

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **THE COLLETT SCHOOL**

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117672

Headteacher: Mrs. Margaret Lemarie

Reporting inspector: April Dakin  
25441

Dates of inspection: 4–7 February 2002

Inspection number: 193114

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 special
Age range of pupils:	4 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lockers Park Lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire.
Postcode:	HP1 1TQ
Telephone number:	01442 398988
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Fox
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25441	April Dakin	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught?
9115	Dr. Terry Clarke OBE	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work with its parents?
20055	Sheila Entwistle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Religious education; Personal, social and health education.	
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Art and design.	
14943	Dr Eric Peagam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Information and communication technology; Music.	
10781	Robert Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology; Modern foreign language; Equal opportunities.	How well is the school led and managed?
10668	David Walker	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Mathematics; Physical education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
7994	Pam Weston	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Foundation Stage; English as an additional Language.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Collett School is a large, co-educational community special school in Hemel Hempstead for pupils aged between four and sixteen years. The vast majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, although there are a few pupils with more severe learning difficulties. The school has a primary base for pupils with autism, which was established in May 2000. In total, there are 18 pupils with difficulties associated with autism who are integrated, most or some of the time, into the primary department and one who has progressed to the secondary department. The school has 126 pupils on roll, including those in the base. At present there is one pupil of Reception age who is taught with pupils in the Year 1 class. Year groups vary in size, and primary pupils are broadly grouped by age, some grouped over two years. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are organised in pastoral groups by age, which are then further divided into ability groups for teaching purposes in practical subjects and, in Year 9, for mathematics and English. All pupils are the subject of a statement of special educational need. About a fifth of pupils receive free school meals. Five pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and, of these, two come from families where English is spoken as an additional language. Neither of these pupils is at an early stage of language acquisition. The vast majority of pupils travel to school by local education authority (LEA) transport; some travel up to half an hour to get to the school. Staffing levels have increased since the last inspection and there are a number of new teachers at the school. The school has a unique position in the Hertfordshire special school structure in that, unlike others, it is an all-age school. The authority is carrying out a review of special school provision at the present time.

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

This is an effective and improving school with good leadership and sound management. The headteacher and senior management team give a clear educational direction to the work of the school. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features, and all pupils, whatever their age, gender or ethnic background, achieve educational standards that are good overall. The school ensures that pupils with autism make good progress towards their priority needs. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. The school gives good value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- The headteacher and key staff provide good leadership and sound management.
- Provision for pupils with autism is good overall and very good in the base; overall, these pupils make good progress in reaching the targets set for them.
- Teaching is good, with some very good and excellent features; this ensures that pupils achieve very well in science, art and design, and geography, and well in English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and in most other subjects
- Pupils are managed well, and this ensures that they have very good attitudes to work, and behave very well in lessons and in and around the school. Relationships are very good.
- Excellent use is made of links with the community to enhance the quality of pupils' education.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in all aspects of communication for the lowest-attaining pupils who learn visually in Year 2 and above.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects.
- Standards and provision for physical education for pupils of secondary age.
- Standards and provision in history for pupils of secondary age.
- Strategic financial planning and attention to best value principles.
- Access to separate, quiet accommodation for withdrawal for therapeutic needs, both in the base and in the rest of the school.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997; the inspection identified a number of key issues that were mainly related to the way in which the curriculum was developed and monitored and the way in which pupils' subject knowledge was checked. There was also concern about how the budget was linked to development plans. The school has made good progress overall towards these key issues. It has put in place a rolling programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning which has identified priorities for development. It has also developed effective assessment systems which, in turn, have provided the school with a considerable amount of data with which to measure the success of its work. This, as yet, is not used effectively to judge the value it gives, but is used well to identify strengths and weaknesses in achievement and in the teaching and learning of the vast majority of pupils. Assessment and monitoring of the lowest-attaining pupils who learn visually could be more effective; individual education plans (IEPs) do not always have suitable targets for these pupils to make the progress they could in communication. The achievements of the pupils are now reported well to parents. The school has made very good progress in developing the curriculum offered to all pupils and it now meets statutory requirements. This, and the improved quality of teaching, is ensuring that pupils make at least satisfactory, and often good and very good, progress in all subjects. The school, through its monitoring process, has identified priorities for development, but the link between the school development plan and the budgeting process is still tenuous.

## STANDARDS

The table below 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	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	B	B	<i>very good</i>	A
Reading	B	B	B	<i>good</i>	B
Writing	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
Mathematics	B	A	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
Personal, social and health education	A	B	B	<i>poor</i>	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B		

Children and pupils achieve standards above those seen in similar schools. Pupils make good progress overall at all key stages. The vast majority of pupils make good progress overall in English. They make very good progress by Year 6, where the National Literacy Strategy is very well established and taught, and good progress by Year 11. Higher-attaining pupils gain the Certificate of Achievement. The lowest-attaining pupils make very good progress in communication up to Year 1, where alternative methods (symbols) are used, and satisfactory progress in the rest of the school. These pupils make good progress in handwriting and develop a love of stories and books. Pupils achieve well in mathematics. They make very good progress by Year 6, where the National Numeracy Strategy is very well established and taught, and achieve well by Year 11. Higher-attaining pupils are gaining the General Certificate of Secondary Education by the age of 16. Others gain the Certificate of Achievement or accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme. Pupils achieve well in science, and make good progress up to Year 6 and very good progress by Year 11. Pupils achieve very well in the Certificate of Achievement for science. Pupils achieve well in learning ICT skills throughout the school, although they could learn to use these skills more effectively in other subjects of the curriculum if better resources were provided. Pupils' achievements and progress in PSHE are good, and all pupils make consistently good progress towards targets set within IEPs. Pupils within the autism base make very good progress in their personal and social development. Pupils attain very high standards in art and design. Standards in music are very high in the primary department and good in the secondary department. Standards are high in geography. Pupils achieve well in all other subjects except for history and physical education in the secondary department. Progress in physical education is affected by the lack of access to appropriate facilities. Achievements in history for secondary aged pupils could be improved by better planning to meet a range of needs, and more effective use of the available resources.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of pupils to the school are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe, secure and valued.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons and in the school and wider community. Very occasionally, pupils with behavioural difficulties show a lack of respect for teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils achieve very high standards in personal development and show an increasing capacity to make friends and work with others. They take increasing responsibility both for their own work and for helping others. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very 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.*

Teaching and learning is good overall with some very good and excellent features. One hundred and seventeen lessons were observed during the inspection; of these, two were not graded for teaching because they took place in other establishments; in both cases learning was judged to be good. Teaching and learning is good across the school and only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Teaching is very good or better in 40 per cent of lessons. It is good or better in 84

per cent of lessons and satisfactory or better in 99 per cent. The key skills of communication, including literacy skills, are well taught in the majority of lessons. Overall, pupils' needs are well met. However, the teaching methods used for the lowest-attaining pupils who learn visually could be improved by more consistent use of alternative methods of communication, such as symbols and ICT, for reading and writing. Numeracy is well taught across the school, and pupils learn to use their numeracy skills well to solve problems in other subjects, as well as in mathematics lessons. Personal and social skills are also well taught, and are very well taught in the base for pupils with autism. Pupils learn to take charge of their own learning, and those with autistic spectrum disorder become increasingly co-operative and tolerant of others and integrate well into the main school lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well taught in discrete lessons and pupils learn a range of skills, but the limited resources in classrooms affect daily access to using these skills in other subjects. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and know them well. Resources are used well and support staff provide good support to those pupils with the most need. The pace of lessons is almost always brisk, and this ensures that pupils have to think quickly and pay attention throughout. As a result, pupils learn well and make good progress in most subjects. Pupils learn to work independently, and are fully aware of what they have learnt in lessons because objectives and targets are made clear to them from the outset. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the management of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs is insecure and class discussion rules are not fully adhered to.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall and fully meets statutory requirements. The school has worked hard to ensure that overall the curriculum meets a range of needs. Provision for those pupils on the autistic spectrum is good, and is very good in the base.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school works hard to promote inclusion and places a good emphasis on the acquisition of language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school is very successful in promoting spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. Very good opportunities exist for social development that enhances pupils' confidence. A strong moral code exists throughout the school. Cultural awareness is promoted through external visits and an appreciation of the arts.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are very good. Teachers check pupils' gains in understanding well and set challenging targets for improvement. The school has established a means of monitoring the progress of individuals and to some extent groups of pupils. The checking of pupils' progress in history needs to be more consistent.

The partnership between the school and its parents is good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff provide good leadership for all the school's work and soundly manage the provision. Strategic planning, in the form of the school improvement plan, could be better if it were longer term and suitably costed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well and have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors its performance in order to provide best value. A good strategy for performance management, which sets targets for groups and individuals, has been put in place. The data now collected by the school could be further evaluated to judge the value it adds in comparison with other schools of this type; at present the school does not apply all the principles of best value well enough.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The satisfactory resources are used well and specific grants support improvements. Links between the budget and the school improvement plan are tenuous. There is a good number of staff, but there are weaknesses in the accommodation. Plans are in place to address this.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy coming to school.</li> <li>• They are comfortable with approaching the school.</li> <li>• The teachers have high expectations of their children and help them to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The progress of the lowest-attaining pupils.</li> <li>• The quality of reading records.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents; they agree that the progress of lower-attaining pupils could be improved. The team does not agree with parents about the quality of reading records, which have improved recently. It also believes that the range of extra-curricular activities is good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. There was only one child of Reception age on roll at the time of the inspection. Analysis of this pupil's work, and the other pupils who are now above Reception age, shows that children achieve very well and make very good progress in their first year at school. This reflects the high quality of teaching found in the combined Reception and Year 1 class.
2. Overall, the achievements of pupils of school age are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were satisfactory overall with some shortcomings in standards for the oldest pupils. There has been a significant improvement in standards across the school in many subjects because the school now monitors teaching and learning well.
3. Pupils whose home language is not English make similar rates of progress to their peers, and there are no pupils at an early stage of language acquisition. There was no difference in performance by these pupils of different ethnic origin. Boys and girls make similar progress in all subjects, although the girls do show less enthusiasm for games as they get older.
4. Primary aged pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, who are gradually integrated for longer periods in the school day into the school classes, make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment and very good progress when withdrawn for individual programmes of work. The very few pupils of secondary age with autistic spectrum disorder make sound and sometimes good progress. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder who receive most of their education within the base make very good progress, especially in their personal and social development and communication. This enables them to integrate well into other classes in the school with support and structured routines. Other pupils with additional special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates in most other subjects. The teachers, on the whole, make sure that objectives in lessons, and questioning, meet individual needs. However, those who learn visually and cannot access print could make better progress, particularly in reading and recording their work, if symbols were used more consistently for this purpose. The very good practice seen in Key Stage 1 and in the autism base could be usefully extended to other visual learners in the rest of the school.
5. Pupils make good progress in their PSHE and in reaching priority targets identified in IEPs for this, and for English and mathematics. In the primary department, pupils make good and sometimes very good progress towards school targets set for class groups and individuals in all aspects of English and mathematics. Pupils' achievements in English and mathematics are good overall. There has been a significant improvement in the achievement and progress of pupils in mathematics and literacy since the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies in the primary department, and the setting of pupils by ability in the secondary department. The introduction of these strategies in the secondary department is having a positive impact on progress in many lessons but, as yet, not all teachers are fully confident in teaching English this way. The school is aware of this and is continuing to monitor and support them in their planning. Pupils achieve well in the Certificate of Achievement for English by the age of 16. Teachers are more confident in implementing the strategy for mathematics and, although this has not yet had the full impact,

the school is well placed to improve standards further in this subject. Improvements in opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to gain accreditation through the General Certificate of Secondary Education, and for others to gain the Certificate of Achievement in mathematics, are motivating all pupils to work hard in lessons and achieve well.

6. Because of the high quality of teaching by non-specialist teachers in the primary department, achievements and progress in science are good. Standards of achievement are very good in the secondary department and reflect the very good teaching of the specialist teacher. Better planning and the use of assessment have improved achievement in the subject since the time of the last inspection, when standards were found to be sound and sometimes better. The very good emphasis on investigative science is ensuring that all pupils are challenged. Pupils' achievements in the Certificate of Achievement are improving year on year. They could be even better if older pupils had access to more standard science equipment and better facilities, such as a fume cupboard.

7. Achievement in ICT is good overall. Overall, pupils by the age of 16 are achieving well in the Certificate of Achievement. The school, after a period of instability, has managed to maintain the overall standards seen at the last inspection. Changes to the operating system have affected progress to some extent, but the new co-ordinator is filling in gaps in pupils' knowledge well. However, there are still shortages in hardware and software to meet the needs of the lowest-attaining pupils, and to ensure access for all in other subjects. As a result, progress for the lower-attaining pupils who need additional aids and software, and for all pupils in using information technology across the curriculum, is satisfactory but could be better. The extra-curricular club at lunch times is having a positive impact on the confidence of pupils to work independently.

8. Achievement in art and design is very good. Pupils achieve very well across the school because of the high-quality specialist teaching they receive. In 2001, five pupils gained Grade A, one pupil Grade B and one pupil Grade C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education in art and design. The quality of work seen is very good and sometimes outstanding. Lower-attaining pupils also achieved well in the art module of the Youth Award Scheme in 2001. This year, standards of achievement are likely to be lower because of changes in the requirements in the examination system, which now place a greater emphasis on literacy skills. Progress towards the practical and creative side of art remains very good, but the abilities of the present Year 11 class in literacy are likely to affect overall results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Standards of achievement in design and technology are good and pupils make good progress across the school. Again, specialist teaching and improved planning and assessment have resulted in improved progress throughout the school and, in 2001, half of the pupils gained distinctions and the other half merits in the Certificate of Achievement at the age of 16.

9. All pupils, whatever their age and prior attainment, now make good progress in religious education. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' achievements were sound overall, but varied from unsatisfactory to good. Improved planning and the more rigorous use of assessment have improved pupils' progress in the subject. The progress of pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 and their attitudes to the subject have improved and are now good, possibly because of increased opportunities to gain external accreditation in the subject. These pupils are now achieving well in the Hertfordshire Certificate of Religious Education. Pupils of all ages now gain a good knowledge of their own and other religions and show empathy for other pupils' values and beliefs.

10. Achievements in geography have improved; they are now very good overall. Weaknesses in the provision identified at the last inspection have been addressed and this, and the monitoring of teaching, has improved progress in the subject. Pupils achieve very

well in the Certificate of Achievement in relation to their prior attainment. A number of pupils gained merits and distinctions last year. Pupils make very good gains in geographical skills and knowledge, but also make considerable gains in their spiritual, SMSC development because of the emphasis on enquiry skills and discussion.

11. There is a weakness, compared with achievements in other subjects, in the achievements and provision for history at secondary level. Pupils make good progress in the primary department, but skills and knowledge learnt there are not always securely built upon in the secondary department. Assessment of work completed in the secondary department is not rigorous enough, and is not being used consistently to inform planning so that all pupils are systematically challenged. Standards of achievement by the age of 14 are satisfactory overall in chronology and knowledge and understanding, but are unsatisfactory in enquiry skills. History is not taught to the oldest pupils, and those who have a special interest do not have the opportunity to gain accreditation in the subject. The standards in the secondary department also reflect the quality of teaching the pupils receive; visits and resources are rarely used to make the subject 'come alive' to pupils, and work set does not always meet individual literacy needs.

