

INSPECTION REPORT

KEMBALL SCHOOL

Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124503

Headteacher: Elizabeth Spooner

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger
23587

Dates of inspection: 29th October-1st November 2001

Inspection number: 192254

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 |
| School address: | Duke Street Fenton Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire |
| Postcode: | ST4 3NR |
| Telephone number: | 01782 234879 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Kevin Hamnett |
| Date of previous inspection: | 3/02/97 |

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|--------------|------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 23587 | Alastair Younger | Registered inspector | Art | The characteristics of the school and its effectiveness The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning How well the school is led and managed |
| 9052 | Helen Barter | Lay inspector | | Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers |
| 1405 | Mike McDowell | Team inspector | Geography History Modern foreign language | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| 19386 | Trevor Watts | Team inspector | Science Physical education | Quality and range of learning opportunities |
| 11239 | Sue Flockton | Team inspector | Foundation stage Music Religious education English as an additional language | |
| 27429 | Margaret Smith | Team inspector | English Information and communication technology Special educational needs | |
| 13101 | Mike Kell | Team inspector | Mathematics Design and technology Equal opportunities | |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 7 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| | |
| HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? | 12 |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | |
| | |
| HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT? | 13 |
| | |
| HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS? | 15 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? | 17 |
| | |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS | 18 |
| | |
| HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? | 19 |
| | |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 21 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 22 |
| | |
| PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 25 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is in a deprived inner city area. There are 78 boys and girls aged 4 to 19 on roll, a reduction of 6 since the previous inspection. Almost half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils have severe, or profound and multiple learning difficulties, 12 are from ethnic minorities, mainly Pakistani. All of these have English as an additional language. All pupils either have statements of special educational need or are in the process of being assessed. The school is part of Stoke's Education Action Zone. Since the previous inspection the number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties has risen significantly, resulting in attainment on entry falling to a very low level.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, with very few weaknesses. Its main strength lies in its attention to pupils' personal development. A high consistency of good teaching is helping pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve most of their individual targets. The headteacher provides good leadership and management, ensuring that her clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is translated into action. The school provides good value for money

What the school does well

- It is a happy place, pupils like attending and they are very well looked after
- Pupils are well taught. Teachers strike a very good balance between promoting pupils' academic progress and their personal development
- It provides a good range of learning opportunities. Particularly good attention is paid to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
- It inspires the confidence of parents
- The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership and management

What could be improved

- The planning of topic work to identify links to the National Curriculum
- The use of additional aids to communication to reflect the difficulties of a growing number of pupils

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 high standards identified by the previous inspection in February 1997 have been maintained despite the increasing complexities of pupils' needs. Weaknesses have been systematically addressed. There has been satisfactory 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 very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|---|
| Speaking and listening | B | B | B | B | |
| Reading | B | B | B | B | |
| Writing | B | B | B | B | |
| Mathematics | B | B | B | B | |
| Personal, social and health education | B | B | B | B | |
| 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.

It is very difficult for a school such as this to set precise targets to reflect year on year improvement. There is a small number of pupils and the ability of those about to leave is hugely variable. Individual targets are much more meaningful and evidence from reviews shows that nearly all pupils make significant progress in meeting most of their targets. Achievement in English is often very good. The overall judgement takes into account the fact that a small number of pupils with very limited powers of communication are not achieving as much as they could if better strategies were in place to teach them alternative forms of communication. Achievement in mathematics is good, helped by strong teaching of a good, well-organised curriculum. In music, physical education and information and communication technology achievement is good and in all other subjects, including science, it is satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Nearly all pupils love coming to school. They involve themselves wholeheartedly in lessons, concentrating to the best of their ability and trying very hard to achieve success. Pupils enthusiastically participate in out-of-class activities. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. The calm, happy and relaxed atmosphere of the school bears testament to the contentment of pupils who can focus their energies on learning and their own personal development, free from any worry and, usually, from the distraction of other pupils. Lunch and break-times are delightful, with pupils eating and playing together, never spoiling one another's enjoyment. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. To the best of their ability, pupils try not to cause hurt or annoyance to anyone. They show consideration for others less able, or less mature, than themselves, often offering help. They take great pride in being able to demonstrate their ability to assume simple responsibilities around the school. Strong relationships between pupils and staff demonstrate the trust that pupils have in the adults who are there to help them. Many strong friendships are formed between pupils. |
| Attendance | Good. Several pupils often have to miss school for medical reasons but nearly all establish very regular patterns of attendance. Little time is wasted by pupils |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| | during a very full school day. |
|--|--------------------------------|

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Foundation | 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.

There is a high consistency of good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Judging by the good work amassed by pupils over the past year it is safe to assume that the quality of teaching observed is a fair indication of that being produced day in and day out by nearly all teachers. Teaching of English is good overall and was very good in almost half of the lessons observed. Mathematics and science teaching is good overall. Aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE) are well taught in most lessons, often very well. In lessons where PSHE is the main focus, teaching is good.

Underpinning the success of teaching is the very successful balance teachers maintain between promoting learning and nurturing pupils' personal development, thus meeting the individual needs of pupils with a high degree of success. Teachers can do this because they are constantly checking whether pupils have understood what has been taught and whether their personal needs are being met. This would not be possible without the strong contribution of a skilled team of support staff.

Pupils learn well because teachers succeed in making lessons varied and interesting. This is an essential skill when the same topic frequently has to be repeated to ensure that pupils have learned, and remembered, what has been taught.

Less successful teaching is usually characterised by either low or unrealistic expectations. In the former, work is occasionally too easy for higher achieving pupils and insufficient demands are made of those presenting difficult behaviour. In the latter the work is beyond the ability of pupils, resulting in them losing interest and becoming easily distracted. A further factor limiting learning is the inability of a small number of pupils to communicate successfully because teachers are not adequately developing methods to make this easier for them. Apart from this, however, the teaching of basic skills is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. Pupils are taught a varied range of subjects, including religious education. There is a strong focus on the very important subjects of English, mathematics and PSHE and good attention is paid to ensuring that national numeracy and literacy strategies are implemented. Subjects are made relevant, thus ensuring that individual needs are being met and all pupils can be included in all learning activities. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Good. Pupils, parents and teachers benefit from the services of a support assistant who speaks Urdu as well as English. Those with limited powers of speech are helped through the services of a speech therapist. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. This is at the heart of the school. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to reflect on their own, and other's, lives and are helped to feel valued. Staff set a very good example to pupils, demonstrating the values of trust and honesty. The many trips out of school combine opportunities for pupils to practice their social skills whilst improving their cultural awareness. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Very good. Child protection procedures are correctly followed. Pupils are happy and well looked after. A range of good policies directs procedures for ensuring that pupils' progress is carefully monitored. A weakness is that the good information gathered is not sufficiently used to plan the content of some of the minor subjects nor rationalise the grouping of pupils. |

The school works closely with parents to ensure that they are kept well informed about the progress of their children. Most parents are strongly supportive of the school and greatly appreciate the hard work that goes into ensuring that their children are well educated and well looked after.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher thinks deeply about how to keep improving the school. She has built up a loyal staff, who have pupils' best interests at heart. There is a good deputy who complements the skills of the headteacher particularly well. The sharing of responsibilities for subject management meets with mixed results, but most subject managers are conscientiously fulfilling their duties. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | Satisfactory. The governing body occasionally provides valuable support to the headteacher. Several governors are using their experience from other fields to help in the management of the school. The main weakness of the governing body is that it is too reliant on the headteacher in establishing strengths and weaknesses of the school and proposing ways to sustain or improve them. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. There is a long established system in place for the monitoring of teaching. Some of this is informal, but it nevertheless results in the headteacher having a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals, allowing her to deploy them effectively. All staff are set targets and training is linked to them. Regular reference to the good school improvement plan allows the pace of development to be monitored closely. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. Careful consideration is given to how money is spent. Equal consideration is given as to how money can be saved to fund future developments. Grants are used for their designated purpose and the school seeks best value in its budgeting. |

Staffing is good. There are sufficient teachers and they share a good range of experience and expertise. Supporting these teachers is a large number of classroom assistants who provide invaluable help in the classroom, often to ensure that all pupils can be included in all activities. The accommodation is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Their children are being well taught and are making good progress • They like the headteacher and feel comfortable in approaching staff • They are kept well informed about their children's progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four parents would like to see a greater range of activities outside lessons • Four parents would like the school to work more closely with them |

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views but not with their negative ones

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Because of the wide age and ability range in each class, it is difficult to track progress by class or Key Stage. The degree and complexity of learning difficulty, often in association with physical disability, has far greater impact on achievement than chronological age, especially in the case of pupils whose condition is worsening. However, there is good evidence, from assessment and recording files and Records of Achievement, that individually, nearly all pupils achieve well, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Children enter the school with exceptionally low levels of attainment. They achieve well in the foundation stage and continue to build on that start as they pass through the school. They do so because there is a high standard of teaching and staff pay particularly close attention to pupils' personal as well as social needs.

2. Achievement is good in English, mathematics and personal, health and social education, three of the most important areas of the curriculum. Pupils also make good progress in achieving success in the individual targets they are set in reviews. The main obstacle to better achievement is the underdevelopment of alternative aids to communication. This is particularly significant for those groups of pupils with severe autism and those whose physical disability prevents them from letting staff know how much they have understood. The problem is most noticeable in English, but also has an adverse effect on achievement in all other subjects. Pupils with English as an additional language make equal progress to all other pupils.

