of the music of different cultures. Higher attaining pupils within this group swim with appropriate support from LSAs. Supported by flotation devices they develop confidence in the water and individually extend their independent movement. Pupils in this group with greater mobility acquire and develop skills using different equipment. They move in response to tempo. They understand the nature of competition within games. Though some of these games are appropriately modified to include peers in wheelchairs they develop a good understanding of the concept of fair play as well as the need for warming-up exercises. This is particularly the case for students within the post-16 classes.
192. The teaching of physical education is at least good, but very good lessons were provided by specialist teachers. Without exception, teachers showed a good knowledge of the needs of their pupils and provided learning opportunities that were characterised by enthusiastic presentation. The pupils respond to this enthusiasm by putting in greater effort to their learning. LSAs also provide good support for pupils and ensure that each pupil is actively involved. Lessons are underpinned by good planning that also provides opportunities for the development of literacy and numeracy. For example, when post-16 students were preparing for their lesson they were required to identify the correct changing room for themselves, by reference to the sign and writing on each door. Very good levels of challenge are provided and tasks adjusted to match needs and to promote success. For example, in a lesson involving the trampoline, lower attaining pupils were given assisted bounces by staff so that they could experience the brief freedom of 'flight'. Clear objectives, instructions and demonstrations along with positive relationships inspire the pupils to try hard and enjoy their activity. For example, in the swimming pool, dancing or playing small-sided games. In one lesson, a pupil with autism who has severe difficulties in sustaining concentration achieved an IEP target of 'joining in an activity for ten minutes'.
193. At the last inspection there was no overall policy or scheme of work in physical education. Both these are now in place, with the scheme taking account of different levels of learning difficulties and disabilities. It provides a very useful guide to non-specialist teachers, with sections on step by step skills development such as in football and athletic events. Further support through training opportunities for all staff has increased the creativity and confidence of teachers. Pupils have opportunities to participate in a full range of physical activities including outdoor pursuits such as canoeing. The use of ICT has yet to be explored. For example, it could be used with higher attaining pupils to measure and record changes in body temperature and heart rate following exercise.

194. At the time of the last inspection most recording and reporting was merely a written record of what had been taught. Satisfactory improvement has been made as daily lesson plans are evaluated with comments on pupils' achievements. However, there is inconsistent use of such assessment in planning. The lack of specific assessment in relation to the good scheme of work devalues the potential impact of planning to raise pupils' achievement even though this is based on clear, assessment criteria.
195. The subject co-ordinator has developed it well through the scheme of work and provision of training for other staff, especially improving the previously less effective teaching in the lower school. There is a commitment and potential to further improve through the additional training of teaching assistants, monitoring and the development of assessment as a guide for planning. The contribution by physiotherapists to pupils' development and general movement is recognised and the good quality collaboration between these professionals and teachers is a significant factor in pupils' achievement and progress.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

196. Due to timetable constraints, it was only possible to observe lessons in Years 1 to 6. Additional evidence was gained from discussions with the co-ordinator; analysis of pupils' work and classroom display; scrutiny of resources and artefacts and an analysis of subject planning and the plans of individual teachers. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvements in the planning of religious education and in developing adequate learning resources and artefacts to enhance teaching and learning.
197. The achievements of pupils throughout the school are satisfactory. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 are learning about Christian stories and festivals, such as Easter, the work of Jesus and the story of the Creation. They know that Easter is celebrated with Easter eggs. Higher attaining pupils know that an egg is a sign of new life and that we also need water to live. By Year 6, pupils are aware that different religions are represented by different symbols; for example, the Cross representing Christianity. They also increase their knowledge about Christianity through Bible stories. Pupils have a good understanding of the celebration of festivals because teachers make appropriate use of good resources selected from a range of religious artefacts that represent major world faiths. This adds interest and vitality to the teaching and focuses pupils' attention on lesson activities. For example, they are aware of the Harvest Festival, Hallowe'en and Christmas celebrations.
198. Older secondary aged pupils in Years 7 to 11 learn about commitment and beliefs and make at least satisfactory progress in knowing that 'God' has a different meaning and significance for many religions. They know that people worship God in many different ways and they describe some of the symbols and the special events and celebrations of different religions; for example, the use of lighted candles in the festival of Diwali. Pupils are introduced to the similarities and differences of a variety of world religions; for example, through planned visits to a church and synagogue. They learn well about key concepts such as love, respect and forgiveness and are encouraged to practise such values in their own lives and this not only enhances their spiritual development, but also their social and moral development.
199. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Tasks are planned for the different abilities of pupils and support staff are effectively deployed to ensure that all pupils receive the appropriate degree of support. This ensures that pupils of all attainment capitalise to the full in their learning. Pupils' learning is made effective through the use of resources that appropriately catch their attention. Where necessary, teachers and LSAs reinforce learning through the use of Makaton signing, which enables pupils to gain a better understanding. Where lessons lost their impact it was because of the slow pace. In the case of a Years 1 and 2 lesson for very low attaining pupils there were too few LSAs. When one had to leave the room in order to see to the needs of a pupil the teacher was unable to ensure that all remaining pupils received the appropriate degree of attention.