12. Similarly, achievements and progress in physical education are satisfactory overall, and good in the primary department. Standards of achievement and progress could be better if pupils had access to better facilities and improved teaching. The school has recently been part of a successful bid with other special and secondary schools which will extend extra-curricular provision and give opportunities for pupils to co-organise events with mainstream pupils. It will also allow the school to use the specialist staff from the mainstream establishment to observe and monitor the quality of teaching at The Collett School. Similar bids have also been successful for music. At present, standards of achievement in music are good and have been maintained since the last inspection. They reflect the high overall quality of teaching in the subject. Access to improved resources and facilities through this recent bid with other families of schools, particularly for ICT to support performance and composition, should help to raise standards further, particularly for those pupils of secondary age.

13. Standards of achievement in French are good, and are much improved since the last inspection when they were satisfactory. All pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 are now taught French, and the subject now meets statutory requirements. Higher-attaining pupils are gaining good levels of success in the Certificate of Achievement in French by the age of 16, and lower-attaining pupils are gaining accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme.

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

14. Pupils' attitudes to the school, and their behaviour, personal development and relationships are all very good. No firm judgements were made in the previous report on this aspect, but it appears to have been good. If this were so, it has improved since the last inspection. Attendance remains good.

15. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They enjoy coming to school, a fact confirmed by parents in the answers to the questionnaires; they show enthusiasm when they arrive, and they quickly settle down to their classroom tasks after registration and assembly. One parent said that her child was not too keen to go to school when he was getting ready, but once he arrived he was very happy to be with his friends. Overall, pupils, particularly those of primary school age, are friendly towards visitors and will greet them both cheerily and inquisitively. Those of secondary school age are also friendly, but in a more mature way, as befits their age. When interviewed, pupils spoke positively about the school and the activities they liked doing best.

16. Behaviour is very good, apart from a small minority with challenging behaviour, who are on the whole, managed well by staff. Pupils are polite and courteous. They hold doors open for adults and for each other and say 'thank you' when doors are held open for them. Older pupils are very caring of the younger ones. Parents commented on this at their meeting with inspectors. The very good behaviour which was observed in lessons matches that seen around the school, at break times, in the dining hall, on arrival at school and on leaving at the end of the day. Pupils learn to take turns and to put their hands up to ask and answer questions. Staff from the local library have commented on how well pupils from the school behave. On the minibus travelling to the local Oaklands College, the behaviour of a group of Year 10 pupils was exemplary. There were four fixed-term exclusions, in the year preceding the inspection and they involved three pupils, all boys. During the week of the inspection, one boy was excluded for aggressive behaviour.

17. The absence of oppressive behaviour is good. A group of pupils who were interviewed told inspectors that there was some bullying at the school, but that the school dealt with it. Overall, however, bullying at the school is rare and there is no evidence that sexism or racism exists; the school ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to be included in activities.

18. Pupils understand very well the impact of their actions on others and they show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. For example, one Year 11 assembly took place in the information technology suite where they were researching the UNICEF web site and becoming aware of the problems of people starving in Africa. This was a prelude to Friday's charity breakfast when they were raising money for relevant charities. Older pupils throughout the school were observed helping the younger ones. At the parents' meeting one parent said: 'They learn to love one another.'

19. As they grow up through the school, pupils learn to show initiative and take an increasing amount of responsibility. Younger pupils help by taking registers to Reception and by tidying up the classroom after lessons. However, older pupils in Years 10 and 11, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, help and support the younger ones. A number of examples of these activities were observed during the inspection. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 were seen helping to supervise pupils during lunchtime and then clearing up afterwards; Year 11 pupils had taken upon themselves the responsibility of supervising pupils leaving at the end of the school day. They took the younger pupils out to their transport and ensured that they got into the correct taxis; two pupils from Year 11 were observed helping pupils in Years 3 and 4 with their reading at the beginning of the afternoon, when everyone reads in class. Pupils on the school council represent their peers well. The initiative shown and the responsibility taken, particularly by secondary-age pupils, are very good. One parent reported that a Year 11 pupil said to her at an open evening: 'I am learning to be independent.'

20. Relationships at the school between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils work well together in groups and in pairs. The school is a very friendly place and pupils appreciate the way that teachers help and support them. Very good relationships were observed in the classroom as well as in the playground and around the school. Examples of the good relationships were those between Year 10 and Year 11 pupils and the teaching assistant, who accompanied them to the Oaklands and West Hertfordshire Colleges.

21. Attendance is good and above the national average for this type of school. Unauthorised absences are well below average and have decreased over the last three years. Authorised absences are slightly higher than average, but this is largely due to the long term absence of a pupil, who it is planned will go into a residential school in the near

future, but will remain on the school's roll until then. Pupils arrive at school on time, rarely arriving late unless the transport is delayed through local traffic problems. The good level of attendance and the prompt arrival of pupils at school ensure a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

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

22. Overall, the quality of teaching is good with some very good and excellent features. A total of 117 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, during inspection week. Two lessons were observed off site at other establishments and were not graded for teaching, but learning observed was graded as good. Of the other 115 lessons, 114 were satisfactory or better (99 per cent), 51 were good (44.4 per cent), 41 were very good (35.7 per cent), and 5 were excellent (4.4 per cent). Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. The quality of teaching and learning is much improved since the time of the last inspection when around 12 percent of teaching was unsatisfactory. There is now a much higher proportion of good or better lessons. Taking the scrutiny of samples of pupils' work into consideration, the quality of teaching and learning over time in art and design, design and technology and geography is very good, and it is good in all other subjects, except in history and physical education where it is satisfactory. Teaching and learning is best in primary-aged classes where there is a higher proportion of lessons that are good or better, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. It is very good for pupils aged between five and seven, where half of lessons are very good or better, and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, teaching in the secondary department is good at each stage, although there is a higher proportion of very good teaching for pupils aged between 14 and 16. Teachers of English to pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 are not always secure in the new methods of delivering English, although teaching is sound and often better. The teaching of history in the secondary department does not always challenge pupils or meet the needs of the least able. The teaching of physical education at secondary level, although sound, has limited provision for developing creativity in gymnastics, and is hindered by the accommodation in games.

23. Since the last inspection, the school has adopted a three-part structure for all lessons in the primary department, building on the success of this aspect from the literacy and numeracy strategies; the secondary department also follows this structure in most lessons. Teachers now include an introduction where learning outcomes are shared with pupils, a middle section where tasks and activities are set, and a plenary session where pupils are encouraged to assess their own performance and that of others. Planning is very often detailed and includes learning outcomes for pupils of differing ability within the class groups. The senior management team has worked hard to improve the quality of learning outcomes and target setting by teachers. This has been very effective in improving the quality of teaching. Pupils are mostly well informed about what they are to learn and what they have to do to achieve. This gives a good focus to learning for all pupils, whatever their degree of difficulty with the subject. This, and the quality of questioning in lessons that involves all pupils, is a particular strength of the best teaching. On the whole, teachers have a good and often very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and have used assessments well to decide what pupils need to learn to do next. When interviewed, higher-attaining pupils could tell inspectors what their targets for learning were, particularly in English.

24. Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils, which is another outcome of the national literacy and numeracy strategies and the intention to develop further integration links with mainstream schools. There is now a clear expectation that all pupils will achieve well-matched external accreditation by the age of 16 in the vast majority of subjects, and teachers work hard to make this happen. As a result, teachers are successful, in explaining quite difficult concepts in lessons. The best teachers also challenge pupils through discussion, investigation and the development of enquiry skills. This helps pupils learn to

use their knowledge and understanding to solve problems in daily life. Pupils are expected to use their initiative and to work independently where possible, and teachers and their assistants usually provide the necessary support when pupils find this difficult. The work of the support assistants in classes adds to the high quality of the provision.

25. The important skills of speaking and listening are taught effectively in all lessons. As part of their English lessons, pupils have a broad range of learning experiences that promote speaking and listening and social communication. Pupils grow in confidence to speak and listen for a wide range of purposes and audiences through role-play, listening to stories, structured language sessions, which are supported by programmes from speech therapists, and, in the secondary department, opportunities for drama. Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills by their skilful intervention in whole-class teaching, encouraging more reticent pupils to answer questions; in group work, they sensitively and skilfully extend pupils' breadth of vocabulary by revising well what has been taught earlier. In lessons other than English, there is an emphasis on learning new technical vocabulary, which pupils learn to use to describe and evaluate their work in plenary sessions. There is an emphasis on social communication skills for younger pupils on the autistic spectrum, and every opportunity is taken to encourage pupils to relate to each other and to take turns and make simple requests of others. Communication to and from pupils is very well supported by the use of symbols and schedules so they know what is to happen next, and this gives them the means to ask for help or make requests for what they want. This is reducing incidents of more challenging behaviour over time, increasing their independence and developing their thinking skills.

26. On the whole, reading and writing skills are reinforced well across the curriculum. The use of symbols is developing well in the early years provision and in the autism base, and could be usefully extended for use with all lower-attaining pupils who cannot access print. This would help these pupils to read and record their work more independently. During the inspection, teachers in the primary department used stories well to make links between literacy and work in other subjects. Pupils learn about a range of hats that are used for different purposes after reading the story of 'Mrs Money's Hat', and older pupils learn to read and write instructions, in design and technology for example. Most teachers manage to match pupils' literacy skills to recording methods, but this is not always the case for the lowest-attaining pupils. Occasionally, worksheets do not meet all recording needs, and lower-attaining pupils copy work that has not been generated by them, so they do not have the same opportunity as others to learn to record accurately what they have learnt in the lesson.

27. In mathematics, basic skills are taught well through mental and written work. Pupils learn to manipulate number of increasing size mentally and to record their computations accurately. Numeracy is well taught across the curriculum and, although teachers do not always specifically plan to enhance numeracy skills in lessons other than mathematics, good use is made of incidental opportunities. During the inspection, older and younger pupils were seen consolidating their measuring skills in design and technology, and learning about shape and pattern in art. Numeracy is well planned and taught in design and technology and science, where pupils learn to measure length, distance, sound and weight accurately, for example. The language of mathematics was particularly well taught in all lessons in the autism base.

28. Teachers use information technology especially well when they have access to the information technology room. However, the limited range of specialised hardware and software in the classroom inhibits the use of it at other times, especially for lower-attaining pupils. Skills

are taught well and software is used effectively in English in the primary department, in numeracy in both the secondary and primary departments and in the autism base. Several co-ordinators recognised the need to develop access to supportive software in their subjects.

29. Overall, teachers manage pupils very well, although some teachers are not as skilled in managing the behaviour of pupils with additional needs as others. For example, those teachers who have received additional training in the management of pupils with autism are very successful in managing pupils who integrate into their classes. Others who have not received training as yet find these pupils very demanding, and place an over-reliance on staff who help to support them. The very few older pupils on the autistic spectrum manage well in lessons, considering the lack of training undertaken by teachers in the secondary department, but on occasions find the pressures of integration difficult and respond accordingly. The school is systematically addressing this problem through training. Similarly, one or two teachers are less experienced in the management of older pupils with emotional and behavioural needs, although most manage them very well through providing ground rules for behaviour and positive praise, as well as challenging them with appropriate work in lessons.

30. Resources are used well in most lessons to add interest and assist the learning of lower-attaining pupils. They are used particularly well in art and design. Artefacts and photographic materials are used well so that pupils learn to develop their creative ideas and make very good gains in knowledge and understanding of art from different cultures and times. However, in secondary history lessons, the available resources are not used to make history 'come alive' and this makes lessons rather flat and uninspiring. Pupils learn basic facts about history and develop a good understanding of chronology, but are not inspired to find out about events and people in the past.

31. The provision of homework is satisfactory overall; it is provided regularly in English, mathematics and French. There is a variable response to homework set. When homework is completed, pupils learn to read with greater fluency, consolidate their learning of mathematical computation and remember French phrases well. Where homework is used in other subjects to involve parents in their children's learning, it is very successful and adds interest and a focus for learning in lessons.

32. Oral marking is good in lessons and teachers often ask pupils to evaluate their own work against the learning outcomes identified at the beginning of lessons. However, the quality of written marking seen in the sample of work is variable, and work is not always annotated to show what pupils have learnt in the lessons and what they have to learn next. The school has recognised the variability in marking and has developed a draft policy. It is in a good position to monitor its implementation carefully through the regular programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

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

33. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing its curriculum. The curriculum co-ordinator and senior management team work well together to provide a strategic overview of the whole curriculum. They make sure that it meets statutory requirements, and that planning ensures that pupils cover a broad range of learning experiences and continues to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Policies and schemes of work are well developed for all subjects in accordance with the changes made to the National Curriculum, matching the requirements of the curriculum with pupils' needs and abilities. Opportunities for accreditation are good, with courses leading to GCSE examinations in mathematics and art and design. Pupils have opportunities to obtain

nationally accredited certification in almost all subjects through the Certificate of Achievement, the bronze and silver levels of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and the Hertfordshire Certificate in Religious Education.

34. The breadth, balance and quality of the curriculum have improved since the last inspection, when learning opportunities in a number of subjects were unsatisfactory. These have now been successfully addressed. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, as well as religious education, personal social and health education, sex education and drugs education. Religious education is based on the locally Agreed Syllabus and meets statutory requirements. The breadth of learning and the balance between subjects is now good, and the relevance of learning opportunities is very good. In the primary department, the slightly longer than average school day enables pupils to enjoy a variety of 'options', which support the more formal PSHE lessons and improve their personal development. In some subjects in the secondary department, notably science, music, art and design and physical education, learning opportunities are diminished by weaknesses in accommodation. The school is to address the weaknesses in the arts and physical education through partnership with other schools in the community.

35. The National Literacy Strategy has been very well adapted to the needs of the pupils up to the age of 11, and satisfactorily at the beginning of the secondary department, and is enhancing the curriculum and improving pupils' achievements in English. The National Numeracy Strategy is proving very effective, and is being used imaginatively to extend pupils' progress in mathematics. Further work is being continued by teachers to increase the quality and impact of these sessions across the school.

36. Provision for pupils with additional special needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, is good overall. It is very good for the youngest pupils, who move between the autism base and their age-appropriate class as best suits their abilities and needs, and for pupils who are taught mainly in the base. By the end of Year 6, these pupils are well integrated into the main school with varying degrees of support. In the secondary stage, pupils are class based and provision is satisfactory overall. The limited training of teachers in the secondary department in the teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder does not ensure that these pupils' priority needs are always met. The school could make better use of additional methods of communication to enhance the progress of the lowest-attaining pupils who learn visually and cannot access print. The school has good relationships with other support agencies, and calls upon their expertise and advice as and when necessary; for example, for pupils with speech and language difficulties and hearing impairment. The amount of time provided by the Health Service for speech and language therapy is good. However, there are not always quiet and suitable places provided for individual work to be carried out effectively for speech and language, and for other therapy or counselling needs, both in the school and in the autism base.

37. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good when compared to other schools of this type. After-school clubs continue to be difficult to arrange, because pupils are dependent on school transport to take them home. There are, however, a range of clubs and activities available to pupils at lunchtimes. The library and computer suite, with access to the Internet, are open and supervised every lunchtime. Both facilities are well occupied at these times. The school makes good provision for residential visits to widen the pupils' horizons. There is also a range of sporting events against other schools.

38. The overall provision for careers and vocational education is good. It is organised into five distinct themes, which focus on life-long learning. It gives access to good information and provides experience of the working world. The programme enables pupils to develop their Progress File, in which they record their achievements and plans for the future. All pupils are well prepared for work experience in careers lessons, and learn the key skills for

work as well as developing personal and social skills. Work experience is organised by the Hertfordshire Careers Service, which ensures that health and safety issues are addressed. Targets are set and monitored well, and pupils are expected to keep a diary of their experiences. They are visited at least once, and given support if and when needed.

39. The school's links with the community make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. The extensive list of individuals, agencies and businesses makes it impossible to name them all. However, they include the local Lions and Rotary clubs. The former help to identify families which are to receive food parcels, and the latter arranges an annual day out to Whipsnade Zoo. The school has links with the health service through the school doctor and the school nurse, who participates in the personal and social education programme, and contributes well to sex education. The school nurse also runs a weekly drop-in centre for pupils, and plans to start one for parents. The school has very good links with the local police and fire services, which promote learning in science and geography as well as personal and social education. Visits to the local shopping centres, at which pupils are welcomed, help younger pupils to learn about shopping and a sense of place. A local leisure centre donated a mini-bus to the school, which increases the ability of pupils to take part in many educational visits and enables pupils to attend some of the local colleges. Many local companies play a major part in pupils' education by providing work experience, and they do this willingly. An example of a particularly touching link with the local community appeared in the picture books in the school hall. In one there was a newspaper cutting about the death of an elderly neighbour. The school remembered him with a number of photographs recording some of his visits to the school.

40. The school has a good relationship with many partner institutions. During the inspection, pupils in Year 10 were observed attending a course at the local Oaklands College, learning about health and safety on the farm, and pupils in Year 11 were observed at the West Hertfordshire College in Hemel Hempstead. The school has many other school and college links, which include day visits to the school by students on Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses. There are also a number of musical links. For example, pupils from the school took part in a Millennium Concert, held in St Albans Abbey, which involved mainstream schools from the county. However, although there are some good links with local mainstream schools and a small number of pupils take part in integration programmes, these opportunities are limited, particularly for primary-age pupils. The school encourages integration and professional relationships between mainstream and special schools. At the moment one secondary pupil attends mainstream part time, and one primary pupil integrates with a local primary school. One pupil from a local school for children with severe learning difficulties attends The Collett School part time, and the school is fully involved in the LEA Primary Outreach Project, which begins in March 2002. Three staff have already undertaken the training for this project. The school is working hard to establish other links in order to improve provision for performing arts and physical education.

41. Provision for SMSC education is very good. The school has developed a very clear values statement through its involvement in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 'Values Project'. This guides teachers in their planning for each year group in this aspect of provision, and is reflected well, and often very well, in their policies and planning. Provision for PSHE, music, art and design and religious education makes a particularly strong contribution to this development.

42. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good, and is much improved since the last inspection. Teachers provide very good opportunities to develop pupils' own values and beliefs, as well as an awareness of others through well-led discussions. Examples of this take place in lessons in religious education, when the aim is understanding different religious beliefs, and in geography in respect of environmental issues. Pupils are

often given opportunities to reflect on their own learning and the work of others. Pupils are given very good opportunities to learn to value themselves, relationships, society and the environment. Most pupils are willing to express their views, and pupils show respect for these views. School assemblies provide very good opportunities for reflection about those less fortunate than themselves. In a food technology lesson, pupils were amazed when yeast made bread rise in the oven, were stunned into silence when they listened to their own compositions in music, and were overwhelmed by the skills and talents of artists from different times and cultures in art.

43. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils are developing an understanding of common values, and an ability to re-assess their own values in the light of experience. Many pupils are prepared to take a stance where there is dispute. For example, in a Year 10 religious education lesson, a good discussion took place on the morality of racial discrimination. All members of staff act as good role models and, through good relationships, aim to give a sense of right, wrong and appropriate behaviour. Pupils are given good and often very good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, because teachers make objectives clear to them in lessons. There are high expectations that pupils will show respect for each other and the teachers. Loyalty and trust have a strong emphasis in all the school's work.

44. The provision for pupils' social development is very good, and is reflected in the way pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively in class and in other activities, such as assemblies and school productions. Older pupils are given very good opportunities to help younger pupils, in paired reading projects, for example, and to develop the idea of the school and wider community. Pupils are encouraged to think of the needs of others and, during the week of the inspection, a charity breakfast was held in aid of UNICEF. The development of the school council is helping pupils to have a voice, and pupils participate actively and responsibly. Tutor groups and circle time also provide good opportunities for involvement in school matters, and for developing social skills, such as turn taking and listening to others' points of view. Pupils are encouraged to develop good manners and to play games which encourage turn taking and sharing. 'Golden time' for the youngest pupils provides good opportunities for them to earn the right to choose from a range of activities that promote social skills. In careers education and guidance, older pupils are given very good opportunities to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and explore career possibilities. Lessons in citizenship help to develop an understanding of forms of government, elected leadership, and legal and human rights.

45. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. The pupils have very good opportunities to gain a sense of their own identity, for example through studying and creating self-portraits in art, by investigating changes in their bodies as they grow in science and PSHE, and developing a sense of belonging to a particular culture in religious education and geography. Pupils are developing a respect for cultural diversity, for example in Year 5 work on the Jewish Festival of Purim, and in the school Christmas production which featured music and language from many different cultures. Pupils are also made aware of different cultures by the lead given in assemblies, where festivals of many faiths are celebrated.

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

46. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good; those for the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development, and for providing educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are both good. Pupils receive their education in a warm, caring and supportive environment.

47. The school has proper child protection procedures in place, with the headteacher as the designated adult. One other senior member of staff has received child protection training, and the headteacher has undergone training in the care of looked-after children. The school's child protection policy is in line with that of the Hertfordshire County Child Protection Committee. Because the social services child protection team has been integrated with the education department, the school can easily contact them if necessary, and relationships are very good. Apart from formal referrals, social services staff will give advice on a 'what if' basis. Child protection forms a part of regular staff training and is an integral part of the induction programme for new staff.

48. The procedures for health and safety and for managing sick and injured pupils are both very good. The school carries out termly health and safety checks and reports the results to the governing body. The local authority carried out a full health and safety audit last year. The school and the local authority carry out risk assessments, which include those for school visits. The one health and safety issue raised during the inspection, in the design and technology department, was brought to the attention of the school and put right before the end of the inspection. The experienced caretaker is forever vigilant in bringing health and safety matters to the attention of the school when they arise. An appropriate number of staff have first-aid certificates and take part in a weekly rota, which is exhibited in the school office so that the school Receptionist knows who to contact. The excellent procedures for administering medication are carried out competently by an experienced teaching assistant. The above procedures were judged as good at the time of the last inspection. They are now very good.

49. As at the last inspection, the school monitors and promotes attendance very well. The school adopts a first day contact policy for those pupils absent without notification. In spite of there having been a number of changes of education welfare officer, the school itself follows up absences very well. The school stresses to parents the importance of attendance, and rewards pupils for good attendance. It also monitor the times of arrival of taxis and minibuses. Pupils sign the late book if they arrive late, and just a couple of pupils were observed doing this during the inspection. The outcome is a good level of attendance with a very low incidence of unauthorised absence. The school has plans to computerise registration, which will make it easier to analyse in detail attendance and absence patterns across the school.

50. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good, which is an improvement on the last inspection, when it was good. Rewards and sanctions are used to promote good behaviour, and the result of the school's policy is reflected in the very good behaviour seen around the school. The one weakness is the absence of individual behaviour management plans for pupils at the school with emotional and behavioural difficulties, although most staff have good individual strategies for managing these pupils. The school's procedures for dealing with pupils with behaviour problems start with the class teacher, particularly for pupils of primary age, whilst the pastoral team are more likely to become involved earlier in the secondary stage. Pupils are praised and certificates are awarded for good behaviour, the emphasis being on the positive aspects of behaviour. Parents are told about good behaviour as well as poor. Fixed-term exclusions are dealt with according to statutory procedures. The school also offers advice on how to manage pupils at home. Oppressive behaviour is dealt with very well. Pupils say that if bullying occurs the school deals with it quickly, and this echoes the views of parents.

51. The staff know pupils very well, and this makes it easier for the school to monitor and support pupils' personal development. Monitoring is very good. There is a regular exchange of information about pupils, and class teachers keep the assistant headteacher informed of any pastoral problems. Secondary-age pupils are more likely to approach her directly. The pastoral procedures are well supported by the school nurse, who runs a drop-in centre in the

medical room. Pupils have their own record forms, as well as the home/school diaries, through which information between parents and school is exchanged. Any major incident is recorded in the school's incident book. One particularly supportive procedure is the induction programme for pupils entering the secondary phase of their education. Although by then they know the school well, pupils undergo an induction programme similar to that which mainstream primary pupils undergo for transfer to secondary school.

52. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment on entry to the school, and the annual review of their statement of special educational needs, are effectively carried out.

53. Procedures for assessing attainment, introduced since the last inspection, are clearly outlined in the policy guidelines, and with the exception of history in the secondary department are well implemented. This is a major improvement since the last inspection, when most subjects were criticised for weak or non-existent procedures. Attainment is measured against individual targets as well as subject-based assessment. These assessments are used for future planning, to inform parents and to help pupils know how well they are achieving.

54. The system and structure of individual education plans has been reviewed and this is working well. The vast majority of pupils have specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-related (SMART) targets, set at the annual review meeting, and recorded in their diaries. Occasionally the targets set for the lowest-attaining pupils are not achieved because they are not always broken down well enough and do not build on earlier gains. Not all the lowest-attaining pupils, who cannot access print, have targets that will help them access reading and writing through symbols. In Years 10 and 11, 'Progress Files' are being piloted, but this is not proving as effective as the Youth Award Scheme in terms of pupils being more aware of their own learning. Pupil portfolios, which contain examples of work and achievement, are in use throughout the school, although they could be better annotated to show achievement, progress and what pupils should learn next. A uniform marking policy has recently been introduced in the secondary department. When fully implemented, this will ensure that the pupils have a clear understanding of their own achievement and progress. A similar system is planned for the primary department. The school is in the process of developing portfolios for subjects to show moderated and agreed levels of work.

55. The school has a clear commitment to both recognising and celebrating pupils' achievement through a comprehensive system of awards and certificates. Most of these are awarded in public at assemblies or in front of a class group. These systems are a significant factor in boosting pupils' confidence and self-esteem, helping to motivate them further.

56. The school has collected a considerable amount of data about pupils' academic achievement against P Levels, National Curriculum criteria and accreditation criteria, and this is being used well to set targets for individuals and age groups in the school. Data is carefully displayed, using ICT to make analysis and target setting clear. As yet, the information is not used to identify the progress of pupils, to set targets for different disability, gender or ethnic minority groups, or to compare itself with other schools of the same type to see the value it adds compared with others. The school is now well placed to develop this aspect of its work.

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

57. The parents' views of the school, as expressed in the answers to the questionnaires and at the parents' meeting, are positive with nine out of 11 questions in the questionnaire being answered positively by over 90 per cent of parents. For example, 97 per cent of parents say that their child likes coming to school, 95 per cent say that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school and 94 per cent think that their child is making good progress. The main concern from the questionnaire was that a number believe that there is not a big enough range of extra-curricular activities, although inspectors disagree. Some parents express concern about the progress made by the lowest-attaining pupils, but enthuse about the progress made by the primary-aged children who are on the autistic spectrum.

58. The school provides a wide range of good-quality information about the school and about individual pupils' progress. There is a detailed and well-presented school prospectus and a full annual report from the governing body. Both of these contain the relevant statutory information, but the latter could be presented in a more attractive way. Regular newsletters from the school keep parents informed about school events and various activities. Very good quality newsletters from the autism base supplement these. Parents are kept informed about pupils' progress through the review system, with the majority of parents attending the meetings. The autumn progress reports and pupils' annual reports, which are of good quality, add depth to the information. The latter information partly addresses Key Issue 3 from the last inspection, which referred to reporting pupils' progress and reporting effectively to parents. The other part has been addressed through the assessment procedures. The school is always open for parents, who can drop in and have coffee together, with the library used as a parents' room.

59. There are effective links between the school and parents. Although there is still no formal parent teacher association (PTA), there are plans to re-form one. Staff in the autism base have formed a very active parent support group. Parents have formed a school support group, which arranges meetings once a term with a visiting speaker such as the school nurse. It is mainly primary parents who attend these meetings. At the parents' meeting it was said that more parents were becoming involved with the school. The governors arrange a number of fundraising events, which are well supported by parents. Last year these events raised over £6000 towards extra resources for the school. Before each event the decision is made as to how the funds will be allocated. For instance, over £2000 raised by the '72' club was allocated towards purchasing new printers, a keyboard and a digital camera.

60. Parents make a good impact on the work of the school. For example, three to four years ago there was no recorded form of the school's values. The school decided to consult a sample of parents and members of the community on their views, starting with a blank sheet of paper, on what they thought the school's values should be. Out of this consultation arose the current aims of the school as well as its vision. Parents were also consulted on the form of the home/school agreement. A small number of parents come into the school as volunteers to help in the classroom or listen to pupils read. Two of these were in school during the inspection. Some pupils told inspectors that their parents helped them with their homework and the school has issued a leaflet to parents entitled 'Helping Your Child With Literacy'. The school gives advice to parents on how to cope with their child at home and the school nurse is planning to start a drop-in centre for parents. Some class teachers involve parents in the work that pupils do. For example, the Year 7 teacher asked parents to write in with special memories of their children when they were small. A number responded to this request and the results were used as the basis for a religious education lesson.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The headteacher and key staff provide effective and often very good leadership to the school, and overall the school is managed soundly. However, there are still weaknesses in the school's financial and strategic planning. A strong, competent senior management team has been established, which influences and motivates staff at all levels in order to improve standards at the school. The whole school team has created an atmosphere in which pupils strive very hard to achieve well. This reflects the school's motto – 'Keen to Learn'. The headteacher and key staff have a clear educational direction for the school and provide a firm steer to the school's work, but this is not always translated formally into the school development plan.

62. The school's internal management structure and the individual roles and responsibilities of senior staff are clear to all members of staff. The senior management team has been restructured and improved and now comprises the headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the head of the autism base. This group meets regularly to discuss routine school business and further developments. Regular whole-school staff meetings, departmental meetings and efficient communication channels at all levels ensure that staff are kept informed about the school's work and development, and staff are, on the whole, committed to raising standards further.

63. The headteacher and senior managers, including the head of the autism base, have moved the school forward in many respects since the last inspection, especially in the organisation and development of the curriculum, which now fully meets statutory requirements and meets the needs of a wider range of pupils. Another aspect, that has much improved the overall teaching and provision, has been the initiation and expansion of the school's monitoring and evaluation programme over the last three years. This programme has helped the school to identify key priorities for further improvement. For example, the school has worked hard to develop better target setting and clearer objectives, and this has improved the quality of teaching and learning in the majority of subjects. The school has taken the introduction of new national initiatives in its stride, and has fully addressed almost all of the key issues identified in the last inspection. Only one issue, relating to the financial management of the school, has not been fully addressed.