3. Achievement in geography, history, religious education and to a lesser degree science is weakened by the theme, or topic, centred approach where planning is not sufficiently sophisticated to ensure that each of these subjects complements what is being taught in the others rather than repeating it. It also results in some tenuous links between the subject matter being taught and national curriculum programmes of study. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory overall in all four subjects and also in design and technology, art and cultural studies. Achievement is good in information and communications technology, where teachers' skills have increased, and there is a better range of resources than at the time of the previous inspection. It is good in music, where teaching is particularly strong, and in physical education where a wide range of activities helps to keep pupils motivated.

4. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress despite the very large groups in which many are taught. The good organisational skills of teachers help overcome this, but it is a burden. When possible, such pupils are included in other classes. It is in these classes that communication difficulties are most pronounced and academic achievement suffers, but the social inclusion is a balancing strength. Occasionally, the extreme behaviour associated with the autistic tendencies of a small number of pupils interferes with their learning. When this happens, less experienced teachers tend to sideline these pupils, resulting in their limited achievement in those lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Pupils greet their teachers and the classroom staff eagerly, and they are welcomed warmly in return. When lessons commence they are keen to take part. For example, when

a group with profound learning difficulties were told the story of Noah's Ark, they listened actively and took part in making animal noises. In music lessons, a great deal of verve and spirit is brought to the playing of percussion instruments. There is great pride in achievement among those who sing in the choir. This is also seen in pupils who play African drums in an ensemble performance with pupils from a nearby high school. When it is necessary to do so, pupils also show quiet, responsible behaviour, as, for example, in the careful manner in which they handle artefacts in a religious education lesson.

6. Over time, pupils show a developing sense of responsibility. More able-bodied, older pupils help those in wheelchairs and ensure that they get their turn. They reciprocate by showing their appreciation for what is done for them. Younger pupils begin to exercise a small degree of responsibility for an early stage, for example, by returning class registers to the office. As they become more confident, pupils perform in assemblies and concerts and at special school festivals. They volunteer to clear away after lessons and they do additional work in their own time. In this, they show the positive values that the school promotes.

7. When the whole school comes together, as it did for the African drum concert, behaviour is appropriate and very good. Again, on a journey from the school to a nearby centre for physical education, behaviour was of a high standard. Mealtimes are orderly and sociable occasions. The pupils serve themselves and talk cheerfully to one another in their table groups. Behaviour in lessons is very good; however, there is a small number of pupils with particular special educational needs that result in behaviour that is difficult to manage. The school has not yet successfully devised suitable means to ensure that these few pupils fully benefit from teaching, and that their involuntary behaviour does not prevent others from learning. The school does not exclude pupils so it is important that it succeeds in devising means of managing them more effectively. Relationships between pupils and adults at the school are very good. They are founded on the feelings of pupils that the school is a safe place in which they can learn and express friendships. The adults know their pupils very well; they anticipate their difficulties, celebrate their achievements and respond to them with genuine warmth. Over time, pupils become more aware of their own actions and the effects these have on others. Older pupils have a good understanding of these matters.

8. During the inspection, no incidents of bullying, sexism or racism were noted and the school incident book confirms that incidents of this kind are very rare. The school has successfully built on the high standards of conduct and personal development commented on the last report.

9. Most pupils have good attendance at school. Although for many this is affected by frequent absences for illness, most come to school when they can because they enjoy the activities provided. Occasionally, pupils are late for school in the morning when transport is delayed but, on the whole, most arrive in good time for the start of registration and morning activities. Parents are very pleased that their children enjoy coming to school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

10. Teaching is good overall, similar to the previous inspection. About three in every four lessons observed was taught to a good or better standard, about one in three to a very good standard. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There is very little difference in the overall quality of teaching for different year groups but the teaching of the youngest pupils was never less than good. Six different teachers shared the best teaching in eight different subjects, demonstrating the breadth and quality of teacher expertise. The past

work of pupils testifies to the fact that what was seen during the inspection was probably a good indication of the quality of teaching most of the time over the past year.

11. Teaching of English is good overall and was very good in almost half of the lessons observed. Mathematics and science teaching is good overall. Aspects of personal, social and health education, particularly at the end of school when pupils gather together to discuss their day, are often very well taught. In lessons where PSHE is the main focus, teaching is good overall. Teaching is very good in music and good in religious education, the food aspect of design and technology, information and communications technology and physical education. It is satisfactory overall in art, geography and history.

12. Teachers maintain a very successful balance between promoting learning and nurturing pupils' personal development. Here, the high quality support of classroom assistants is invaluable in helping to meet the widely ranging individual needs of pupils with a high degree of success. These assistants are skilled in supporting learning, behaviour and assessment. Teachers are effective because they are constantly checking whether pupils have understood what has been taught and whether personal needs are being met. They know that both are vital if pupils are to fulfil their learning potential. As a result, pupils are happy and have a particularly good impression of how well they are learning.

13. Pupils also learn well because teachers succeed in making lessons varied and interesting. Many pupils require a huge degree of repetition because they cannot retain much of what they have learned in one lesson long enough for them to use it in the next. Teachers are particularly adept at presenting the same work in many different ways so as to help reinforce pupils' learning, whilst at the same time moving pupils on in very small steps when they are ready.

14. Less successful teaching is usually characterised by either low or unrealistic expectations. In the former, work is occasionally too easy for higher achieving pupils and insufficient demands are made of those presenting difficult behaviour. In a mathematics lesson for instance, where Year 9 pupils were learning about doubling numbers, there were not enough activities to challenge pupils who could complete this task already, even the teacher commented "it was fun, but it was easy". In the latter the work is beyond the ability of pupils, resulting in them losing interest and becoming easily distracted.

15. Generally, teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the subjects they teach and also the difficulties most pupils face in learning. There are, however, exceptions. Most teachers are not sufficiently developing methods to make communication easier for a small group of pupils. As a result, those with the most pronounced difficulty have few means by which they can express whether they have learned what has been taught and can play only a passive role in discussions. Another weakness in teaching is occasionally seen when teachers are faced with the extreme behaviour associated with autism. Too often the strategy for managing this behaviour is to ignore it or restrain the pupil, as tends to happen in a class with Year 5 pupils in it. This results in those pupils making insufficient progress, as happened in a puppet making exercise and also a science lesson where other pupils were learning about pushing and pulling forces.

16. Weaknesses in subject expertise are exposed in the planning of theme work. Too often, teachers do not bring out those aspects of the topic that relate to the subject being taught. This is seen in history, for instance, where insufficient attention is paid to how things change over time and what were the underlying causes that have brought about important events, also and in geography where occasionally lessons are based on a chance association of the school theme and a geographical objective, rather than concentrating on

the important necessity to link the study of places to the development of geographical skills. In these lessons learning does take place, but not necessarily the learning relevant to the subject. This is reflected in minor imbalances in the curriculum.

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

17. The school has a good curriculum, as was the case at the previous inspection. There is a good emphasis on English, mathematics and personal and social development, and all of the other subjects of the national curriculum are taught, apart from a foreign language. This is satisfactorily brought into "cultural studies" where the learning of language is of secondary importance to understanding different cultures. Money from EMAG funds a support assistant who speaks Urdu as well as English and a home/school link worker is funded through the Stoke Education Action Zone. This has a good impact and enables pupils with English as a second language to follow the same curriculum and make equal progress to other pupils. Sex and drugs education, as well as personal safety, are taught in personal, social and health education lessons.

18. The youngest children are taught in classes with slightly older pupils. They are taught a good mixture of lessons from the Early Years curriculum, as well as from the National Curriculum. Most pupils are in mixed age classes. This occasionally leads to difficulties in planning a series of lessons so as not to repeat work done in previous years, but for most pupils this is not significant because of the need for regular reinforcement.

19. Each pupil has their own plan of learning targets for each subject. These are very good but place a major burden on staff to produce them for every subject, rather than just the most important ones such as language skills, mathematics and personal/behavioural development. In several subjects, including history and geography, the focus strays from the subject because the lessons have been planned as part of a school-wide topic. An example is the teaching about the current activities of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in a history lesson under the topic of 'water'

20. The oldest pupils work for Certificate of Achievement awards, which provide good external accreditation for these pupils. These courses include subjects such as vehicle care, hairdressing, photography and care of farm animals. Some of these courses are taught at a local college, where the pupils have the benefit of mixing with other students during lessons and at lunchtimes.

21. Pupils with the most profound difficulties are taught in two separate classes. Each has lessons that are well designed, resourced and taught for their particular needs, whether in the classrooms, the hydrotherapy and Jacuzzi pools or out of school on visits. Much of this work is based on developing the pupils' senses, body awareness, movements, and awareness and control of things around them. Where similar, but slightly less profound difficulties are present, several pupils are included in other classes. Very occasionally they are not fully involved in the main lessons, often because of communication difficulties.

22. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy well, modifying some aspects to best suit pupils with special needs, and this is becoming increasingly effective in raising standards in English. The National Numeracy Strategy, which is more recent, has also been adopted well, and it is proving to be equally effective in raising awareness of mathematics, and increasing pupils' skills. In many lessons, not enough use is made of

modern electronic aids, including computers, to help to develop pupils' learning, especially communication, throughout the school.

23. At the age of fourteen, pupils begin their careers education, and the school carries this out well. At an early stage, pupils and parents are reminded that there is a life beyond the school years, and that it will soon be time to consider their options. This later develops well, to cover a wide range of choices and possibilities about, for example, sheltered work opportunities, sheltered accommodation, courses at local colleges and leisure activities. A small library contains good information about different areas of work, guides for parents, courses at colleges, and information about places that pupils have visited, or from people who have visited the school to give talks about their work. Lessons within personal, social and health education often deal with what the future can hold for pupils, and trying to help them to be as independent as possible. The local careers service is well involved in providing information and talks for pupils on many of these topics. Pupils look at the different jobs that people around the school do, such as the teachers, caretaker, secretary and kitchen staff; and they also visit other places to learn about different jobs in the wider world.

24. Pupils' learning is helped through extra-curricular lunchtime activities, such as the choir, gardening club and recorder club. A host of trips out of school also contribute very well to the curriculum. These are all closely connected to subjects and topics that the pupils are studying. As part of the current topic on "water" pupils visited a supermarket (to look at the fish counter), the canal, an aquarium, a sea life centre, Stapely water gardens, a garden centre, Carsington reservoir and Liverpool docks. For a course about vehicles, they went to a car showroom, a bus cleaning depot and an army vehicle repair base.

25. Many strong links with other schools and institutions greatly enhance the pupils' learning. Visitors come into school to talk about their work, and the school welcomes mainstream pupils and nursery nurse students on work experience placements. Many of the older pupils attend local college courses such as computers, photography and personal presentation. Good use is made of physical education facilities at a local sports centre, swimming pool, college and young offenders' institution. Along with other special schools, pupils take part in swimming galas, athletics events, football tournaments and the Special Olympics for the West Midlands each year.

26. Very good provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is central to the philosophy of the school and one of its greatest strengths. The very good outcomes of this provision, such as improved self-esteem, awareness of others, and a sense of responsibility, improve pupils' learning in all areas of the curriculum.

27. A wide variety of faiths and traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, are taught through religious education lessons and assemblies. Older pupils are taught how beliefs affect the way they live, and teachers use current events well to illustrate this. Pupils handle artefacts, visit places of worship, and meet leaders of faith communities when these leaders contribute to special assemblies. Relationships are very good. Pupils know that they are valued and so develop self-esteem, and confidence, which enables them to value and respect others. Each class in turn leads a weekly assembly. This combines Christian worship with a celebration of the individual through the presentation of achievement awards. Each class has a ten-minute collective worship period at the end of the morning session, in which pupils reflect on what they have done so far that day, give thanks, and end with a prayer. At times the transition from a very busy, active lesson to a calm reflective atmosphere is achieved very effectively by the lighting of a candle and quiet music.

28. Moral values are promoted very well. Staff are excellent role models. Teachers are firm but fair, and pupils learn what is and is not acceptable behaviour. The youngest pupils are made aware of the importance of honesty, fairness and the need for rules of behaviour. Rules, or codes of conduct displayed in classrooms are appropriate to the level of understanding of the pupils. Stories, assemblies, and current events form the basis for discussions on right and wrong. Older pupils sometimes reprimand each other, and can say why particular behaviour is unacceptable. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, and to understand its effect on others.

29. All pupils are expected to accept responsibility. Each class has responsibility for monitoring the collection of particular material, such as foil, paper, or plastic, for recycling. Pupils are taught to care for the environment and participate in the Eco-Schools Award Scheme. In classrooms pupils are given responsibility for regular tasks, such as feeding the fish, or watering the plants. Older pupils work their way through a list of tasks, in an English lesson. Pupils are encouraged to take part in fund-raising for charities such as Red Nose Day, and each year they choose a different charity to be the recipient of the Harvest service collection. They learn to work as a team, and take part in football matches with other schools. Good relationships were observed between Kemball pupils and visiting pupils from a local mainstream school. Numerous examples of co-operation, and helpfulness, in and out of lessons, were seen on the inspection, and pupils were very welcoming and helpful to adult visitors to the school. Older pupils helped the younger, and less able pupils to return to class after a concert in the hall. Sharing lunch in the dining room with the older pupils and witnessing the recreation period afterwards in the school yard was a delightful experience, which demonstrated the effectiveness of the provision for social development.

30. Pupils learn about their own culture and the diversity and richness of other cultures through lessons in history, geography and English literature, and as a result of the many visitors and visits organised by the school. Religious education gives pupils an insight into the lifestyles and traditions of people from other countries. The school also celebrates religious feasts and traditional holidays, such as the Chinese New Year. Good use is made of contacts with local musicians and artists. Recently pupils took part in a music project to introduce young people to South Asian music. They worked with musicians from Sampad, both in school, and at the New Victoria Theatre. Music, including the opportunities to hear live music, contributes very well to the cultural development of pupils. Pupils from Kemball joined with a local mainstream school to learn African drumming, and took part in a joint performance during the inspection. Two Fine Arts students created a mural in the swimming pool, incorporating pupils' ideas and designs in the work. The library is well supplied with books to support an awareness of both local and multicultural issues.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. This is very caring school in which pupils are happy and well looked after. The quality of educational and personal support and guidance offered to pupils is good because staff have excellent relationships with them and a good understanding of their needs. There is high quality support for their personal development which helps pupils to gain in confidence and to achieve well.

32. Parents are very pleased with the pastoral care provided for their children. They describe the school as having a lovely, 'jolly' atmosphere with lots of laughter which encourages their children to want to come to school. Nearly all parents say that they are comfortable in approaching any member of staff if they have any worries.

33. Staff have very good knowledge of pupils and their families and work closely with them to help them with any difficulties that they experience. Child protection procedures are good and staff have received up-to-date training so that they know how to report and record their concerns. There are very good health and safety procedures in place to ensure that pupils and staff work in a safe and secure environment. The school continues to closely monitor the car parking arrangements and the difficulties associated with the arrival and departure of buses and taxis.

34. There are sound procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' attendance. In conjunction with the educational welfare officer, the school has devised a draft attendance policy with clear guidelines for staff. As a result, the completion of registers has improved and staff are clearer about how to code absences, particularly in the case of two pupils with long-term absences which have been condoned by parents.

35. The school's approach to monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour is good and, as a result, pupils learn to behave well and to follow the simple class rules. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils has a significant impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils are treated with respect and care and staff are consistent in their expectations that pupils will behave well. Where pupils have significant behaviour problems, there are clear strategies in their individual education plans. All staff have been trained in SCIP procedures so that the use of control, where necessary, is used correctly. The school maintains satisfactory central records of incidents and any examples where control has had to be used. At break and lunchtimes pupils are very well supervised by staff who ensure that they are safe but who engage themselves well in pupils' play so that pupils have fun and behave well in a safe environment.

36. Pupils' personal development is promoted and monitored very well. Records of achievement contain very good evidence of their participation in events such as visits outside school, concerts and assemblies and certificates of achievement, for example for swimming. The files are very well kept. They are completed regularly and examples of work and photographs are dated and annotated. They provide good evidence for teachers when discussing pupils' progress with their parents and when reporting on personal development in annual review reports. Throughout the school there is very good emphasis on celebrating and recognising pupils' work and achievements on display boards, in classrooms, corridors and in the foyer.

37. Although teachers are very good at using ongoing assessment in lessons, there is room for overall improvement to ensure consistent practice in formal assessment and recording of what pupils know, understand and can do. English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education are well planned and have good systems and procedures for assessing pupils' achievements and progress. On the other hand, planning and procedures in history and design and technology are unsatisfactory. The school has good procedures for individual target setting. Targets from the previous year are evaluated and new ones for mathematics, English, personal, social and health education, and usually music, are set at annual reviews of statements of special needs. These targets are simply written but it is this simplicity and clarity that makes them so effective because pupils' progress towards meeting them can be easily evaluated.

38. Although assessment procedures are good, the school is not always effective in using assessment information to plan future work to precisely meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, lesson planning is not always sufficiently sharp in using the

information about pupils' achievements to provide extended learning opportunities for higher attaining pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The school has a very good partnership with parents and works effectively with them. As a result of the open and positive relationship between the school and its families, parents are very pleased with the school, the education that it provides and the achievements of their children.

40. Through their responses to the questionnaires, parents showed particular appreciation of:

- the teaching that their children receive which helps them to make good progress;
- the school's high expectations;
- high quality leadership and management
- the comfort with which they can approach the headteacher and staff;
- the way in which the school keeps them informed;
- the enjoyment which their children get from coming to school.

41. Only a very small minority of parents had any criticisms. A few parents were not sure that the school works as closely with them as it might and a similar number would like to see a greater range of activities provided outside lessons. The inspection team agrees fully with parents' positive views of the school. It feels that the school has very effective links with parents and works closely with them to help them support their children at home and at school. The range of extra-curricular activities provided is good and includes clubs at lunchtime and visits outside school.

42. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The school documentation is clearly written and attractively presented. It encourages parents to get involved with their children's learning both at school and at home and to support the school as much as they can. Staff place high priority on regular communication with them through telephone calls, home-school diaries and newsletters. The school is open and friendly which means that parents feel at ease when they wish to speak to teachers about their children's progress and any concerns that they might have. Parents receive very detailed information about their children's achievements and progress in the annual review reports. These are well supported by the records of achievement, which are regularly shared with parents.

43. Since the last inspection, the school has strengthened the links that it has with parents and makes every effort to work with them for the benefit of pupils. The appointment of a home-school link worker from the Education Action Zone and a support assistant, via EMAG funding, to work with ethnic minority families has been a positive step forward in building links and the confidence of some families who may not be as involved in their children's education as the school would wish. Most parents attend annual review meetings and there is good attendance at regular coffee mornings. There is a small core of parents who give regular support to the school through their involvement on the governing body, with fundraising activities and voluntary help, for example, for visits outside school. A parent support group meets from time to time to share experiences and to work on projects such as making story sacks. The school also runs 'workshops', reflecting parental interest in subjects such as aromatherapy and play.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher has a clear vision of how she would like the school to develop. This is closely linked to her well-informed perception of how provision for this type of child is likely to develop across the whole authority. Change is imposed carefully and gradually. Improvements are solid and likely to last. This is largely because staff fully support proposed developments and with good training and support are playing an increasingly professional role in their own areas of responsibility. There is a good deputy who complements the skills of the headteacher particularly well, ensuring that vision is translated into practice. At the time of the previous inspection the headteacher was newly appointed. Since then her leadership and management skills have grown.

45. The governing body plays a sufficient role in the management of the school. Several governors are using their experience from other fields to help in the management of the school, for instance expertise in personnel management and finance has been much appreciated by the headteacher. Several governors have a close involvement because they have children who either are, or have been, pupils at the school. They bring a valuable lay perspective to the headteacher's educational vision. Governors have a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses because the headteacher tells them. They are not sufficiently involved in monitoring standards, and initiatives for improvement usually come from the head and staff. The governing body is currently under strength but sub groups are still functioning, meeting at suitable intervals to discuss relevant issues.

46. The school has put in place policies and procedures to ensure that it can continually monitor and review its performance and the standards achieved by pupils. As part of this, all teachers are interviewed annually by a member of the senior management team. Targets are set that specify what the pupils should achieve and the professional development required by the teachers. Teaching and planning are monitored by senior staff and teachers' progress towards the targets is reviewed. A good feature of the staff development procedures is the requirement that teachers receiving in-service training as courses should evaluate their usefulness and, where possible, share what they have learned with others. Training is planned to address shortcomings in skills in information technology, exposed by the rapidly improving resources. The work of the school is greatly helped by efficient administrative and premises staff.

47. The efficiency of the school is good. It plans carefully to finance the developments set out as priorities for spending in its improvement plan. It manages its budget well; an audit of priorities is conducted prior to the start of each year that identifies areas for expenditure. The head teacher then draws up the annual spending plan and seeks approval for this from the governors. The governors have an appropriate committee to deal with financial matters and members are kept up to date by means of regular statements of the school's income, expenditure and balances throughout the year. However, the involvement of governors in this process is less active than it should be. While they certainly question the head teacher on her expenditure plans, they do not take a lead themselves. By careful budgeting and with judicious use of voluntary funds, the school can move to develop its accommodation to meet the needs of its pupils more effectively.

48. Resources for learning are good. There has been great improvement in computers and other resources for information and communications technology since the last inspection. This is reflected in the confident use of computers made by so many pupils. However, there are too few resources to fully support work in design and technology and in history and geography resources are limited. The collection of books to support literacy, the library and the texts in it that relate to specific subjects are good and they continue to improve. Sufficient priority has been given to developing resources that were previously

criticised, for example computers. The head teacher is strongly aware of the need to weigh carefully the benefits to be obtained from expenditure against the cost. The school adopts this principle more generally. It seeks to compare what it offers its pupils and what they achieve to the provision made by other similar schools and the performance of their pupils. It has recently begun to gather data about its pupils' attainments using a nationally recognised scale to judge them. This data will eventually give the school important information about how well it is doing in comparison to others.

49. Financial administration is good; the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been acted on. There are effective systems in place that accord with the requirements of the local education authority and the recommendations of the Audit Commission, to oversee ordering and paying for goods and services.

50. Accommodation is satisfactory. The school is very clean and well maintained. In classrooms and corridors, there is an extensive array of work by the pupils and stimulating displays focusing on the current school themes. Classrooms are mostly of sufficient size for the groups using them and accessible to those with mobility difficulties. The exception is the classrooms for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, which do not provide sufficient space in which to fully meet their needs. The school has invested very well over recent years in interior fittings and furnishings of high quality. A good library area has been developed and it is well used. It stimulates interest in books, stories and reading.

51. Physical education is well supported by the hard surfaced and grassy areas in the grounds and by the hydrotherapy pool that is very suited to promoting water confidence and early swimming skills. However, the hall, which is used for gymnastics is of limited usefulness because it is also used for assemblies, dining and music. Space is taken by the storage necessary for these uses. There is good provision for food technology but no satisfactory provision is available for work with resistant materials. The school acknowledges the shortcomings in accommodation, and it has developed plans to make necessary improvements. These plans start with provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

52. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum. The teachers are well supported by classroom assistants who work very effectively with them. This is an improvement on the situation reported at the last inspection when there were judged to be too few teachers. The staff meet the needs of pupils well but there are some gaps in expertise, particularly in the management and education of pupils with challenging behaviour associated with autistic spectrum disorder, and with those pupils with the most profound communication difficulties.

53. Resources and funding made available through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant and the Stoke Education Action Zone are used effectively to support targeted pupils. The former grant is being used to improve interpretation services. Much of the latter funding has been spent on greatly needed speech therapy and resources to support it, such as interactive whiteboards and digital cameras. In a very productive arrangement, the Education Action Zone matches the time given by local businesses in support of the school with equivalent funding.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to bring about further improvement the headteacher and governing body should now

- Improve the planning of theme work in geography, history, religious education and science to more closely identify links to the National Curriculum (*paragraphs 18,19,85,93,97,99,115*)
- Develop the use of additional aids to communication to reflect the difficulties of a growing number of pupils (*paragraphs 2,63,65,67,74*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 60 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 23 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 19 | 26 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 1.6 | 32 | 43 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 78 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 35 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 12 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | N/A |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | N/A |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|----|
| School data | 13 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|---|
| School data | 3 |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 6 |
| Bangladeshi | 1 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 59 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 5 |

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 11 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 7 |
| Average class size | 11 |

Education support staff: YR – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 15 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 450 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|--------|
| Financial year | 00/01 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 738680 |
| Total expenditure | 716636 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 9188 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 58940 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 80983 |

Recruitment of teachers

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 73 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 45 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 69 | 22 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 44 | 49 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 38 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 33 | 53 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 69 | 29 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 64 | 29 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 73 | 20 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 64 | 31 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 58 | 33 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 60 | 36 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 51 | 36 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 51 | 36 | 2 | 7 | 4 |

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

55. There is a small number of children in the foundation stage, all of whom are of reception class age. They are placed in two mixed-age classes, one of which is for children with severe learning difficulties and one for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The curriculum is designed using the areas of learning for children at the foundation stage where this is appropriate, together with the P levels and the National Curriculum. The curriculum is well planned and provides good learning opportunities for children.

EARLY LEARNING GOALS

56. As at the last inspection, standards of achievement in the foundation stage are good overall. Children enter the school with exceptionally low levels of attainment and, given their special educational needs, are unlikely to reach the early learning goals by the time they reach the end of the reception year. However, because of the good teaching and the range of interesting activities, the children make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

PERSONAL SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

57. There is very good progress in this area. Children have settled well into the school and are beginning to develop an understanding of the structure of the school day. This is well reinforced at the start of the day as plans are discussed. Pictures, photographs and symbols are used to remind children during the day. Children learn how they are expected to behave in the classroom, for example, sitting quietly for a story or for collective worship. They work in groups with the support of an adult, developing concentration and completing activities. Children are encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible. They are provided with opportunities for personal development which are appropriate to their needs. For example, children with profound and multiple learning difficulties are helped to make choices or to indicate their turn by eye pointing, gesture or vocalisation. Children form very good relationships with adults. Staff explain clearly the difference between right and wrong and, as a result, behaviour is usually good. Adults are good role models, staff praise and encourage children and positive attitudes are consistently reinforced. Staff have provided a relaxed atmosphere in which children feel confident to try activities and to respond to challenges.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

58. Most children make good progress in developing language and communication skills, being given opportunities to develop them through a wide variety of activities. Language and communication skills are reinforced throughout the day, for example, when developing a vocabulary of everyday routines and objects. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties are encouraged to gesture, point or vocalise whenever possible. However, some restriction is placed on the progress of children who are not able to speak, as there is limited use of alternative forms of communication such as signing, symbols, or switches. Listening is being well developed. Children are learning to listen well to adults and to respond by word, gesture or by looking towards the person who is talking. Several children recognise their own names, and those of others in the class. They are beginning to learn the sounds of a few letters and to point to the text in a book. They make

marks on paper as a pre-writing skill. They learn the words of frequently used rhymes. Children enjoy listening to stories such as “Noah’s Ark”, and “The Rainbow Fish”, and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to tactile cues such as objects and fabrics.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