200. There has been good improvement in the development of the subject since the last inspection. The school has now adapted the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and has begun to use 'Pupil' Scale assessments to record pupils' progress. The co-ordination and management of the subject is satisfactory, but procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning within the subject have yet to be developed. Procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress are satisfactory.

### **Post-16 Provision**

201. The majority of students for whom the department caters have particular and individual special needs. The provision for these post-16 students is good and they achieve well. This has resulted from good management of the department and good quality teaching. The most significant improvement since the last inspection is the introduction of a better range of externally accredited courses. This has had a good impact on learning and has raised standards overall. By the time they leave the school the students are prepared well for the next phase of their life and education.
202. Significant improvement in what the school provides for students over the age of 16 has been made since the last inspection. From being unsatisfactory in several areas, it is now satisfactory with some good features and is currently developing well. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was too narrow and no accredited courses were offered to the students. The recent introduction of a range and growing number of accredited courses has broadened the post-16 curriculum, providing good opportunities for students to raise achievement within individual subjects and their personal development. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) 'Towards Independence' module provides an appropriate framework for students' learning. The recent introduction of 'Transition Challenge' for pupils in Year 11 has also created improved continuity and progression in pupils' learning. During the last inspection there were insufficient links between post-16 provision and approaches in the senior school. These links are now strong and still developing.
203. Additional accredited courses include OCR NSP (National Skills Profile) and ALL (Accreditation for Life and Learning). The overall variety of modules now available provide opportunities in developing skills in areas such as communication and numeracy, daily living, sports and leisure, music, ceramics and ICT. Some lower attaining students use IT devices with pre-recorded messages so that they can join in the sessions of morning greeting. Higher attaining students use ICT in the presentation of their work. Vocational opportunities, through modules such as Horse and Stable Management, are also now on offer.
204. Good use is made of the accreditation systems to assess, including self-assessment, the students and inform planning. Teaching is consistently at least good, with good planning, good relationships and a good balance of support and challenge. During the last inspection the lack of challenge in the learning activities was noted. There is now a culture of persistent nurturing to which the students respond well and make good progress against individual targets. Students consolidate and extend their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills with numeracy embedded in the full range of accredited courses open to them. They particularly gain a deeper understanding of mathematical vocabulary and the proper functional use of object; for example, money in shopping.
205. The quality of teaching is good and contributes, in large measure, to the higher standards within the department. Where possible, teachers place students' learning into practical situations and this ensures that students retain good levels of concentration, even though some individual sessions are quite long. Numeracy and literacy development is fully considered and, even though many of the students are of low attainment, the levels of challenge presented to them are consistently good. For example, in a numeracy lesson, students had to match a number to particular objects. The teacher insisted that the task should be completed independently and then extended the learning to include the concepts of 'same' and 'different'. The way in which teachers throughout the department accurately match tasks to students' previous learning is a good aspect of the provision. Because of this, students continue to make good progress.

206. The attitudes and enthusiasm that students bring to their learning are good. In PE lessons; for example, they co-operate very well with each other and because of their enthusiasm, games become enjoyable experiences. Within this context they are also encouraged by teachers to develop both literacy and numeracy skills. For example, by counting the people on their team, realising that they are not even and then inviting one of the adults to join their side. When enthusiasm may flag, as it did for two students in a numeracy lesson, the majority still maintain their concentration.
207. Work experience opportunities are now satisfactory, having been limited previously. Through outside agencies, more opportunities are currently being developed outside school. Within school, mini-enterprises, including car washing, have been created and students gain work experience alongside non-teaching staff. Students with complex needs are helped in a shoe cleaning mini-enterprise and experience the world of work by joining in tasks such as wiping the tables in the scenario of a cafe.
208. The growing opportunities to explore work related activities have developed alongside the now satisfactory careers guidance. Previously this was regarded as underdeveloped. There is now the start of a better careers' library, appropriate links with outside careers agencies and stronger links have been established with local colleges.
209. The social development of students is fostered by visits within the local and wider community. Within the school, the students have the advantage of distinct and separate accommodation that staff use to benefit the growing maturity of each student. Although many students require frequent adult support, each of them is respected as an individual and provided with social challenges equal to their capability.
210. The developments in the post-16 provision are well led and managed. Good contributions are made by physiotherapists and speech and language therapists and these different therapies complement the overall development of students. A satisfactory range of activities is in place to ensure that all students are prepared for life beyond school.