64. Governors and managers manage the delegated budget successfully in the main, and there has been some improvement in the structure for school development planning. However, this still has a short-term focus and is still insufficiently costed, and the links to the budget setting process are somewhat tenuous. The school budgets every year for a substantial under spend, although this does not always appear clear since amounts set aside for contingencies are included under other budget headings. As a result, the amounts allocated to the various budget heads do not reflect even the limited costings included in the school improvement plan. When substantial under spending is identified during the course of the year, as happened towards the end of 2001 because of savings in staffing expenditure, spending decisions, involving considerable sums, are not fully based on priorities identified in the school improvement plan. As a result, there is no framework for ensuring that the long-term needs of the school are prioritised and met. Major spending to address shortcomings in resources, including subject specialist facilities as in physical education and science, is not always clearly stated in the school development plan, and there is no structure to identify and fund the need for replacement of larger equipment. The effect is that the school improvement plan is effectively downgraded and does not inform spending adequately. The large under spend from last year was spent on re-surfacing and landscaping two playgrounds, new ICT resources and extensions to a teaching assistant's contract. Four thousand pounds is being saved for a new-minibus. All use of monies was appropriate.

65. Systems for financial management are good overall with effective use being made of LEA financial services to monitor spending against budget heads. Standards funding and other specific grants are allocated to appropriate purposes. Spending is carefully monitored, but there is limited evaluation of the effectiveness of this spending, because targets set within the school development plan do not always have clear success criteria that are related to raising standards. The recent audit report made a number of recommendations, which are being addressed, including the updating of inventories. The school is aware of the principles of best value and has begun to apply some of these. There is a commitment to achieving value for money in buying goods and services, but there is no structure to ensure that spending on learning resources ensures that the school obtains the best price. The school consults well with parents both formally and informally and takes their views into account in overall planning. Effective use is made of outside providers such as local colleges to augment the educational provision the school can offer, and recent joint bids with other secondary schools will further improve the quality of the provision. Consultation with the community about the school's aims and values was very successful and has helped the school raise pupils' standards of behaviour and attitudes to work. The school regularly seeks advice and support from the LEA subject advisors and the special needs advisor, as well as from the specialist literacy and numeracy advisors. The school has effective and systematic processes and procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating other aspects of its work and performance, such as health and safety and attendance. There is now a wealth of significant data that the school uses to monitor the performance of individuals and subjects; it is now in a good position to evaluate it further in order to identify the progress of specific groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, and those with additional educational needs, and to make comparisons, where they can, with other schools in terms of best value.

66. Curriculum co-ordinators on the whole provide good leadership, and are becoming more proactive in their roles. The leadership of English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography and music is very good, and that of almost all other subjects is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The leadership of history at secondary level is at present unsatisfactory because assessment and monitoring of the pupils' and the subject's performance are not rigorous enough, although there is evidence that it has been good in the recent past. Not all co-ordinators have yet had the opportunity to monitor by direct observation of teaching, although all are involved in monitoring planning and in preparing portfolios of agreed standards of work. The vast majority of teachers and all senior managers are working hard towards their performance management targets.

67. The leadership and management of the governing body are satisfactory. It is very supportive of the headteacher and senior staff, and has been effective in fulfilling its responsibilities and statutory duties. Individual governors have been appointed to link to mathematics, English and the autism base. Several lesson observations have taken place, and the governors responsible have reported back to the full governing body on the pleasing work that has been seen. Co-ordinators give subject presentations to the governors and this keeps them well informed.

68. Performance management arrangements are good and are supported by a well-written policy. The governing body is kept well informed of the progress of performance management arrangements. Performance management is linked into the school's improvement plan and action plans. The second performance management cycle ends in July this year. This is being monitored well by the senior management team. Formal lesson observations are taking place, with feedback to teachers and appropriate targets set. An independent performance management consultant, who graded the school very high in

meeting its targets, monitored the school's procedures in December 2001. Target setting for teachers and for the headteacher, in relation to pupil progress and whole-school target setting, is the subject of much current thought in the school as it reviews the ways in which it assigns assessment levels to its pupils and describes their progress.

69. The school has a good level of staffing, which has now stabilised after eight teachers moved on to other positions. All new additions to the staffing list are well qualified and experienced on the whole. Many have come from mainstream schools and this has raised expectations at the school, although few have additional qualifications for special educational needs. The school is addressing these shortcomings through training. Many of the support staff are very experienced, and those who are not receive on-the-job training. All attend in-service days and a few have had additional training in the management of pupils with autism, which is improving the quality of support in integrated classes. Support staff and a teacher provide continuity to the whole school curriculum by working with pupils at lunchtime. The very good relationships and teamwork between teachers and support staff, who are well briefed and de-briefed, are major factors in the success enjoyed in the classroom and the high standards achieved by pupils. A strong team spirit is a feature of the school.

70. Good informal systems of support are in place so that the strengths of the new teachers and staff are utilised, which has led to pupils' reaching higher standards, academically and in their behaviour. However, these are informal, and the school would benefit from more formal arrangements and more structured targets being set. The school supports supply teachers well through detailed planning for lessons and a very useful staff handbook. The professional development of staff is supported strongly by the senior management team. All staff who attend courses are expected to feed back on the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the course they attended. As a result, professional development has a positive effect on the educational standards in the school. The significant investment the school makes in training ensures that the high standards in care and teaching are maintained. The school is working towards 'Investors in People' status, and hopes to achieve this in the near future.

71. Accommodation is satisfactory overall; some of it is good. The school is bright and welcoming. The grounds and gardens are well maintained. Staff and pupils take a pride in the surroundings, and the total campus is a pleasant environment in which to learn and work. Excellent displays of artwork and work in other subjects, and photographic records of outings and achievements enhance the appearance of the school. General classrooms are bright and airy. The ICT and the food technology rooms are very good. The library is good and has improved since the last inspection. Outdoor facilities are good overall although the steep gradient of the sports field is a disadvantage. The recently improved outdoor play areas are very good. The caretaker takes a great pride in the facilities and the school fabric, frequently helping out in his free time.

72. The multipurpose school hall is not large enough for secondary age physical education and the art room is not large enough for some of the primary classes who use it. The science room has no fume cupboard and this affects the depth to which science can be taught for secondary aged pupils. Plans are in hand to overcome some of the accommodation problems by building links with local secondary schools and using their specialist facilities for subjects such as music, drama and physical education. There is a storage problem in a number of subjects, and the garage has been taken over as a storage facility. There are not enough small, quiet rooms for visiting therapists and for use when pupils have to be withdrawn from classes.

73. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and good in many subjects, and are reinforced by use of community and schools loan services. There has been a general improvement in resources since the last inspection. In spite of very good updating and development of the ICT accommodation and resources since the last inspection, there is still a need for more software for the specialist ICT area and across subjects. In science, there is not enough measuring equipment for pupils to be able to work in pairs. The library is used well as a resource both during lesson time and during the lunch hour, when it is very busy.

74. The school has made a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when value for money was judged satisfactory, and now offers a good quality of education, in particular through good teaching. The level of funding is still higher than for many similar schools and the school does not make entirely efficient use of the funding. However, in light of the good and often very good leadership of key staff, good and often very good achievement and the very high quality of personal development shown by pupils, which is reflected in the high levels of parental satisfaction, the school gives good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to improve the quality of education provided, the headteacher and governors should:

- Improve standards of achievement in all aspects of communication for the lowest-attaining pupils who learn visually in Year 2 and above by:
  - \* sharing the good practice seen in the autism base and Year 1 in the use of symbols, so that all pupils make similar gains in reading;
  - \* extending this practice, so that these pupils at all ages are offered opportunities to use symbols to record their work independently in English and all other subjects.
  
- Improve the use of ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum by :
  - \* improving the range of ICT resources for those pupils with additional needs and monitoring and evaluating their use in lessons;
  - \* improving the range of ICT resources for use in other subjects and monitoring and evaluating their use in lessons.
  
- Improve standards in physical education for secondary aged pupils by:
  - \* following up the very good arrangements that are planned for giving pupils access to better physical education opportunities, facilities and expertise in the local secondary school.
  
- Improve standards in history for pupils of secondary age by:
  - \* ensuring that the learning of pupils of this age is checked and monitored and information gained is used to set work to meet all needs;
  - \* ensuring that the available resources are used to make the teaching more interesting and to develop pupils' enquiry skills;
  - \* investigating the possibility of reintroducing external accreditation for those pupils who have an interest in the subject.
  
- Improve strategic financial planning and attention to best value principles by:
  - \* ensuring that the school has a three-year plan for school development that is costed and has clear success criteria that are related to raising standards;
  - \* using the wealth of information already gathered by the school to effectively compare its performance with other schools;
  - \* analysing information already gathered to set targets for different groups of pupils within the school and monitoring and evaluating them carefully through the evaluation process already set up by the school.

- Improve the access to separate, quiet accommodation for withdrawal for therapeutic needs, both in the base, and in the rest of the school by:
  - \* creative timetabling of rooms already available, and those that may come available as a result of recent bids for physical education and performing arts;
  - \* strategically planning improvements to the accommodation for the autism base to allow those that are withdrawn for individual programmes, or for counselling and therapy, to have access to a quiet place for reflection and learning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed (2 not graded for teaching as observed at college)	117
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	41	51	17	1	0	0
Percentage	4	36	44	15	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	126
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	24

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

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

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

100 per cent of pupils were assessed by teachers to be working towards Level 1 in the National Curriculum in English, mathematics and science.

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

<b>Teacher Assessment</b>						
<b>Percentage at each Level</b>						
	<b>W</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Pupils disappplied</b>	<b>Pupils absent</b>
<b>English</b>	0	66	34	0	0	0
<b>Mathematics</b>	17	59	26	8	0	0
<b>Science</b>	0	66	34	0	0	0

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

<b>Teacher assessment</b>								
<b>Percentage at each Level</b>								
	<b>W</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Pupils disappplied</b>	<b>Pupils absent</b>
<b>English</b>	8	38	53	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mathematics</b>	8	23	23	46	0	0	0	0
<b>Science</b>	8	31	15	38	8	0	0	0

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4***

<b>GCSE RESULTS (7 entries)</b>							
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>U</b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	0	0	0	0	0	5	1
<b>Art and design</b>	5	1	1	0	0	0	

<b><i>Certificate of Achievement</i></b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Entry Level 3</b>	<b>Entry Level 2</b>	<b>Entry Level 1</b>
<b>English</b>	6	4	1
<b>Maths</b>	8	1	3
<b>Science</b>	6	4	1
<b>DT</b>	4	4	3
<b>IT</b>	8	2	1
<b>GG</b>	3	2	0
<b>HI</b>	3	2	0
<b>French</b>	4	1	5

15 per cent of the pupils gained 7 entry Level 3 certificates and 2 GCSEs  
31 per cent of the pupils gained at least 6 entry Level 3 certificates and 2 GCSEs

Youth Award Scheme 2 Bronze, 5 Bronze Silver, 5 Silver.

### AEB Basic Skills tests

	Literacy			Numeracy		
	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3
<b>Number of Pupils</b>	8	5	3	5	6	5
<b>Range of % score</b>	20	50	40	40	55	50
	75	75	65	75	95	70

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	100
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### 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	4	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–Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.3
Average class size	12.8

#### Education support staff: YR–Y11

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	474

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Financial information

Financial year	<b>2000-2001</b>
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	£
Total income	995893.00
Total expenditure	971225.00
Expenditure per pupil	8027.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	44083.00
Balance carried forward to next year	68751.00

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.0

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  
Number of questionnaires returned

126
65

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	35	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	37	5	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	48	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	48	5	0	2
The teaching is good	69	23	5	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	28	9	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	17	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	26	5	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	29	3	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	69	23	3	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	34	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	31	5	5	14

### Other issues raised by parents

A few parents were concerned about the progress of the lowest-attaining pupils.

## **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**

76. The school does not always have children of Reception age on its roll. At the time of the inspection there was one pupil in this age group who was in her second term in school. Currently provision is aimed at meeting individual needs very well. The curriculum is planned to the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. The early learning goals have been adapted using 'P' scales (Pre-National Curriculum) to meet the needs of the very small number of children who enter school at this age.

77. On entry to school, children are carefully assessed and each child's needs are catered for individually. Some children are not able to score on the baseline assessment and they are plotted against developmental checklists and 'P' scales. There is great care taken that children are fully included in all learning activities and, although some pupils are still at a very early developmental stage, all are included in the learning process. In English and mathematics the curriculum is planned in line with the modified national literacy and numeracy strategies framework, with great emphasis placed on language development and the needs of the individual children. All other subjects are very well integrated into the school day through a cross-curricular approach, often based on a reading book theme. The classroom base for these pupils is well resourced and there are good outdoor play areas including a covered area.

### **ENGLISH**

78. Standards of achievement and progress in English are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment was judged to be satisfactory, with strengths in speaking and listening. Pupils, including the majority of those with additional special educational needs and those with English as an additional language (EAL), achieve well at all key stages and make good progress in all aspects of English. Those pupils who learn visually could make better progress in independent reading and writing if symbols were used consistently to give them access to print. At the time of the last inspection, pupils in Years 1 to 9 made good progress against specific targets, whilst pupils in Years 10 and 11 made slower progress because of less specific target setting. Target setting in Years 10 and 11 is now quite specific and relevant to the pupils' needs. The main strengths of the subject are the quality of the teaching, in particular in Years 1 to 6.

79. The very successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, suitably modified to meet the ability and needs of the pupils in Reception to Year 6, has improved progress for the majority of pupils across speaking and listening and reading, and to a lesser extent in writing. The modified literacy hour is linked well into 'P' Levels and pupils' targets within individual education plans. This is giving all pupils very good quality learning opportunities. In Years 7 to 9, the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy has been satisfactorily introduced, but it is at an early stage and staff are still adjusting to the demands of teaching the strategy. In Year 9 the decision to group for ability is working well. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow two-year accreditation courses and attend the local college for two sessions per week. The previous inspection criticised teachers' marking. All work is now marked, and comments made by teachers are usually encouraging and, as a result, pupils of all ability levels are using recording and writing skills with increasing confidence.

80. Achievements and progress in speaking and listening are now good. By age seven, higher-attaining pupils, when looking at hats in their design and technology lesson, sort the hats by their design features and talk clearly about the kind of person who might wear them.

Lower-attaining pupils during role-play match hats to owners and make simple choices, giving reasons for doing so. The good and often very good progress being made by these pupils is because the teacher demonstrates very good skills and provides very good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen, so that they are constantly reinforcing these skills across the curriculum. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in the base also make very good progress; this is because the teacher makes very good use of pictorial representation to aid the pupils' understanding. Pupils spontaneously use, for example, the 'help' symbol. These methods are also well integrated into practice in the Reception and Year 1 class. By age 11, because the teacher uses very good teaching methods, higher-attaining pupils match words from a story to simple explanations, for example 'headlong', and explain why they consider the explanation to be true. Lower-attaining pupils make good contributions to class feedback sessions by speaking into the teacher's imaginary microphone. The use of pictorial representation for pupils with additional special educational needs in integrated classes is not used consistently to assist those pupils who would benefit from this form of communication; this sometimes prevents them achieving as well as they are able. Other pupils become involved in discussions because the teacher directs the questions specifically to them. All pupils listen carefully during the literacy hour and remain focused on the activities, and most are developing good social communication skills.