59. Children are making very good progress in acquiring pre-maths skills. Teaching is very good and lessons are well planned to reinforce concepts such as number, colour and shape. There are many mathematical activities throughout the day, for example, sequencing the day’s activities, and teachers take every opportunity to extend children’s mathematical vocabulary. Activities such as shapes in a feely bag, shapes in snacks and shape matching are well used to help children learn the names of two-dimensional shapes such as circle, square and triangle. Most know the names of colours and some are able to match and sort by colour. More able children count to ten as they count the number of children in the class. Good multi-sensory activities reinforce learning, as when children feel the shapes, or the surfaces of numbers about which they are learning. Learning in mathematics is well supported by the use of counting rhymes and songs, which help children to remember the numbers and make the learning an enjoyable experience. For example, one group of children had a book and a display about “five little ducks”

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

60. Children are encouraged to observe their environment, for example, by looking at the weather. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore the environment visually and, for example, track a noisy toy. They plant seeds, water them and watch the growth. More able children know the names of parts of the body. Children are fascinated when they take part in an activity in which water is poured on their hands as part of an introduction to floating and sinking. They help to prepare snacks, to stir mixtures in cookery and .to taste and discuss the textures of different foods. When they roll balls, they start to learn about pulling and pushing. They begin to use computers, attempting to use the mouse and using programmes such as creating a face. They use switches for torches and for toys. Children gain knowledge from the visits which they make, for example, to Chester, the local museum, a garden centre, the Sea Life Centre and the marina. They are involved in the school’s cultural studies projects about countries such as Pakistan and the USA. Teaching in this area is very good, with plans linked to other aspects of the curriculum, and learning supported by exploration of the environment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

61. Children make good use of opportunities to work creatively in different media. They use paint, pencil, crayon and different types of modelling material. They experiment with painting with objects such as sponges, bubbles, leaves, and they work with clay and dough. They are involved in producing paintings and collages about books which they have read, for example, Noah’s Ark and Elmer the Elephant. Children join very enthusiastically in music. They to listen to music and know something of rhythm. They have opportunities to play percussion instruments and match photographs to instruments, with support where needed. Some are able to recognise the instruments being played on a CD. Singing is used on a number of occasions, for example, at the start of the day for “good morning” songs or to co-ordinate movements in physical development lessons. It is used to create background for stories or for class worship. Children were able to join in a workshop which introduced them to the music of South Asia. Teaching is good, with clear learning objectives well focussed on the development of skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

62. Children are making good progress in this area of learning and are developing gross and fine motor skills at levels appropriate to their abilities. Some are able to run, jump and balance. They imitate the movements of fish, water, and rowing a boat. They play on the outdoor equipment with growing confidence. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are enabled, for example, to roll giant balls to one another. Children are gaining confidence in swimming. Fine motor skills are developed through activities such as painting, cutting and sticking. Awareness of space is developed as children learn to complete jigsaw puzzles

TEACHING AND LEARNING

63. Teaching of children in the early years is good overall, with some very good elements, ensuring that children receive a good start to their education. The teachers have a good knowledge both of the needs of young children and of their different special educational needs. They plan very carefully to ensure that all areas of learning are covered. Teachers work closely with nursery nurses to provide a good range of opportunities for learning and this, together with their good knowledge of the children, ensures that the latter are able to make good progress. Effective assessment procedures are in place, starting from initial assessment when children enter the school. The information from this is used to set targets for children in language, number and personal and social development. Children's development is closely monitored, as progress is recorded in lessons and in other activities. Classrooms are attractive, with good use being made of a display of children's work and of materials to support learning. Resources are satisfactory, but there is insufficient outdoor play equipment and resources such as the home corner and construction toys need further development.

ENGLISH

64. Achievement in English is good overall. For many pupils it is very good as a result of detailed planning, assessment and recording, and very good teaching strategies. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, a small number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, do not achieve as well as they could if better strategies were in place to provide them with an alternative, structured, system of communication.

65. Pupils are encouraged to develop good speaking and listening. By the age of seven, most pupils listen attentively to the teacher, contribute to discussions and answer questions. Responses range from facial expression and gesture to spoken sentences. In a science lesson, one boy observed that his plastic car "floated like a boat". The most able listen and respond appropriately to the contributions of other pupils. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to their names, to greetings, and to music with smiles. One of the youngest pupils used eye-pointing very effectively. More able pupils have made very good progress by the age of eleven, demonstrating that they have listened by contributing sensibly to discussions. They distinguish between fiction and non-fiction, explaining the reasons for their opinion. A good discussion on healthy and unhealthy foods was observed when pupils made choices, and were able to justify them. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties listen attentively, and are keen to respond, for example by touching photographs to indicate their presence during registration.

66. For a few pupils, recognised by staff as having good understanding of language, progress is limited because they do not have the powers of communication to express what they have learned. The small number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder do not achieve as well as they could if their understanding of language was enhanced, for instance, by the use of signing or symbols.

67. Older pupils take part in relevant, interesting discussions in and out of lessons. News of weekend activities was exchanged, dangers and necessary precautions in a power station were explained, and conversations resulted from stories heard or read. Pupils talked confidently to adults and to each other over lunch. Some use is made of communication aids, such as objects of reference and photographs, with older pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

68. Achievement in reading is good for most pupils and very good for a few. What prevents it from being even better is that it is not sufficiently supported by use of symbols, for those pupils who have difficulty in deciphering text. All pupils enjoy shared reading and skills learned in literacy hours enhance progress through the individual reading scheme.

69. By the age of seven, pupils understand that text conveys meaning. The more able recognise their own names, and most are beginning to identify initial letters. Pupils learn to handle books appropriately, and by the age of eleven are familiar with terms such as cover, title, author, fiction and non-fiction. More able pupils read simple phrases, including labels on food packaging, and play word matching "bingo" games. Most pupils pick out words beginning with a given letter, and have learned a range of strategies to deal with unfamiliar words. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties show enjoyment of stories through physical responses, especially when the story is enhanced by the use of sensory resources.

70. Achievement in reading for older, more able pupils, is good. The material used is relevant, including social signs, instructions and safety information, as well as stories. Pupils read work schedules, and become more independent in carrying out a sequence of tasks. Less able pupils enjoy stories and discuss the content. When the reading material used with older pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, is relevant and linked to the topic being studied, pupils' responses demonstrate understanding.

71. Pupils develop writing skills well, often from a very low starting position. This is because of the well-planned, structured approach used by teachers. Well-recorded evidence shows that pupils work through a scheme, from making marks with a variety of tools, through correct handling of pencils, correct formation of letters and care in presentation. Eventually, the most able pupils write in sentences, with capital letters and full stops.

72. Younger pupils trace letters in the air following teacher's modelling. The more able write letters on the board. Less able pupils finger-paint letters within guidelines. Year 4 pupils take great care when writing over dotted lines to form their names. Older pupils discuss what they want to say with an adult, who then writes it down for the pupil to copy. There is good emphasis on presentation, and pupils try very hard to form their letters well. The most able link several sentences, writing neatly with correct use of capital letters and full stops.

73. Teaching is good overall. That observed ranged from satisfactory to very good, with no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Pupils' progress suggests that this is the usual standard. Experienced support staff make a good contribution in maintaining the quality of lessons,

especially through the recording of achievement. This is especially valuable for pupils whose progress is measured in very small steps.

74. The Literacy Strategy is used very effectively and pupils are developing a love of story and rhyme through their introduction to a range of texts, prose and poetry, including Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Teachers focus well on the text in the Big Books, and enhance their teaching with very good use of sensory resources and information technology, including computers, interactive whiteboard and digital cameras. As a result, pupils' interest and enthusiasm is very good, and they show good recall of previous learning. Most pupils behave very well in lessons, mainly because teachers make them interesting and often exciting. Teachers are less experienced and less successful in managing those few pupils, whose behaviour problems are linked to their particular learning difficulty.

75. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The most significant weakness is the lack of strategies to enable pupils with profound or complex learning difficulties to communicate more effectively. Teachers and support staff are extremely good at interpreting the smallest physical response but a few pupils give clear indications that they have more to say than can be communicated in this way. For the remainder of pupils the teaching of basic skills is good overall and often very good.

76. The curriculum, including the implementation of the Literacy Strategy, is good, and relevant to the needs of the pupils. Good examples of cross-curricular literacy were observed during the inspection, especially in science and in personal and social education, where teachers planned well to extend vocabulary and promote the development of speaking and listening skills. Management is good. The very good work, of the co-ordinator, who left at the end of last term, has enabled the school to function well while waiting for the new co-ordinator to take up her post. Monitoring of planning and teaching is good and well established. The speech therapist assesses pupils and contributes to their individual education plans. She also provides good advice and assistance to teachers. Resources are good, especially the provision of Big Books, and story sacks. The library is attractive, welcoming, well stocked with a range of fiction and non-fiction, and very well organised. It is in constant use and is a valuable asset to the teaching of English.