81. By age 14, higher-attaining pupils enter into discussion with increasing confidence, as they did when they were given an extract from 'The Bird That Disappeared'. They develop an increasing vocabulary, and offer suggestions for the meaning of words identified by the teacher, such as 'remorse' and 'vengeance'. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 7, when dramatising previously read play scripts, develop good understanding of their roles in the play and are beginning to insert their own sentences, whilst still maintaining the original story line. Because the teacher plans time for discussion with the pupils at the end of the lesson, they consider the aspects of their performance that they found most difficult. One pupil with additional special educational need identified 'trying to talk slowly' as the most difficult task. By age 16, most pupils make good progress, following a curriculum that has been suitably adapted to meet their individual needs. They have opportunities to develop their communication skills in preparation for adult life. Higher-attaining pupils communicate their ideas in an increasingly confident manner. They initiate and participate in discussion with teachers. Lower-attaining pupils all listen well, but are less confident when responding to questions during class activities.

82. Overall, pupils are developing their communication skills in a range of contexts and for different purposes and audiences. They benefit from very good support from the speech and language service, so that their skills are continually extended. Clear targets are set for both higher and lower-attaining pupils and for those with additional special educational need. These are carefully monitored to ensure that pupils' skills improve over time.

83. Pupils make good progress and achieve well overall in reading. By age seven, higher-attaining pupils are beginning to recognise key words from their reading scheme; this is because teachers continually use big books well to reinforce the vocabulary. They make very good use of video recordings of storybooks and word cards to reinforce the pupils' learning. Lower-attaining pupils are at the very early stages of reading, and developing their interest and pleasure in reading, through learning to focus on pictures. They show understanding of how books work; for example they turn the pages and hold the book correctly. Pupils with additional special educational need make sound and sometimes good progress, enjoy books and are beginning to order pictures to tell a story. Symbolic sentences are used very well to enable all pupils to access books. By age 11, higher-attaining pupils explain the meanings of words. They show good understanding of alliteration and make their own suggestions because the teacher gives them a very good framework from which to work. In Year 4 the teacher encourages lower-ability pupils to contribute to a pictorial map to reinforce the vocabulary and sequence of the story. Because

the pupils develop this, as they read and anticipate what is next in the story, they concentrate hard and enjoy participating in the activity. Pupils with additional special educational need are very well supported and there is excellent teamwork during this lesson. Two pupils are supported individually, but unobtrusively, within the main group and this enables them to participate fully in the class activity.

84. By age 14, higher-attaining pupils are developing good comprehension skills. Higher-attaining pupils on the autistic spectrum show good understanding when given a short extract from a book. They search the text quite confidently for the answers to the set questions. All pupils have good opportunities to develop an interest in reading, with experience of a range of texts both fictional and non-fictional. Lower-attaining pupils use the context of the story to self correct when reading aloud, but are unable to retell the story without prompting. Pupils with additional special educational need make satisfactory progress. By age 16, pupils access a range of books for pleasure and study. Higher-attaining pupils work without support when necessary. They are beginning to reflect on the meaning of what they have read and heard, and provide reasons for their choices of books, and their preferences. Lower-attaining pupils still read haltingly. They are aware of punctuation when reading, although comprehension skills are underdeveloped. They access the library, and have good understanding of how the library is organised and where to locate, for instance, a book about Judaism.

85. There is a very good paired-reading initiative in place as part of Year 11's citizenship award. Year 11 pupils support Year 4 pupils on a daily basis for approximately ten minutes. They encourage the younger pupils, and correct in a sensitive manner. They successfully build up the confidence and self-esteem of Year 4 pupils.

86. All pupils have a home/school reading diary and this is generally used well. There are good records of the progress made by the pupils and the books that they have read. Sometimes pupils remain too long on a level of reading book because of the school's policy that, in order to consolidate their learning, the pupils must work their way through all the stages of the reading schemes. This occasionally results in higher-attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged in Year 8, for example. Pupils use the central library very well during the lunchtime; a mixture of quiet activities takes place as well as reading, and these are well supervised by a classroom assistant.

87. Achievements and progress in writing are good overall. By age seven, higher-attaining pupils list places that they have visited, and are encouraged to 'have a go' and write their own lists. One pupil writes 'park' unaided whilst others write 'ch' for church. Other pupils make good attempts. The teacher models writing a sentence, such as 'We are red group' emphasising the need for spaces between words and, as a result, the pupils gain a good understanding of what a sentence is. Lower-attaining pupils learn through a mixture of formal and practical activities; for instance they learn about words beginning with 'j' by making jam sandwiches. There are good opportunities to develop the pupils' fine motor skills because the teacher provides plenty of activities such as cutting, free drawing and colouring within shapes. By age 11, higher-attaining pupils show considerable progress in writing. They are drafting and redrafting their stories, and spelling more commonly used words correctly. Their drafted work shows development of ideas and good use of sentences with occasional use of speech marks. Lower-attaining pupils have made good progress when writing stories. They show some recall of stories previously read. When writing sentences, letters are well formed but words often run into each other. Pupils with additional special educational needs make sentences by matching words to pictures. They follow instructions, and when completing worksheets letters are recognisable.

88. By age 14, higher-attaining pupils write about the 'Great Wall of China' and reflect on the story of Romeo and Juliet. Ideas are developed in a sequence of sentences, using full stops, capital letters and speech marks. Handwriting is well formed and consistent in size. Lower-attaining pupils spell more commonly used words correctly, but are still finding difficulty in remembering the basic spelling rules. Their writing shows awareness of how full stops are used and letters are usually clearly formed. Lower-attaining pupils with additional special educational needs make good attempts to complete worksheets unaided when they find the missing word in a sentence. Throughout this stage there is very little evidence of the use of ICT to aid learning and to support writing skills in English lessons. By age 16, most pupils have made good progress in presentation and learning. Pupils of all ability levels use their recording and writing skills with increasing confidence and independence. They write for a range of purposes and in different styles in preparation for adult life. Higher-attaining pupils sequence their sentences to extend their ideas, and are beginning to use interesting vocabulary such as 'the ropes were snapped by a sudden strong wind'.

89. Teachers in the primary department support pupils' basic literacy skills well in subjects other than English. In the best specialist lessons in the secondary department literacy skills are well supported either by providing easier worksheets for the lower-attaining pupils or by using support to help pupils with their literacy needs. However, this is not always the case and lower-attaining pupils sometimes find it difficult to complete the written work independently. There are good opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to write creatively in other subjects. For example, pupils wrote about their dream house in design and technology and about life in other times and places in history and geography.

90. Overall the quality of teaching is good across the school and never less than satisfactory. Sixteen lessons were observed; of these, two were excellent, seven were very good, four were good and the rest were satisfactory. Both examples of excellent teaching were found in the primary department. The teaching of literacy is very good in the primary department and good in the secondary department overall, when scrutiny of work is taken into consideration. When excellent teaching occurred the teaching flowed seamlessly with all aspects of the subject, with assessment being carefully planned into lessons. Work was very well matched to meet the needs of the wide ability range of the pupils and to extend their learning. There was excellent teamwork with support staff, which meant that the lessons were fully inclusive, enabling all pupils to achieve very well. Teaching is never less than good in the primary department, with all teachers showing very good knowledge and teaching of basic skills. Computers are used very well to extend the pupils' reading and writing skills at primary age. In the secondary department, half of the teaching is satisfactory, and the other half is good. This is because not all teachers have fully adjusted their teaching to meet the demands of the newly introduced Key Stage 3 literacy strategy. The teachers' knowledge of teaching basic skills, and their management of pupils is sometimes only satisfactory. Across both departments teachers set homework, although pupils' response is variable. A very good example of effective use of homework was when a parent assisted her child to complete a diary of weekend activities. This enabled the teacher to facilitate full inclusion of this pupil in the class news time.

91. Overall the two co-ordinators lead the subject well. The secondary co-ordinator has only recently been appointed and has not yet taken full responsibility for the oldest pupils. Baseline assessment of pupils on entry is made, and teachers keep records of pupils' attainment against 'P' scales (Pre-National Curriculum) and National Curriculum Levels. There are good arrangements for the oldest pupils to take part in external two-year accreditation courses and formal examinations. Resources are good, but the co-ordinators have rightly identified a gap in the reading software materials. There is a very good subject improvement plan, showing clearly how the co-ordinators see the subject moving forward, with clear priorities identified.

## MATHEMATICS

92. Overall, standards of achievement and progress in mathematics are good. Pupils aged between seven and eleven achieve very well and make very good progress. All other pupils make good progress, including the one child of Reception age. Pupils with additional needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, make similar progress to their classmates in relation to their prior attainment. There is no difference in the progress made by boys or girls. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when progress was judged to be satisfactory overall. The main strengths of the subject are its leadership, the very effective implementation of a well-modified National Numeracy Strategy, the quality of the teaching, the knowledge that teachers have of the pupils and the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

93. By age seven, higher-attaining pupils count, recognise and write numbers to 9 and use language such as 'long', 'short' and 'straight' accurately. They recognise and name common two-dimensional shapes such as a circle, square and triangle. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with additional special educational needs, rote count to five and write '1' and '2' over a dotted line. They join with others in number rhymes and rote counting to ten. They match shapes, such as the triangle and circle, and copy simple patterns.

94. By age 11, higher-attaining pupils add two two-digit numbers ( $34 + 21$ ) and subtract from numbers to 15 ( $14 - 6$ ). They recognise odd and even numbers and begin to be familiar with the two times table by counting in twos. They distinguish between tens and units, add coins to 20p and know the meaning of 'more' and 'less'. Pupils recognise and name most simple two and three-dimensional shapes and recognise and recreate simple patterns. They estimate lengths in centimetres and then use a ruler to check for accuracy, and begin to estimate capacity using non-standard measures such as a jug and a bottle. They make a tally list and interpret a simple bar graph. Lower-attaining pupils are working towards a confident understanding of numbers to 20. All count to 20 and are beginning to know their number bonds to ten. They sort three-dimensional objects by one criterion, such as colour, and begin to understand the passing of time, such as morning, dinner and home time. Pupils with additional special educational needs develop an awareness of place value and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary, such as 'plus', 'equals' and 'integers'.

95. By age 14, higher-attaining pupils are adding money up to £1. They add two three-digit numbers and know most multiplication facts. They recognise simple fractions and begin to understand the meaning of equivalence. They begin to work with decimals, especially in the context of money. They plot co-ordinates in the first quadrant and collect data, make up tally charts and frequency tables, and present results in a bar chart using a computer. Most pupils tell the time to a quarter of an hour, and move between analogue and digital time in hours and half-hours. Lower-attaining pupils are working on adding numbers to 20 ( $6 + 3$ ,  $7 + 4$ ). They understand reflective symmetry of simple regular shapes. In data handling, pupils complete similar tasks, but are slower and need much support. Pupils with additional special educational needs require support to access written problems, but count in twos and tens, write numbers to 100, add two two-digit numbers confidently and know coin values. They measure length and complete data handling exercises with support.

96. By age 16, higher-attaining pupils are working towards the GCSE and other pupils the Certificate of Educational Achievement or the Associated Examining Board's Basic Skills in Numeracy Certificates. Higher-attaining pupils know most of the times tables and they understand doubling and halving, completing mental calculations quickly and accurately. They recognise the equivalence of simple fractions and work out the area of simple shapes such as a rectangle and triangle. They understand co-ordinates in all four quadrants and use brackets correctly. They understand the 'square' and 'square root' of a number and interpret simple timetables. Lower attaining pupils and those with additional special

educational needs add fractions with a common denominator, and convert decimal numbers to fractions and vice-versa. They understand sequences such as 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, ... and 1, 4, 9, 16, ... and calculate the perimeter of simple shapes. They name angles as *acute*, *obtuse* or *right angle*. They collect data and process it using tally lists, and represent the findings in a pictogram or bar graph.

97. Some examples of mathematics were observed in other lessons, and in display around the school. They included measurement of weight and volume in science, measuring length and angles in design and technology and naming shapes and using the language of speed in art and design. In physical education, pupils with additional special educational needs and autistic spectrum disorders frequently use small numbers. For example, they count the mats out, count the ropes and order the activities from a symbol timetable. Pupils often have the opportunity to explore and enhance their mathematical skills, using a computer both through published software and as a tool to describe and illustrate their own investigations. Pupils respond well to success in this activity, and it encourages them to work hard.

98. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. It is usually good, often very good and never less than satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was found. Of the 11 lessons observed, four were very good, five were good and two were satisfactory. The quality of teaching for pupils aged between seven and eleven is very good, and it is good for all other pupils. The main strengths of the mathematics teaching are the high expectations that teachers have that the pupils will succeed in the tasks they set, and the very good behaviour management systems and the consistent application of these routines, so that the pupils work in a secure environment. These are particularly supportive of those pupils with additional special educational needs and autistic spectrum disorders. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and motivating and lessons have a sparkle. They start promptly with a well-planned mental exercise which focuses the pupils on the subject. In group work, which occupies the majority of the lesson, activities are explained clearly and at a level which interests all pupils and helps them to learn. Teachers' records and the scrutiny of pupils' work, supplemented by discussion with pupils during the lessons, clearly show that the quality of learning over time is good. Learning is reinforced at the end of the lesson by a plenary session, where pupils are praised and rewarded for their efforts. Well-established routines for managing pupils enable the lesson to proceed smoothly, and minimise disruption when activities change. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Relationships are very good. Pupils relate well to each other and to staff. Support staff make a very positive contribution: they know the pupils very well, and often pre-empt situations arising, thus avoiding confrontations or problems. Resources are adeptly used and changes of activity are skilfully timed, resulting in well-motivated pupils participating fully in their work. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are well motivated by studying for nationally accredited examinations. Regularly set homework also helps pupils to make better progress. Through the good role models of staff, activities which demand taking turns, working together, co-operating, collaborating and thinking about the needs of others, mathematics contributes well to the moral and social development of pupils.

99. The subject shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. This is a reflection of the very successful and enthusiastic leadership by the co-ordinating team. A revised scheme of work has been introduced and is being successfully used. Teachers have been supported constructively with the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, suitably modified to meet the needs of the pupils, through the monitoring of lessons and evaluative discussion. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' attainment against 'P' Scales and National Curriculum Levels, and use this information when planning future work and to establish progress over time. Information technology is used well to record attainment, plot progress and set targets for individuals and groups, but has not yet been

used to analyse differences by ability groups or gender. Pupils' progress in mathematics is reported clearly to parents in the pupils' annual reports and in the annual reviews, by stating what pupils can do, understand and know. Resources are good, and are being regularly reviewed, updated and improved.