MATHEMATICS

77. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The school has maintained the good standard of learning identified at that time. Overall, pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress. The progress of a small number of higher achieving pupils in Years 7-9 is restricted by insufficient challenge.

78. Primary aged pupils work on the key areas of number, money, and shape and space. By the age of seven they are tracing over the numerals one to five. A few write the numerals one to three and identify the number that precedes or follows a written numeral. By the age of eleven they understand the meaning of full, empty, half-full and distinguish between long and short and high and low. They carry out simple written addition sums using single digits and count out small numbers of objects, writing numerals accurately. They name familiar shapes, such as triangles, circles and squares and use appropriate vocabulary such as corners and sides.

79. Secondary aged pupils continue to expand their understanding of number and money. They also work on time and to extracting information from given data. By the age of fourteen many pupils identify special events such as birthdays and recognise the passage of time from the idea of yesterday/today/tomorrow to the order of the seasons. They record

information in a diary, linking mathematics and literacy well. Higher attaining pupils examine pictorial information and answer questions accurately. For example, they analyse a 'wagon wheel' diagram of the different Chinese years, and the animals associated with them, and identify the animal of their year of birth. Older pupils develop skills in handling data by recording information that they have collected. They use ticks to tally the different numbers they throw with dice, or to record details of pupils within the class. Several pupils then present this information as a simple block graph. The oldest pupils put their previous learning to good use, such as relating prices to different objects on a visit to a supermarket.

80. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties generally achieve well but their progress is occasionally limited by the large class size. They engage in a great deal of tactile and exploratory play and by the age of eleven many respond to visual and audio stimuli and are beginning to make choices. By the time they leave several pupils have an understanding of permanence and are beginning to anticipate activities, being attentive and prepared to wait for an object to reappear if it has been taken away from them during a game. Others are beginning to make limited contributions to number rhymes and displaying very early signs of joining in chanting and counting up to five.

81. Mathematics teaching is good overall. Occasionally it is very good. Lessons are characterised by teachers' use of interesting activities, well matched to individual needs. As a result, pupils work with interest and understanding. Good pace is maintained and the classroom support staff contribute strongly, offering individual help to pupils and helping with the organisation of lessons and the recording of progress. The use of good resources, including information and communication technology makes an effective contribution to learning experiences. A teacher's confidence and competence in using this new technology enabled a class of nine and ten year olds to make good progress in their understanding of number order and position. The resource captured pupils' attention and the teacher's skill in combining the use of the technology with good questioning and other supporting activities stimulated and maintained their interest. This new technology was used equally effectively by another teacher to enhance the learning of an individual pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The pupil clearly enjoyed the experience of touching the screenboard and producing pictures of mugs and of having the opportunity to make something colourful and big happen with his own hands. As a result he made good progress in experiencing the numbers one to five and of practising writing the numerals one and two.

82. Learning is slower when it is insufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. On these occasions tasks are presented to reinforce pupils' learning even when pupils have already demonstrated that they have a secure understanding of the concept. This was evident when a group of fourteen and fifteen year old pupils played a game of number bingo in which they had to double the number shown on a die. They did this extremely easily and although they found the activity enjoyable it did not increase their learning.

83. Management by a newly appointed and enthusiastic subject co-ordinator is good. There is a consistent approach to teaching numeracy throughout the school through common planning, lesson structure and assessing pupils' achievements. This effective approach means that teachers generally provide activities that build systematically on individual pupils' prior learning through activities that match their needs. Other subjects of the curriculum make a satisfactory contribution to developing pupils' numeracy skills. For example, a teacher used a science lesson to reinforce the idea of in/out and push/pull with a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and a physical education lesson allowed another teacher to consolidate pupils' understanding of straight/round and bending as they worked with hoops. Other teachers encouraged counting skills in food

studies and the identification of different shapes in design and technology, but there were a number of occasions when teachers missed opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills. Good whole-school planning promotes a progressive approach to developing mathematical skills through a broad and balanced subject curriculum.

SCIENCE

84. As at the time of the previous inspection, achievement is satisfactory overall. The youngest pupils experience using their senses, such as feeling different textures of materials, soft clay or rough sandpaper. They witness different lighting arrangements, and a wide range of sounds and smell and taste substances, including the food they cook. The least able pupils do not progress very much beyond this level but they gain a great deal from their visits to places such as farms, a wildlife park and the zoo. Through these activities, they become more aware of their own bodies, and of the world around them. More able pupils make good progress as they learn to observe an activity or experiment, saying what they think is happening, and why. With help, a few pupils are able to record what they observe. Older pupils recognise different plants and animals and understand how they grow, what they need to grow well, and where they live best. They learn about different forces such as magnets, light and sound, and recognise the uses and dangers of electricity. They identify materials such as metals, plastic, wool, wood and glass, discussing what each can be used for and what differences there are between them.

85. Teaching and learning are good. Observed teaching varied from satisfactory to very good. Pupils learn well in lessons because teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, and of their pupils. This is evident in clear planning and lively pace of lessons. Teachers use a good scientific vocabulary and this helps pupils to build up their own. Lessons are prepared well, often with different resources and work sheets for different pupils. Good organisation helps overcome situations where there are many wheelchairs, tables and pieces of equipment to contend with. This helps to reduce time wastage, and so allow the pupils to get on with their learning uninterrupted. Good use of resources adds interest to lessons and keeps pupils concentrating well. One teacher, for example, used a wide selection of electrical items from around the house, such as a kettle, hairdryer, calculator and vacuum cleaner when talking about the uses and dangers of electricity. The pupils were very interested, and showed good progress because the resources were varied and well chosen, and the support assistants were so good in encouraging the pupils in their groups to think clearly and express themselves. When learning was not so good, it was mainly because activities had not been thought through clearly, and not all pupils were fully involved in the lesson.

86. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The experienced co-ordinator monitors teaching closely and checks what pupils are learning. Difficulties are encountered when trying to ensure a logical sequence of learning. Most classes have children of many different ages and there is occasional repetition of work. There is a small budget for spending on resources, and replacing consumable items, but there are no clear or ambitious plans to develop the subject and its resources. Classroom equipment is adequate but the resources are not imaginative, and the science room does not help pupils' learning. This is because it is too small to hold a class; it contains almost no science equipment; and access is difficult. Teachers do not make good use of computers and related equipment in support of their science lessons, but they do make very good use of local facilities and more distant places to add interest and motivation to lessons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. Achievement is satisfactory, albeit within a limited range of activities. Although the curriculum lacks structure, there is enough progress in individual lessons for pupils to build up a sufficient understanding of important aspects of designing and making. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore different materials through a variety of sensory experiences such as making dough. They use their hands and fingers as simple

tools as they make Christmas cards and use fingerprints to make faces. Other primary aged pupils develop understanding of the importance of sequencing events and they demonstrate their knowledge through activities such as identifying the stages in making sandwiches. Some manipulate simple tools such as scissors and others use large needles independently as they sew and decorate hand puppets. Secondary aged pupils are beginning to see the link between designing, making and function through making simple models, such as a barn, following a visit to a farm.

88. The quality of teaching is generally good. Teachers have high expectations and provide suitably challenging tasks that develop pupils' subject knowledge. They seize opportunities to encourage pupils' numeracy and literacy skills, such as through measuring and using the correct units before cutting card for a model barn, and counting the items used as ingredients when making chicken curry. Teachers in food studies also have high expectations of pupils' awareness of safety issues and their ability to work independently with minimum supervision, such as cutting up vegetables and using a microwave. Relationships in lessons are good, and therefore pupils respond well to these challenges and work sensibly and carefully, observing all health and safety requirements.

89. The subject co-ordinator is not a subject specialist and is relatively new in post. Despite requests to the local education authority for support and making links with other schools, these have not yet been provided. This combination results in ineffective whole-school management of the subject. This is evident in the lack of comprehensive long term planning to ensure planned and progressive learning opportunities. As a result, teachers tend to plan in isolation, with the co-ordinator not yet able to offer them subject guidance.

90. Accommodation and resources are limited and unsatisfactory for older pupils and new technology is not used. The dedicated design and technology room also serves other purposes and its layout does not lend itself to more advanced work with resistant materials such as wood, metal and plastics. In addition, many of these resources are not available, nor is the range of appropriate tools that is required to work with them. The school does not have a clear understanding and approach to design and technology and this is evident in much of its documentation, planning and lesson content. For example, food technology is still referred to as home economics and this scheme of work is very outdated. As a result, the school's approach leans towards teaching design and technology as an aspect of art and craft, and of teaching food studies as a completely separate subject that has no links with the skills, knowledge and understanding associated with design and the use of materials.

GEOGRAPHY

91. Pupils' achievement across the age range is satisfactory; little different to that reported in the last inspection. Over time, pupils develop awareness of where they live, and the school and its immediate environment. Younger pupils have made a start on relating maps to physical and human features and on using a globe. More able pupils use a computer program to draw and name landscape features such as hills. The effect of weather on people and the environment is well understood by pupils aged eleven. They name kinds of weather and in their own recording, they discuss its effects. They write that in high winds, "trees are blown down" and "roof tiles are blown off".