## SCIENCE

100. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils were making progress that was satisfactory or better across the school. This has been maintained and improved upon, so that pupils now make good or very good progress to achieve consistently well. This reflects an overall improvement in teaching and learning, so that the good attitudes that pupils previously displayed are now more effectively exploited through well-focused planning, leading to exciting, well-paced lessons. During the inspection, of the 13 lessons or parts of lessons observed, teaching and learning were very good in seven, good in four and satisfactory in one. In the remaining lesson, teaching was not graded, as the lesson took place in another establishment, but the learning observed was good. The weaknesses identified in planning and assessment have been addressed well and there has been good overall improvement in the subject.

101. Across the school, achievement in science is good for pupils of all abilities, and for secondary-aged pupils it is very good, reflecting the progress that is made. The one pupil of Reception age makes similar progress to older classmates in the same class. Pupils with additional special needs who are integrated into classes across the school make progress that is commensurate with other pupils. This is the result of well-structured teaching and good support from classroom assistants. In lessons in the primary department, learning is consistently at least good and usually very good, reflecting overall good teaching by non-specialist teachers. As a result, primary-aged pupils make good progress. The youngest pupils develop their enquiry skills very well by using their senses to explore objects made from clay, and consider the changes that take place in the process. Higher-attaining pupils go on to use appropriate language to describe the characteristics of clay as they shape and mould it. They know that to change it permanently into ceramic, it must be baked in an oven. In the autism base class, pupils demonstrate very good learning when they identify materials by how they feel, and express a preference for some over others. Older pupils also learn well as they participate in an experiment to discover which materials are waterproof. With help, they make predictions, observe closely, and talk about the results, using appropriate scientific language. Higher-attaining pupils know that leather is waterproof and is made from animal skins. They identify waterproof materials and name them; for instance plastic and rubber. They explore other aspects of the nature of materials, discovering that some dissolve in water and others do not. They identify appropriate equipment for separating mixtures and recognise that substances in solution cannot be filtered out. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils carry out investigations based on their work on forces, to see which shapes will resist pressure most. They begin to appreciate the importance of fair testing, and recognise that careful observation and recording are necessary to conduct successful experiments.

102. Between the ages of 11 and 14, pupils make very good progress through very good learning in lessons, as they extend their knowledge and understanding of science and develop good investigative skills through a range of practical experiences; this ensures that all aspects of the subject are explored. Year 7 pupils, for example, combine work on living things and physical processes when they successfully explore the workings of the human body, and relate the workings of the ear to their knowledge of how sounds are made and transmitted. They use a model of the ear to identify the role each part has, and use a tube telephone to demonstrate that the vibrations in the air are converted to sound by the vibration of the eardrum. They apply this knowledge well to an investigation into suitable

materials to absorb sound when they look at ways of protecting ears against loud noises. By Year 9 they plan and conduct an experiment, with a decreasing amount of help, to examine and demonstrate the properties of a range of materials, as when they study the difference between chemical and physical changes. They know, for example, that a chemical change has occurred when a new substance is produced and, by experiment, they learn about the effects of combining different substances with acids, and some of the properties of the new materials produced. They learn to use standard tests for particular substances, and understand how the pH scale is used to describe acidic or alkaline materials.

103. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress across the whole range of the subject, as they follow the course leading to the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Last year, for example, of the 11 pupils who entered, all secured passes, four at merit level and six with distinction. Pupils increasingly apply their knowledge and skills to new areas of work. For example, pupils draw on previous work on classification of organisms by their characteristics to give examples of the ways in which plants and animals have evolved through mutation and adaptation, and the part that these changes have played in their continued survival or successful competition. They learn about population balance, and consider what occurs when this breaks down. Higher-attaining Year 11 pupils devise and conduct experiments to test the solubility of sugar under a range of conditions; they have a clear understanding of the nature and importance of a fair test and, in particular, the importance of deciding which factors are to be constant and which are to be variable in each experiment.

104. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching for primary-aged pupils is never unsatisfactory; it is usually at least good and, at times, it is very good. For secondary-aged pupils, to whom science is taught by a single specialist teacher, teaching and learning are always at least good and in the great majority of lessons they are very good. In the most effective lessons, very good open-ended and individually targeted questioning encourages all pupils to contribute to oral work, and this is further encouraged by the extent to which their answers are clearly valued. Very good relationships ensure that pupils are managed very well, and older pupils are increasingly treated as adult learners, which enhances their self-esteem and contributes well to their mature approach to the subject. Well-paced lessons have a consistent format; objectives are shared with pupils at the outset and reviewed with the pupils at the end. Good subject knowledge and skills are very effectively deployed to ensure that work is carefully matched to the needs of individual pupils, so that each pupil is enabled to attain the level expected within the lesson. Very careful use of language helps pupils to understand what is being taught at an individual level through linking it well with their own experiences, but teachers ensure that appropriate scientific vocabulary is carefully and consistently taught and reinforced. As a result, pupils increasingly use scientific vocabulary confidently and with good understanding. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged to achieve good standards, and are developing an increasing degree of independence in their investigative skills. Resources are very well chosen or constructed, particularly for practical work and especially for secondary-aged pupils, which ensures that pupils gain a good understanding of what they are doing and why. Pupils are very effectively managed through positive approaches and effective use of praise, particularly for those who lack confidence in their own ability to achieve or behave well. On occasions, at Key Stage 2, activities are not as successful as they might be when science-related objectives are not clearly pursued, insufficient planning or preparation of resources results in slow pace, and planned teaching points are not clearly demonstrated. This leaves pupils confused or discouraged by tasks that are not central to the lesson objectives.

105. Science is well managed throughout the school and there is effective monitoring of the programme, which is well constructed to ensure that pupils build on previous learning without repetition of previous work. All strands of the subject are planned for to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, and there is a very good emphasis on the

development of investigative skills. Planning ensures that pupils follow courses which parallel those in mainstream schools so that they are well prepared for any future return, and accredited courses in Key Stage 4 are well chosen to enable them to reinforce their sense of being successful learners. In most secondary year groups, pupils are set by attainment, which enables the work to be more closely matched to the ability of the group. Assessment is consistent and informative; informal assessment and feedback are well used within lessons to help maintain the momentum of pupils' learning, and progress in each lesson is evaluated against the intended outcomes. Marking is consistent and helpful in recording the degree of help pupils had with their work, but some work in folders is incomplete or uncorrected, so these are of limited use as aids to revision. Longer-term planning is well supported by the use of systematic assessment, which makes good use at the secondary level of the materials provided within the published scheme being used to support teaching and learning. National Curriculum testing is appropriately conducted and good use is made of the assessment requirements for external examinations at Key Stage 4.

106. There is a satisfactory range and quantity of science resources overall, and good use is made of the school grounds to support environmental science and life processes; however, as pupils' attainment rises, shortcomings are apparent. The limited number of each item of measuring and recording equipment means that pupils have to work in larger groups rather than in pairs, for example when using a sound recording meter, and the limited range of ICT facilities for science reduces the impact of ICT on their learning. The absence of some standard science facilities and equipment, such as a fume cupboard, restrict the depth of coverage of some aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Development planning has begun, but this, in common with other school planning, has a short-term focus and does not include the acquisition or replacement of major items over the longer term.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

107. Achievement in art and design is a strength in the school. Standards of achievement are very good and pupils, whatever their age and prior attainment, make very good progress throughout the school in learning a wide range of techniques and skills. In addition, they make very good progress in their SMSC development. Pupils learn about a wide range of multi-cultural art, and to work independently, and in small groups. Progress in lessons is very good and reflects the high quality of specialist teaching.

108. Pupils aged between five and seven make marks and produce paintings and other drawings using a wide range of media and tools. They learn a range of methods for application of different media. For example, pupils learn to use twigs and sticks to apply paint with very impressive results. Samples of collage work and clay work are excellent. Children and pupils in Year 1 and in the autism base make plates carefully from clay and plate moulds, and decorate them very well with individual creative designs. Work shows a good understanding of the use of colour, shape and pattern. The pupils' work is well displayed in the classroom and in communal areas of the school, and the pupils derive great satisfaction from this. Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed in the subject at this age.

109. By age 11, pupils have considerably developed their skills. Work samples and lesson observation show a greater maturity in approach to the subject and increased creativity. Pupils concentrate well and work more independently. The higher-attaining pupils use tools with increasing control and to better effect and, as they gain in confidence, pupils show a good capacity for experimentation. Lower-attaining pupils make equally good progress towards suitable and challenging targets set for them. There is an outstanding exhibition of inspired pupil paintings based on a study of the work of Monet displayed in the entrance hall. Pupils make very good progress in developing the skills and techniques needed for three-dimensional

work. For example, pupils learn how to make and join coils of clay very well in order to make high quality containers in clay, and free work is well developed when pupils make a range of realistic animals. Other media, such as wire and coloured paper, are creatively used to make three-dimensional trees. Work in art is used well to support the recording of work in other subjects, such as religious education, and in topic work.

110. By age 14, portfolios and displays show further excellent progress for all pupils, whatever their prior attainment. Lessons are inspiring, and allow for pertinent discussion on the contribution of other cultures to art through the very good use of interesting and stimulating photographic, pictorial and artefact resources. Pupils are enthused by the teacher as she shows them photographs of three dimensional work found on her travels, and this stimulates pupils to use these ideas creatively. Observational drawing skills particularly improve at this age, because the teacher supports them well and gives individual tuition, role-modelling how to draw in perspective, for example. Three-dimensional artefacts are more finely produced, and include a range of clay vessels, plates and animals and model-making in card. There is a clear improvement in design. Pupils take considerable pride in their work and gain in self-confidence and, in turn, in self-esteem.

111. By age 16, all pupils make further gains, and some make great strides in their work. Some of the work seen is almost of a professional quality, and leads to some pupils reaching Grade A in GCSE Art. Creativity is much in evidence. Higher and lower-attaining pupils are equally successful in consolidating earlier work and developing their skills. Sketchbooks, built up over time, show an ability to review, revise and refine work. Work has an increased breadth of interest and shows development of new skills and techniques, such as those required for photography, silk painting, knitting and lino cutting. Pupils have produced some excellent displays around the school. The pupils benefit considerably from contacts with colleges and art galleries and from community art activity.

112. Teaching in art is very good overall. Of the nine lessons seen, one was excellent, seven were very good and one was good. All lessons are planned to meet individual needs and inspire pupils. Behaviour is excellently managed through providing stimulating resources and constant praise for effort made, and the very good relationships that exist between the teachers and pupils. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are always at least good and often very good, and in a third of lessons observed were excellent. Pupils co-operate very well, quickly become engaged in lessons and thoroughly enjoy the work. All pupils are fully involved in discussion. Pupils gain in confidence as they discuss and reflect on their own work and that of their peers. Sometimes the management of primary-aged pupils is difficult, because the art room is not suitable for the teaching of primary aged pupils. Seating and tables are at the wrong height and the room becomes too crowded for whole primary classes. Discussion is used well to help the teacher assess pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Very good teamwork between teachers and support staff is beneficial to the pupils, and there is no waste of time. Art makes a strong contribution to the personal development of pupils. The spiritual dimension detected in art lessons is almost tangible.

113. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Both co-ordinators have made a number of significant improvements since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are better overall, resources are improved and external accreditation has been successfully extended. Assessment and recording have markedly improved, and planning ensures very good progress across the school. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school has recently appointed support staff and a teacher to help with display.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. The provision for design and technology has improved since the last inspection. The two co-ordinators, for primary and secondary provision, are working very effectively to raise standards and ensure that pupils achieve well in the subject. Pupils, whatever their gender, age, ethnic background and prior ability, make good progress throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be satisfactory overall.

115. By age seven, pupils develop early design skills by learning to make choices. For example, they choose from a good range of construction equipment and create a range of objects or, with support, build from photo cards. During this time, pupils enhance their listening and speaking skills and learn to use mathematical language well. They develop cutting and sticking skills and make choices of colours. Stories, visits and visitors are used well as starting points for investigations. For example, pupils find and cut out a range of trainer shoes from catalogues after reading the story of 'The New Trainers' in the literacy hour. The youngest pupils study how people wear different hats for different purposes, such as for safety. Pupils give examples of Bob the Builder and Fireman Sam. They know that some people wear hats to identify themselves, such as policemen. By the age of 11, pupils use construction kits to build a crane, implementing 'ratchets', and pawls' to control the ratchet. This enables the pupils to investigate weights and forces. Pupils follow diagrams to construct their cranes. Pupils on the autistic disorder spectrum are well provided for in the primary department. Their work is well matched to their needs, and they make similar progress to other pupils.

116. By age 14, pupils make a range of sweet and savoury bread, and devise tests to judge the quality. In a Year 7 class, pupils were amazed and astonished at the way in which the bread rose in the oven. Numeracy was used well to collect information about the quality of the breads they made. Pupils use their ICT control skills well when selecting stitches on a sewing machine and show good control in their sewing. They design and make a machine that will produce several different functions from one input, and test and assess their machines and produce ideas to improve performance.

117. By age 16, pupils build well on previous knowledge and skills. They complete design schedules, with sketches and suggestions for features, materials and tools, using resistant materials. They design and build garden lights and clocks, showing good control of hand tools and cutters and the ability to measure accurately. They work sensibly and adhere to all health and safety rules. Finished projects are of high quality. Boys and girls work well together and there is no difference in the quality of their work. Pupils with additional needs are well supported and they meet their targets for design and technology. Pupils achieve well in external accreditation, the Entry Level Certificate in Design and Technology (Edexcel) and the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme.

118. Teaching is very good overall. It is good for primary-aged pupils and very good for pupils of secondary age. Of the 12 lessons observed, seven were good and five were very good. Teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was found to be good overall. Lessons are well planned, in the form of ongoing projects which contain processes that enable the pupils to develop their design-and-make skills well. The teachers use questioning skilfully and effectively to enable the pupils to recall what they know, and make them think about what they will need for the project and how they will organise their work. Good use is made of 'what if?' and 'why?' questions and this promotes pupils' application of previous knowledge. Pupils are given good opportunities to use literacy skills in lessons because teachers ensure they record their work carefully and identify key vocabulary to be used. Teachers insist on high standards of presentation and so each pupil's design-and-make brief is neat and tidy. There is an emphasis on pupils using their measurement skills

and vocabulary. Personal development is also well promoted because pupils are managed very well. For example, during practical tasks there is a good mix of direct instruction, questioning and enabling, so that the pupils work on their own for long periods of time. Lower-attaining pupils are well involved because of the sensitive support given by the teachers and support assistants. There are very good routines for teaching and learning, within which the pupils feel secure and confident and behave very well. Pupils enjoy design and technology, respond well to their teachers and work co-operatively. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good and have improved since the last inspection when they were found to be good. They are never less than good, often very good, and occasionally excellent.