92. Work has been done on areas that contrast with that in which the pupils live. Arising from the cultural studies theme of Pakistan, pupils aged up to fourteen looked closely, using video, maps and stories, at life in the Swat Valley. They became aware that in some areas the water supply is uncertain but that by using wells, enough water to

sustain agriculture and business can be supplied. They noted that in Pakistan there are many people who work in occupations with which they are familiar, such as bus drivers or postal workers.

93. In a good lesson for pupils aged nine and ten, the imaginary island of Struay, at the heart of the story of Katie Moray, provided a productive focus for developing geographical skills. Pupils recalled the characters in the story and their occupations. They successfully matched the characters' symbols to symbols representing their jobs. They were greatly encouraged in their task by the enthusiasm of their teacher who carefully directed their activities while giving her pupils room to feel a satisfying sense of achievement when they completed their tasks.

94. Teaching is good for pupils aged seven to eleven. For those in other age groups it is satisfactory. This is similar to the picture at the last inspection. Pupils learn well when their imagination is engaged, as it was in the geography lesson about Struay, for example, and when they take part in practical activities. The canal trip involving many pupils and the visit to Oaktree Farm stimulated much good work. Learning opportunities are, however, sometimes separated by lengthy periods of time, a term or more in some cases, when no geography is taught because the focus of topic work shifts. In these circumstances, pupils' knowledge and understanding tend to be lost and skills such as close observation, and relating real life objects or features to pictures, plans and maps, regress. Teaching is best when it has clear geographical objectives and when lessons are set within a planned series that relates strongly to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Where lessons are based on a chance association of the school theme and a geographical objective, they sometimes fail to concentrate on the important necessity to link the study of places to the development of geographical skills.

95. Pupils enjoy their geography lessons and most work hard, collaborate with each other and show pride in their ability to answer questions correctly. In some classes, there are pupils with special educational needs that result in their behaviour being very challenging and hard to manage.

96. The new co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how the subject should develop. She has made sensible proposals to bring about beneficial changes. Without these, pupils' learning is unlikely to develop as well as it could. In order to take the subject further, resources will need to be developed and more systematically organised.

HISTORY

97. Achievement is satisfactory overall but there has been little development or improvement in provision since the last inspection. Nevertheless, pupils show great interest and willingness to learn. In a lesson on Ancient Civilisations, pupils aged eleven were fascinated by the process of preparing a dead king for burial. They knew that mummification involved removing the organs, steeping the body in salt, and wrapping it in oil-soaked bandages. They were aware that the goods put with the body into the tomb were symbols of the dead person's status in life and the key to ensuring that sufficient honour was done to them in the world beyond. They recognised that the "face" that was found in the tomb of Tutankhamen was a death mask. The teacher reinforced this learning well, involving the pupils in practical tasks, such as colouring a death mask that required them to observe, collaborate and use care and skill in applying colours.

98. In a lesson for pupils aged fourteen on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, there was, again, interest and a willingness to participate. Pupils learned to send SOS as a

Morse code distress message, using a torch. However, in this case, while an interesting skill was learned, there was too little in the lesson to relate it to the significant issues that the teaching of history must address. For example, how things change over time and what were the underlying causes that have brought about important events.

99. The quality of teaching is satisfactory; pupils are motivated well to learn history and sometimes they are excited by the content of lessons but planning does not effectively link together the topic studied with the development of enquiry skills, of chronological awareness and of notions of the possible causes or results of events, lifestyles and customs. Because of this, and despite the enthusiasm and hard work of pupils in some lessons, pupils do not progress as well as they should.

100. The lack of clarity about what is important in the subject and how it should develop, signifies unsatisfactory leadership in history. There are good features, such as the visits that are made to museums where artefacts are handled, that bring times past to life, but teachers are given little guidance about what to teach and how to link the school's themes to the requirements of the National Curriculum. As a result, while over their years at the school pupils will experience or be taught much that is relevant, there is little continuity to this and previous learning is not systematically built upon.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

101. Achievement in information technology is good overall and sometimes very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was judged to be sound. This is because teachers' skills have increased, and they now have access to a better range of resources.

102. The youngest pupils understand that they can control toys by pressing a switch, and can operate simple computer programmes using the touch screen. By the age of eleven, pupils work on switch-operated computer programmes, to make choices, for example, which items on screen use electricity. They understand that the interactive whiteboard responds to touch, and can use an art package to write and to draw. Older pupils, with profound and multiple learning difficulties, use switches to operate lights, sounds and a fan, and make choices between them. The smart board is used well in maths for hide and reveal activities. By the time more able pupils reach the age of sixteen, they can, with only a little verbal support, retrieve email messages and print them. They can use the keyboard to copy type a thank you letter, following a visit. One boy was able to explain how to access photographs from the floppy disc in the digital camera.

103. Teachers have improved their skills and developed knowledge of appropriate software through in-service training. This has enabled them to include information technology in the planning of lessons in a number of curriculum areas, especially English and maths, in addition to teaching basic skills in separate information technology lessons. Support staff contribute well to pupils' learning in this subject, supervising and helping in one to one sessions. Teachers begin their NOF training in May, which should lead to even better improvement in the subject.

104. Teachers' use of information technology enhances their teaching, creating interest and enthusiasm in pupils, who as a result behave very well. Digital cameras provide feedback and reinforce learning, because of the way they are incorporated into teaching. For example, in a literacy lesson, for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, photographs were taken of reactions to the bubbles used during the reading of "Bubbles". By the end of the lesson, pupils had seen, with pleasure, their own images on the computer screen, and pasted the printed versions into their own individual "Bubbles " books. Digital

photographs in the Records of Achievement effectively tell the story of a pupil's progress through the school. Displays are made more attractive and informative, with the use of digital images which capture the moment. Computers are used to create a variety of attractive certificates of achievement, which motivate pupils to do their best.

105. The information technology policy is good and includes provision for internet safety. The co-ordinator has adapted the National Curriculum to the needs of the pupils, and included practical advice on suitable activities to meet targets. All strands are covered at a level appropriate to the abilities of pupils. Recording of individual progress is well organised. Resources are good, the number of computers and printers is adequate, and provision of switches, touch monitors, and interactive screens ensures that all pupils can access programmes. The subject is managed well, planning and teaching are monitored, resources are easily accessible.

MUSIC

106. Pupils' achievement in music is good for pupils of all ages. In lessons, progress is very good, which is an improvement on the last inspection, when it was deemed good. This judgement is based on observations of lessons and music clubs, together with discussions with the music teacher and information from pupils' records.

107. Younger pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond well to action songs, by clapping and raising their arms, with the help of adults if needed. All are enabled to make some sounds with their chosen instruments when, for example, they bang a drum in time to a greeting. More able pupils begin to see that music can tell a story, as they listen to "The Carnival of the Animals". As they move through the school, pupils take part in action songs, singing and trying to sustain a beat as they clap. Some are able to demonstrate patterns by clapping, and are willing to show their peers how to do this. They are encouraged to learn the names of instruments as they match pictures to instruments. They listen to taped music, then play along with it, learning to play and pause at the correct places. Many pupils are able to do this without help, while others need assistance to play the instruments. Older pupils listen carefully to music, and try to identify the instruments being played. They talk about music being played loudly or softly, and are able to clap simple rhythms. Some identify mood in music and are able, for example, to suggest that sad music should be played softly. They are beginning to understand composition as they choose long and short notes and play these on their instruments. They sing enthusiastically, and several are able to sustain the melody

108. Teaching in music is very good. Lessons are well planned to draw together curriculum objectives and pupils' individual targets. Use is made of a variety of instruments and the teacher ensures that all pupils have the opportunity of playing these. Wherever possible, pupils are given the choice of the instrument they would like to play. For more able pupils, tasks are gradually increased in difficulty, and pupils respond well to the challenge. Lively presentation by the teacher catches pupils' interest and they respond enthusiastically to the different activities. Pupils receive encouragement and praise for their efforts, and respond by trying hard and take great pleasure in success. In all lessons, careful records are kept of pupils' progress and this enables the teacher to set targets and to ensure that pupils make good progress.

109. Music plays an important part in the wider curriculum. Music is played as pupils arrive at the school and many aspects of the curriculum are accompanied by music. For example, pupils sing "good morning" and "goodbye" songs. Action Rhymes are used to help pupils to develop number skills, and many respond to these with enjoyment. Music is often

played to provide an atmosphere conducive to work or to worship. Pupils have the opportunity of joining the choir or recorder groups in the lunch hours, and a number attend these on a regular basis, and show a great deal of enthusiasm. The choir performs at special occasions such as at Christmas, and takes part in the special schools' music festival. Links have been formed with the local high school and pupils have been sharing in learning African drumming.