119. Leadership of the subject is very good. Through direct observation and scrutiny of planning, the co-ordinators have worked hard to improve the quality and range of learning opportunities available to pupils, which were found to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection. The curriculum is now very good overall. Planning objectives are now clear, and the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and fully meets requirements. The planned use of information technology in the subject is improving, and recently provided resources and training are likely to have a further positive impact on provision and standards. Accommodation has also improved; the food technology room has been renovated and there is now a new layout and improved safety and working conditions. Learning resources are good, and have been audited and matched to the needs of the updated curriculum; any gaps have been highlighted in a subject action plan and appear as priorities in the school improvement plan. This represents a significant overall improvement since the last inspection. Assessment has also improved considerably and teachers now monitor achievement in the subject well. Teachers make good use of ongoing assessment based on the National Curriculum Levels and P Levels, and there is now external accreditation for pupils' achievements through the Edexcel Certificate in design and technology and the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. Pupils are asked to assess themselves against targets set in lessons and have a good understanding of what they learnt and achieved. This is complemented by good verbal feedback to pupils. Although there is now a whole-school policy for homework, the subject does not have a discrete homework policy. Design and technology makes a positive contribution to pupils' SMSC development, when teachers in the primary department set their design and make projects in historical and literary contexts, for example.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

120. Overall, achievement in geography is very good. Standards have improved since the last inspection, when they were sound and often good. Pupils aged between five and eleven make good progress, and achieve well because of the good and very good teaching they receive. Secondary-aged pupils achieve very well in geography, and this is reflected in examination results at the end of Year 11, with three pupils gaining distinctions and two gaining merits in the Certificate of Achievement. Lower-attaining pupils make similar progress to their classmates in learning about geography, in relation to their prior attainment. However, their recorded work has to be highly supported because worksheets do not always meet their literacy needs.

121. By age seven, pupils develop mapping skills by using a plan of the school. Visits into the community help them develop a sense of place; for example, during the week of the inspection they visited a local shopping centre to find out the types of shops, and the higher-attaining pupils followed the plan of the shopping area. By the age of 11, pupils broaden

their horizons, and extend their mapping skills further by locating their houses on a street map. They understand how and why urban land is used for different purposes through discussing proposed development in the town centre. They respond creatively by devising a scheme of their own.

122. By age 14, pupils discuss more complex issues affecting the environment, when considering a proposed quarry scheme in the area, for example. In physical geography, they know about soil and about wind erosion. They learn about the countries and major cities of North America. By age 16, pupils are working on accreditation units that include Environmental Hazards and the geography of Europe. Work consistently builds on previous learning.

123. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Schemes of work and secure assessment are now supporting teachers' planning in both the primary and secondary departments. The quality of teaching is now good for primary-aged pupils and very good in the secondary department where specialists teach the subject. All lessons are well planned, with suitable objectives and activities for the topic being studied. Support is used well to help pupils who are lower attaining to complete tasks set. Resources are well used to make lessons interesting and practical. The best teaching has worksheets that meet the literacy needs of all pupils or separate activities for lower-attaining pupils, although on the occasions when these are not provided, they find it difficult to record what they have understood in lessons. Pupils are well managed and attitudes to the subject are always at least good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Behaviour is good in all lessons. Pupils obviously enjoy the subject and even the lowest-attaining pupils are happy to discuss their work.

124. The breadth and balance of the geography curriculum has improved since the last inspection. The scheme has planned links with other subjects and aspects, such as the moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It has an emphasis on geographical enquiry and the learning of key vocabulary. This is developing pupils' thinking skills and their ability to reflect on their learning, as well as their speaking and listening skills. Numeracy is also well planned for when undertaking map-reading exercises, for example. Planned development of ICT skills is less secure, particularly for pupils of primary age.

125. The subject is managed very effectively. The primary co-ordinator, who monitors teachers' planning and assessment, has begun to monitor teaching by direct observation. The secondary co-ordinator, who teaches all the classes at this stage, ensures that pupils build on previous learning. The subject has shown a good rate of improvement since the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

126. Only three lessons of history were observed during inspection week, all for pupils aged between 11 and 14. It was not timetabled for primary-aged pupils this term. Judgements about achievements, progress and teaching and learning are based on the evidence presented in these lessons and on scrutiny of work and reports and records from across the school.

127. By age seven, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding about the world in the past by visits to local historical buildings during topic work. They link their scientific and mathematical knowledge well to draw conclusions and to talk about changes over time seen in photographs of events in their own lives, such as birthdays and Christmas. Pupils learn to use simple vocabulary associated with time, such as 'old and new' and 'before and after', and are given good opportunities in literacy to order events in stories; they make good progress overall. Pupils with additional needs develop a sense of time through the structured routines that are

offered, and learn to associate particular days and times of the day with specific events. The language of history could be sign posted better for these pupils if symbols were used to support communication of historical and time language, in lessons as well as in the school day.

128. By age 11, pupils learn about life in different times and cultures, for example about life in the time of the Tudors, Greeks and Egyptians. Worksheets used indicate that higher-attaining pupils gain a good grasp of differences between life then and now. Evidence from work of lower-attaining pupils is inconclusive in terms of what specifically has been learnt in lessons. Communication in writing is limited and work is not annotated clearly to show what pupils have learnt, although there is an indication that higher-attaining pupils have a growing understanding of chronology and knowledge and understanding of life in the past. Standards achieved are at least satisfactory overall and sometimes good for higher-attaining pupils.

129. By age 14, lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their understanding of chronology, and achieve standards that are equivalent to those found by higher-attaining pupils at the end of Year 6. Higher-attaining pupils in lessons talked about periods in history and had a satisfactory understanding of chronology, but pupils did not have opportunities to raise questions that they could research, or opportunities to investigate primary or secondary sources. In one Year 7 lesson, pupils showed they clearly understood that the Romans a long time ago used the Latin language and Roman numerals, and pupils developed their own numeracy skills in lessons through the activities provided. In Year 8, a good opportunity was given to pupils to discuss and write comparatively about life in the Middle Ages and today. All pupils remembered significant events, such as the outbreak of the Black Death, and understood that the unsanitary conditions found at that time allowed the disease to spread quickly. However, lower-attaining pupils found the written work too difficult and lost interest after time. Their independent recording needs were not fully met, although staff did support them by scribing for them when this was realised. Pupils in Year 9 responded well to a lesson on learning about how aspects of farming have developed over time, and the advantages and disadvantages of using more sophisticated machinery, for example. Attainment and achievement over time was difficult to judge because assessment has not been used rigorously to identify fully individual and group gains. Progress in lessons is satisfactory, but could be better.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons observed for the older pupils gave good opportunities for discussion, and involved all pupils at points in the lessons. Planning has objectives for different groups of pupils, but recording needs for the lowest-attaining pupils are not always met. There is a 'lack lustre' element in these lessons. Teaching is carried out using worksheets and the whiteboard, with a writing task at the conclusion of each lesson. Available resources, which would have added more interest and excitement, and encouraged pupils to use enquiry skills, were not used. Pupil-teacher relationships are good, and praise is used well to build up self-confidence; on the whole, pupils are industrious and co-operative, and behave well. Scrutiny of work and examination of teachers' records for primary-aged pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 indicate that teaching is at least good and sometimes very good, and is reflected in the good progress pupils make.

131. There are procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. These are applied thoroughly in the primary department but are not used consistently to plan aspects of work in the secondary department. As a result, gains made in the primary department, particularly in enquiry skills, are not securely built upon. Secondary leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory, as the newly appointed co-ordinator does not monitor the pupils' performance well enough at present. However, there is evidence that the subject has been well led in the recent past and this has improved the quality of planning and assessment procedures since the last inspection. Although resources for lessons are adequate overall, these and outside resources are not always used to best effect in the secondary department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

132. The previous inspection found that pupils were making good progress and achieving standards higher than those expected in some cases. Since that time there has been considerable re-organisation in the subject, including a change from the previous, obsolete hardware to PCs and a period in which momentum in the subject was lost. There is limited evidence from pupils' folders on which to base secure judgements of progress over time, but what evidence there is, together with that from observing pupils at work, indicates that achievement is good, although progress has been erratic at times. Recent changes in the organisation of the subject have brought about increased stability; pupils are again making good progress overall. They are filling gaps in their knowledge and skills and increasingly showing confidence in using ICT to extend and enhance their communication and presentation skills. The youngest pupils are making very good progress to achieve very well, in spite of a limited range of resources to meet their needs.

133. Pupils begin to develop good skills from the time they arrive in the school. Planning ensures that work is well matched to pupils' abilities, and provides the basis for the good progress that pupils of all abilities make. Reception-aged pupils are seen intentionally making choices and using a switch to activate a tape player. By age seven, pupils show very good achievement when they make very effective use of a 'PowerPoint' program prepared by the teacher in which they use the mouse to select a picture from the 'thumbnail' collection to enlarge it on screen. They show very good control and take great delight in locating their own picture and that of their friends, especially when the computer says the appropriate name. However, for some very young pupils, particularly those who lack fine motor control, the limited availability of specialist hardware, such as touch screens and enlarged switches, means that good progress becomes more difficult to achieve. Pupils in the autism base class make good progress in using simple computer programs to support learning in numeracy and literacy. Pupils in infant classes learn how to manipulate the controls to make cassette recorders work, and begin to understand that some require to be connected to the mains and others work from batteries. Pupils use a mouse competently to select and move objects on screen when they 'dress the teddy'.

134. By age 11, pupils continue to develop basic ICT skills well, and extend the range of software with which they are increasingly confident. They log on and access a painting program, and use it to make a picture of Jack's house as part of their work on 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. By the time they are 11, pupils understand that e-mail is a way of sending letters by computer, and send and access e-mail with support. They use desktop publishing programs, choosing and inserting a picture and applying text as a caption. When word-processing, the highest-attaining pupils have competent keyboard skills and use the shift key for punctuation and capitals. They begin to find information on the Internet with help, as when they use 'Living Library' to find pictures of houses; where their literacy skills are sufficient, they use these to follow instructions, access programs, and open, edit and save files, taking note of where they have put them in order to retrieve them again.

135. By age 14, pupils continue to make good progress in extending the range and complexity of their use of ICT. They develop an understanding of how a database works, and collect and input data about members of the class when preparing a class database. They use commands within the program to print out graphs that show aspects of the information, and interpret these correctly. Higher-attaining pupils select and set up appropriate fields when creating individualised databases. They develop confident control skills when they use a version of 'logo' to instruct an on-screen 'turtle'. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 begin to understand the principles of modelling when they make effective use of an 'Excel' spreadsheet format in constructing a personal timetable.

136. Good achievement continues for older secondary pupils who work towards accreditation in the OCR computing skills examinations, where most of Year 11 are on course for a merit pass or a distinction. They use their growing word-processing skills to write and revise curriculum vitae, giving good attention to issues such as font size, layout and use of colour. They respond well to the challenge to produce a simple brochure to introduce new pupils to the school, which takes good account of the differing audiences provided by primary and secondary pupils. They interrogate the Internet using sophisticated search engines, and show good understanding of the nature of the World Wide Web. Their competence and confidence increases to such an extent that they work unsupervised and unsupported in lunchtimes when they complete work associated with projects in other subjects, or use computer-based revision programs.

137. In lessons seen, teaching and learning were good overall; of the six lessons, or parts of lessons where pupils were being taught ICT skills, four were good and one was excellent. Where a learning support assistant was working with pupils in a very small group, learning was satisfactory. Teachers in the primary department have developed a good range of ICT skills, and apply these confidently when supporting their own classes. On occasion, this results in excellent teaching. In the secondary department, teaching by the co-ordinator is confident and effective. It is based on a secure understanding of what is being taught, and is supported by a willingness to seek additional advice where appropriate to extend her knowledge and skills. Lessons are generally good, because they have clear objectives which are fully explained to pupils at the outset and reviewed at the end; as a result, pupils are aware of the extent of their learning. The good learning is very well supported by the increasing maturity which pupils show in their approach; their behaviour is very good and they show considerable commitment to succeeding. Very good support is provided to extend pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to have an awareness of the varying literacy needs of others when designing a welcome page for a brochure aimed at new pupils. Good support is targeted effectively to pupils working individually. It takes account of the range of skills and prior experience within each group and ensures that pupils are each enabled to meet the expectations set out for them. Within lessons, pupils are managed very effectively through praise and positive feedback that show their work is valued, which, in turn improves their self-esteem. This is particularly helpful for pupils with additional difficulties who also benefit from the very good work of support staff. However, at times, the limited range of specialist hardware and software available hampers the progress of the lowest attaining pupils.

138. Arrangements for co-ordination of ICT, although only recently re-organised, are now secure, and the subject is well managed. Good progress is being made in updating the scheme of work and the range of software to reflect the change of platform and operating system, but this is still not fully completed. There is a good policy that provides well for the full range of the subject. Pupils' opportunities for learning are increased well by the computer club that operates at lunchtimes, where older, more experienced pupils can be seen assisting younger ones. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall; there are good structures for recording pupils' attainments, and effective use is made of informal assessment and feedback within lessons. However, there are no records for the period immediately preceding the appointment of the current co-ordinator, and work before that is insufficiently marked or annotated to provide accurate information.

139. Resources are sufficient and improving, with a very good facility in the ICT suite. Arrangements to ensure accessibility to the suite mean that all teachers have the opportunity to have access to this resource and, in most cases, this is achieved. However, there are shortcomings in resources to support cross-curricular work, and there is, in consequence, insufficient use of ICT in lessons in other subjects. There are limited specialist resources for the youngest pupils with the greatest learning difficulty, and much software cannot be used on the new, networked system until the co-ordinator has established the existence of

appropriate site licences. These difficulties have been identified, and planning is in place to address them, adopting a sensible approach to determining priorities. Training for teachers under the nationally recognised and funded scheme has been interrupted, but is now back on track to ensure that all teachers will have the necessary skills and confidence across the school. In light of the changes made and the continuing good progress, satisfactory progress has been made in this subject since the previous inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

140. Standards of achievement in French are good and have risen since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress. By age 14, pupils are developing their confidence to speak French. This is because of the effective way in which the teacher introduces new words and shows pupils how they are pronounced. The use of activities that require pupils to speak to each other is good. Pupils make oral tapes of their work and play them back to each other. Pupils are building up a good vocabulary of French words, including numbers, colours, time, months, days of the week and food and drink.

141. By age 16, pupils recognise items of clothing and respond well to simple questions and instructions spoken in French. There is much emphasis on the social use of language; this supports their learning and progress well. Pupils know that France is part of the European community and that the French now use 'Euros', having changed from French Francs. Work in lessons supports numeracy when they learn to convert Euros into pounds and to use the 24-hour clock when interpreting French timetables.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is now consistently good. Five lessons were observed and all were good. As a native speaker of French, the teacher provides an excellent role model that pupils strive to copy. Her enthusiastic and determined approach to the subject has a positive impact on pupils, as it encourages them to work hard, take pride in their achievements and enjoy their lessons. At the beginning and end of lessons, pupils are greeted and dismissed individually in French. They enjoy this and respond cheerfully, such as 'Bonjour', 'Ca va', 'Je m'appelle.' The emphasis is on oral work and the teacher, well supported by the learning assistant, has established a very supportive atmosphere where pupils are gaining in confidence to use the target language.

143. A strength of the teaching is in the way links with other subjects, such as numeracy, literacy, history, and geography, are planned into lessons. Planning is detailed and ensures that all pupils participate fully. Pupils are managed well in lessons because of the good teamwork between teachers and the learning assistant. Provision of a variety of activities and good pace ensure that pupils are motivated, concentrate well and persevere, even when they find some aspects of the work difficult. Praise, encouragement and good humour are used well; these are appreciated by pupils and build on the very good relationships staff have with them. Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject and behave well in lessons. Pupils work well together, take turns in role-play, support and encourage each other, and are quick to celebrate each other's successes, which enhances their social development. Homework is set regularly and matched to the needs of the pupils.