110. The music co-ordinator has been teaching all classes in the school only since September, although she taught the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties last year. She has made very good progress in planning for the subject, developing a scheme of work which takes into account the school's curriculum themes and the National Curriculum requirements. Careful use is made of on-going assessment and targets are set for all pupils. Resources for music are satisfactory, but a wider range of instruments would give pupils further opportunities for playing, and there is a need for more CDs to enable pupils to listen to different types of music. Most lessons have to be held in the school hall, where there is limited storage for equipment, and the teacher sometimes has to take resources to other rooms in the school when the hall is in use. The use of other classrooms restricts the space available to pupils, and limits the number of resources which can be carried around the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

111. Pupils achieve well in physical education, and they make good progress through the school in a range of skills and activities. This continues well from the standards at the time of the last inspection. The least able pupils gain awareness of their own bodies, and what is happening to them, through activities such as stretching, rolling, lying and sitting in different positions, pushing and rolling objects such as large balls, being moved around in the warm water of the hydrotherapy pool, and moving to music. The therapy staff are a valuable asset in carrying out this work with the least able children. The more able pupils also begin their physical education in this way, but they make much more visible progress. They develop skills well, learning to run in competitive races, to jump and to throw balls, bean bags and quoits, for instance. In swimming, the most able pupils can swim up to a hundred metres, and most pupils have good water confidence. Pupils move well to music, such as when they move fluidly to some "river" music by Joni Mitchell, using long ribbons to increase the sense of movement. In gymnastics, pupils improve their balance and movement, putting a series of movements together, including rolls and jumps. As they improve their social skills, pupils begin to take a more effective part in team games such as football and indoor hockey, as well as other games such as badminton and bowls. They learn about their heartbeat and breathing, and about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet.

112. Teaching and learning in lessons are good overall. Lessons are planned well, with good activities to keep pupils interested, active and learning well. There is often a good warm up and a main activity, with a cool down activity, game or relaxation period to finish off. Teachers plan their lessons well to build on the skills that pupils have already learned in previous lessons. Pupils are challenged well to do their best in most lessons, although there are times when teachers do not expect some pupils to be at all active or involved during lessons. This happened, for instance, in two lessons in the hydrotherapy pool: one pupil was allowed to do nothing in one lesson, and there was very little attempt to teach any of the pupils in the other lesson. Mostly, teachers make good use of the equipment, so that the lessons are more interesting and challenging, and the pupils enjoy the tasks they are set, and they learn well. The support assistants with each class are invaluable in helping individual pupils and small groups; they know their pupils very well and give very good encouragement without over-helping. In a very good lesson with young pupils, the teacher

started promptly and kept up a good pace throughout. She began with a stretching and rowing game in a circle (to do with the “water” theme this term), and then moving on in a lively way to group work that enabled all pupils to practise balancing and moving on the apparatus. This activity was very well helped by the support assistants, and by the children themselves giving demonstrations of their “best” movements. The lesson ended as it began, with an enjoyable circle activity with music to provide a beat. All of the children had been very well involved, extended their skills and enjoyed good exercise.

113. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has monitored teaching and has produced a plan of what will be taught in the long term. This plan is brief but it is enough to make sure that most pupils develop their skills well, in a sequence of increasing achievement. Recording of pupils’ progress is somewhat intermittent; this makes it difficult to change the planning of what will be taught in the future. There are no clear plans for how the subject should develop. There is a good range of high quality resources, from small equipment to large apparatus. During a residential week each year, pupils have opportunities to go canoeing, climbing, orienteering and sailing. Each year there are several events that involve other schools, including a swimming gala, an athletics day, a mini football tournament, and the Special Olympics for the region. The adventure play equipment, hydrotherapy pool and Jacuzzi are very good facilities but the grass area for outdoor games is very small. Good use is made of local facilities, including a swimming pool, two gym halls (at a young offenders’ institute and at a college), and a sports centre.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

114. Pupils’ achievements are satisfactory overall. They are good for pupils up to the age of seven. This is similar to the situation at the last inspection. Younger pupils show enjoyment of stories from the Bible, such as Noah’s Ark. They talk about the animals, the flood and the rainbow. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond by smiling at particular objects or sounds, or by vocalising and pointing. More able pupils are able to match pictures related to stories. By the age of 11 pupils know some stories from the Old Testament, such as Noah’s Ark, Moses, and David and Goliath. They have heard about festivals in different faiths such as Christmas, Easter, Rosh Hashanah and Diwali. They have tasted foods used for special festivals, and listened to appropriate music. Older pupils know about Christian ceremonies such as baptism in more detail. They are developing an awareness of different religions and know some basic facts about Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Pupils have heard stories of famous people such as Martin Luther King, and more able pupils remember the main features of these. They are able to talk about churches, weddings and Harvest festival. Less able pupils listen carefully to discussions and look at pictures. They enjoy sensory experiences such as touching and tasting fruits at Harvest festival. Pupils in all age groups take part in class assemblies on themes such as Christmas, Harvest and Easter

115. Teaching overall is good. Lessons are well planned to give pupils opportunities to learn new information and to consolidate previous lessons. Clear introductions make pupils aware of what they have to learn. Strategies are used which ensure that all pupils are involved in the lessons, and pupils show interest and concentrate well. More able pupils are encouraged to record their work in words or pictures, and good support from teachers and classroom assistants helps them to achieve this. Good use is made of artefacts and pictures to help pupils’ understanding, and pupils use these to help them to discuss topics. Good plenary sessions sum up lessons and check pupils’ understanding of what they have learned. Occasionally planning is limited and the aims of the lessons unclear. When this happens, teachers do not focus clearly on the main point of the lesson, and spend too much time on unimportant information.

116. Religious Education planning is based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus and, as such, it meets statutory requirements. However, there is no overall scheme of work for the subject, but instead there is a menu of suggested topics for each age group, from which teachers can select suitable topics. Since the school's curriculum is planned on a thematic basis, this sometimes means that pupils of all ages may be studying the same topic. This is the main reason why achievement falls behind the quality of teaching. The co-ordinator monitors the subject by looking at termly plans of all teachers, but because some of these contain little detail, it is not always possible to check the contents of the topics being studied. This makes it difficult to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to make progress over time. Teachers assess pupils' progress in topics, and record this information but, again, the way in which this is done is inconsistent. Resources for the subject are satisfactory, with a useful supply of artefacts having been gathered, together with some photographs and books.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

117. Pupils make good progress in their personal development, and they achieve well, just as they did at the time of the last inspection. This is because the school provides well for this aspect of the pupils' education. A considerable amount of time is given to personal development each week. For the least able pupils this involves toileting, eating, drinking, cleaning teeth and brushing hair. In one lesson the least able children effectively combined rhyming songs with teeth cleaning and hair brushing. To a large extent, the school's provision also involves giving pupils choices such as which drink they will have, which activity they want to do next, which college course to take, or what to do when they leave school. The syllabus includes good and relevant lessons for sex education and awareness of the dangers of drugs. Several classes have "circle time" lessons in which the teachers gather the children together to discuss something of importance to them, such as their holidays, their families and pets, the class rules, how to help themselves and each other, or how to behave responsibly when out of school.

118. The teaching in the "circle time" lessons is good, with teachers and support assistants who know their pupils very well, and who can adjust what they are discussing to the individuals. In one lesson, for instance, the teacher and the pupils talked about how they could do things for each other, or for other people (perhaps helping someone to cross the road) or their pets (such as taking their dog for a walk safely). All of the pupils were well involved in this session, and the pupils thought seriously about how they could be helpful and a credit to themselves at the college the following day. Occasionally, however, not enough effort is made to involve all of the pupils in a class, and some children with additional difficulties are allowed to do nothing at all. Staff make use of good resources, but mainly they rely on their own skills and knowledge of the children, and the things around them. This helps pupils to learn, for example, how to dress appropriately for different activities, how to spend small amounts of money, how to cook simple dishes and how to make a drink. Staff provide a very good role model for the pupils to copy, and a lot is learned almost incidentally in everyday situations, such as opening doors, being polite, helping a classmate, playing together or having lunch together. Pupils' understanding of how to behave is further learned and reinforced on trips out, whether in the minibus itself, or at the leisure centre, the zoo or the supermarket. Staff make many opportunities to reinforce good and socially appropriate ways of doing things during the course of these visits.

119. This part of the curriculum is well led and managed, with many good outlines of what can be done in each aspect of the subject, and how pupils' progress can be checked.

All staff have had training in drugs education awareness. Much of what is already carried out is being put together under the heading of "citizenship", and the co-ordinator is well ahead in her preparations to have the newer aspects in place soon. It would be possible, however, to emphasise the importance of some existing aspects, such as giving pupils more time and opportunity to help themselves with getting changed for in-school swimming, or for more classes to have some form of "circle time" discussions.

CULTURAL STUDIES

120. The school no longer teaches a modern foreign language to pupils aged eleven to fourteen. In place of this, "cultural studies" is provided. This offers pupils the opportunity to become more familiar with the language, customs, beliefs and importance of many countries and societies. It is clear that there is great benefit to be derived from the cultural study of Pakistan. This is the homeland of the families of several pupils and of the neighbours of many who attend the school. Learning to appreciate the food, music, languages and dress of the people of Pakistan has real value and is helpful in giving those of Pakistani origin a fuller sense of being included and welcomed. It is also valuable to examine the extent to which the culture of the United States of America impinges on life in the United Kingdom. The work on this theme was hugely enjoyable to the pupils who benefited by the extension it provided for work in art, music, language and humanities.

121. It is less certain that similar benefits accrue from the study of Egypt, which is now underway. Most have taken this to be Ancient Egypt, which is already a theme for history in the programme of study of the National Curriculum. Generally, while offering opportunities for colourful lessons, the theme of Egypt has provided relatively little that will inform the pupils about life in contemporary society. Cultural studies is a good means of focusing attention on contemporary, relevant and important social issues, provided the choice of topic is carefully made.