144. At the time of the last inspection, French did not meet statutory requirements and was taught to pupils aged between 11 and 14 only. French is now well established on the school timetable for pupils aged between 11 and 16, and pupils now work towards external accreditation. One pupil is disapplied and follows an appropriate course in speech and language. The policy has been rewritten and the scheme of work revised. The new co-ordinator was appointed last September and is now well established; standards are rising

and good progress has been made since the last inspection. An area of development recognised by the co-ordinator is the further use of ICT. Although she uses audio tapes and an overhead projector very effectively, there is a need to develop word processing and interactive CDs. French makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' SMSC development when pupils discuss and compare French and English customs and traditions.

## **MUSIC**

145. At the time of the previous inspection, as a result of good progress, standards of achievement were satisfactory and, at times, higher than those expected. In spite of staff changes, and a period of uncertainty, these standards have been at least maintained, the quality of teaching has improved overall, shortcomings in planning and assessment have been addressed and pupils of all abilities now make good progress to achieve consistently well across the school. As a result, progress in the subject since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

146. From their arrival in the school, pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing musical skills and understanding. The youngest pupils sing simple songs that form an integral part of their daily routine. They thoroughly enjoy singing, and gain in confidence to join in 'What did you have for breakfast?', increasingly performing individually with diminishing need for teacher support. By age 11, the range and extent of their skills increase. They sing with greater confidence as they join in musical games like 'Musical box goes round' and 'A monster came to visit you'. They compose sound pictures to express ideas or to illustrate stories they have been reading. They learn to start and stop, following a conductor, and become familiar with musical elements, especially pitch, which they illustrate using their hands as they imitate the call of a whale. They become increasingly confident at reading and responding to a visual score. They listen to music and express an opinion about what they like.

147. By age 14, pupils perform competently when learning songs with complicated rhythms and show good awareness of the importance of posture and breathing in good singing. Pupils keep in tune when singing in unison, listen to major and minor scales and learn to differentiate between them, commenting on the mood created by each when used in composition. Pupils with additional or more severe difficulties also make good progress and respond appropriately, as when a Year 7 pupil with autistic spectrum disorder joins in the singing and moves in response to the music, which represents a significant development over time.

148. Teaching and learning in music are good overall and never unsatisfactory. Of the five lessons observed, teaching was good in three, very good in one and excellent in the other. It is particularly strong for pupils in the primary department. For pupils aged 11 to 14, whilst it remains good, the scope of teaching is constrained by the absence of appropriate accommodation and the impact this has on the use of resources. Very good teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and excellent rapport with pupils, coupled with very high expectations that enable pupils to achieve at a level higher than could be expected. This is evident when excellent planning and careful teaching of skills, combined with outstanding joint work between teacher and support staff, enable Year 3 pupils to perform at levels which approach national expectations when performing their instrumental interpretation of 'The Whale's Song'. At other times, very well managed activities with good cross-curricular links enable the youngest pupils to match sounds to instruments, and to identify the actions used to play each instrument. There are very good arrangements to meet the special educational needs of pupils. Planning is very detailed, with clear learning outcomes for pupils of differing levels of attainment. This is ensuring that the differing needs of individuals and groups, including those with additional or more severe special need, are

fully taken into account. Pupils in the autism base class are well supported by the use of symbols that help them to make choices and promote their understanding of musical language. As a result, good learning is seen in lessons, and pupils concentrate well, following instructions and taking account of each other's needs. At its best, pupils' response is epitomised by the awed silence when Year 3 pupils finished a performance and were clearly transported by the effect they had jointly created, so that eventually the silence had to be broken by the teacher who was recording their work.

149. There is a very good programme for teaching music that ensures that pupils are given opportunities to compose and perform, as well as listening to music and thinking about how it is structured and what it conveys. However, there are limited opportunities for the oldest pupils to continue with the subject, as it is not offered as an option. Assessment arrangements are very good; pupils' response to the whole range of experiences offered is sensitively recorded and very effectively used in planning. There is a good rapport and working partnership between the two co-ordinators (primary and secondary) and shared planning contributes well to the effectiveness of the arrangement. There are enough resources and, in the primary department in particular, there is a good range of untuned percussion instruments that represent a wide range of cultural traditions. The recently appointed secondary co-ordinator has identified shortcomings in resources, particularly in links to ICT and software to support composition and appraisal in music, and has plans to address these. At present, there are no appropriate facilities for working in groups to prepare or record composition and performance. There are some opportunities for pupils to develop their singing skills through membership of the school choir, but the opportunities to perform are limited. There are no opportunities for pupils to develop individual instrumental skills outside lessons or to participate in ensemble work. Whilst, within lessons, the subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development, the limited role of music in the life of the school as a whole means that it does not make the overall contribution that it should. The school has been part of the very recently accepted joint bid with Hemel Hempstead School and other schools for Specialist Performing Arts status, and this should address both resource and accommodation deficits and raise standards further in the secondary department.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

150. Overall, standards of achievement in physical education are satisfactory. Pupils between the ages of five and eleven make good progress and are achieving better standards than those found at the last inspection. The standards attained and progress made by secondary-aged pupils are satisfactory. Standards and progress are adversely affected by the quality of both the indoor accommodation and the outside playing field. There has been a modest improvement in this subject since the last inspection. Although no swimming was observed, records show that approximately half of the pupils swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6 and many others do so later, as swimming tuition continues in the older classes.

151. By age 7, higher-attaining pupils walk confidently up a sloping bench and jump from a box, some with a star jump, landing on two feet with a slight knee bend to maintain balance. They jump on a knotted rope and swing with obvious enjoyment. Lower-attaining pupils complete similar exercises, but need reassurance when walking up the bench and need physical support to jump from the box. Pupils with additional special educational needs including those with autistic spectrum disorders, undress and dress themselves ready for physical education with minimal support from the staff. They know body parts and touch head, knees, toes, and shoulders in warm-up routines. They run and hop confidently around

the hall. Pupils walk along a bench with confidence and jump from it. Higher-attaining pupils immediately move into a forward roll to complete the sequence learnt the week before. Less confident pupils need to be encouraged and supported to jump and roll. All pupils understand and co-operate in taking turns.

152. By age 11, most pupils understand why it is necessary to warm up before exercise. They learn basketball skills, such as throwing and catching balls using the chest, and bounce and pass and dribble balls with increasing control. They have learnt the need to watch the ball carefully and work hard on these aspects. Higher-attaining pupils pass a ball several metres to a partner and catch it regularly. Lower-attaining pupils try hard, but have difficulty in controlling the pass and the dribbling bounce. In gymnastics, higher-attaining pupils vault independently with turns, star and half twist. Lower-attaining pupils walk along the benches unaided and crawl through while others are walking on the bench. Pupils with additional special educational needs and autistic spectrum disorders are included very well in these lessons with the other pupils, and are supported very well, so that they make similar progress to other pupils.

153. By age 14, pupils practise the skills of stopping and passing the ball in football. In basketball, pupils practise chest-passing skills and begin to work as a team. In volleyball pupils learn and consolidate the skills of the dig and volley techniques. Higher-attaining pupils, generally working just below national expectations, stop the ball with one foot and pass it with the other, using either foot. They have mastered several basketball skills. They pass accurately and quickly, bounce the ball with either hand and turn and change hands. They understand the need to cover an opponent and begin to find their own space. In volleyball they maintain several 'digs' in succession, but find it much more difficult to maintain a sequence of volleys. They know the importance of rules. Pupils know that practice improves skills and adapt and refine existing skills. In gymnastics, they roll into a shoulder stand or pike seat balance with good control, and join these into simple sequences of roll, balance, roll, balance and finish. Lower-attaining pupils follow a similar programme, but make less progress toward the overall targets. They apply some of the rules of the games. In basketball, they have some co-ordination difficulties when catching the ball and are not always ready for a pass, but can throw and catch the ball independently. In gymnastics they have less control in the balance position, but do complete simpler sequences successfully.

154. Only one lesson for the oldest pupils in Year 11 was observed. From this, it was noted that higher-attaining pupils by age 16 have developed good hand-eye co-ordination, and use the dig and volley techniques and other basic movements appropriately in volleyball. Most pupils work hard to improve, but some adapt the activity to make it easier. Overall learning is inhibited in this activity by inadequate facilities.

155. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good for pupils of primary age, where training has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning, and satisfactory for pupils of secondary age. Of the 11 lessons observed, four were satisfactory, six were good and one was very good. All teachers are secure in subject knowledge and know the pupils abilities and needs well. The teaching of classes of pupils with additional special needs and autistic spectrum disorders is very good. Teachers have consistently high expectations of participation and behaviour, particularly in primary-aged classes. All staff have good relationships with pupils. Pupils are now more often involved in demonstrating activities and techniques and in discussing and evaluating their own and others' performance, which helps to reinforce their learning. They generally respond positively to lessons and are keen to participate, but in a Key Stage 4 volleyball session girls were noticeably less enthusiastic than the boys and generally performed less well. There is usually an atmosphere of hard work, application, and a willingness to succeed. Pupils compete against each other well, usually without bad feeling if they are unsuccessful.

Relationships are good between pupils. Teachers make frequent verbal assessments of pupils' achievements, which they use to modify the skills they teach to different pupils. They keep clear records of the level of skill each pupil has mastered. Support staff are used well to give individual or small groups of pupils additional practice in appropriate skills, especially those with additional special needs and autistic spectrum disorders; this enables these pupils to make similar progress to that of other pupils. Health and safety are well considered and pupils and staff are appropriately dressed for lessons, though older pupils are not required to shower at the end of the lesson. All classes use warm-up and cool-down procedures, which older pupils do independently. Pupils are taught to observe the rules and to be good sports, so that physical education makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Good use is made of photographs to help pupils celebrate their sporting successes.

156. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes all the required elements. The scheme of work covers all key stages with opportunities for games activities, such as netball, basketball, cricket and soccer, taught on a regular basis. Athletics is taught in the summer term. Dance and gymnastics are also offered. There is now a satisfactory whole-school assessment and recording system. All activities are equally available to boys and girls. There are sound sporting connections with several special schools. In addition, physical activities are usually part of the residential opportunities that the pupils have during their time at school. Resources are good, but the general-purpose hall that serves as the gymnasium is unsatisfactory for secondary-aged pupils. There is limited storage space for physical education equipment, so that large pieces of equipment, benches and landing mats are left in the hall, which compromises health and safety. The playing field has a significant slope, which makes it unsatisfactory and discourages some pupils especially when playing 'uphill'. The subject is satisfactorily managed and the senior management team, in co-operation with other partner institutions, has effectively planned and co-ordinated recent new developments. A nearby secondary school has recently obtained sports status, and the The Collett School will be able to share in the improved facilities that will now become available; this should improve standards further.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

157. Achievement and progress in religious education are consistently good throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards of achievement and progress, although sound overall, were said to be variable. All pupils make progress in line with their abilities. The last report commented on the slower progress of the oldest pupils. This has been improved by the introduction of an externally accredited course, which gives pupils a better focus to their studies.

158. By age 7, pupils know about some aspects of Christianity. They learn through stories, pictures and videos. They tell the stories of some of the miracles of Jesus, for example the healing of the paralysed man. They are encouraged to talk about their feelings and discuss the idea of belonging, to the school and a church community, for example. By age 11, pupils have made good progress in learning about the five major world religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. They know the story of the creation of man from Genesis, which they compare with the Jewish and Hindu stories of creation. They are aware of the major festivals of each religion, for example Divali with its special foods and symbols. They also discuss moral issues such as good and bad behaviour.

159. By age 14, pupils build on the knowledge they have, and in addition learn about Sikhism. They know about the five pillars of Islam, the Koran and the importance of Ramadan. They realise the importance of the crucifixion and resurrection to Christians. They discuss relationships through the aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation. By age 16,

pupils are working on units of an accreditation scheme. These cover a variety of topics and issues, and pupils learn about the universe and the existence of God, prejudice and discrimination, war and peace, and marriage and divorce from the viewpoint of Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism.

160. Six lessons were observed; of these, two were very good, three were good and one was satisfactory. Overall the quality of teaching is good; it is good in the autism base and good at each stage. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory overall, with some unsatisfactory teaching. The best teaching has good planning with an interesting range of practical activities to retain pupils' interest and concentration. Role-play is used well in the primary department to bring the subject alive. One very good lesson involved parents, when they were asked to write in to tell of any time that their child had been lost. A good response from parents meant that the teacher could effectively link parental stories to the Bible story of Jesus being lost in the Temple. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. Behaviour is very well managed in lessons and pupils show good and improved attitudes to the subject. Behaviour is very good. There is a good balance in most lessons between learning about religion and from religion. This ensures that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers give good opportunities for discussion, and pupils are prepared to listen to the opinions of others. Effective deployment of teaching assistants contributes to learning, and good quality learning resources support teaching, especially for lower-attaining pupils. The use of ICT to support learning is limited. Work scrutiny provided evidence of the use of ICT in Year 2 only, and computers were not used during any lessons in inspection week. Work-sheets used in lessons meet the needs of most pupils, but lower-attaining pupils need considerable support to complete some of them, and written work completed does not always reflect the learning of these pupils in the lessons.

161. Overall management of the subject is good but, although both co-ordinators monitor the planning of others, so far they have not been given time to monitor the quality of teaching by direct observation. Procedures for checking pupils' progress and achievement, and the use of this for planning, are much improved, particularly in the primary department. Procedures are different in the secondary department and, although satisfactory, would benefit from further monitoring to ensure consistency in practice. At the time of the last inspection, the school was criticised for not spending enough time on the subject; the school now has agreed to allocate a sufficient amount of time, which is used well.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)**

162. Pupils' achievements in PSHE are good because of effective and well-planned teaching, a curriculum which has been developed to meet the needs of the pupils and the strength of the relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils make good progress across the school, including those with additional needs relating to autism, who make very good progress in the base. They learn to manage their own behaviour very well and show an increasing self-awareness and awareness of others, culminating in positive integration experiences in the school classes and better behaviour at home. The subject is taught through a range of methods, including discrete teaching, the use of opportunities throughout the school day, careers and work experience and independent study towards accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme. Some lessons are taught in other establishments, such as the local college.

163. By age 7, pupils have a sound sense of self and a social awareness of how to behave in a range of situations in the school and local community. During 'Golden Time', a period in the school week when pupils chose a favourite activity if they have worked hard in

the week, they learn to make choices, share and take turns. During 'Circle Time', pupils sit together to discuss school and wider community issues and develop a moral and social understanding of those who are worse off than themselves, for example. By age 11, pupils make progress in a growing awareness of safety issues such as safety in the home and what to do if they get lost. They learn the value of healthy eating and exercise and discuss special people in their lives, especially those who care for them.

164. By age 14, pupils have participated in a programme of sex education and have knowledge of problems associated with drugs and alcohol. They also begin a programme of vocational education and careers guidance, where they find out about a range of jobs and learn to work as a group. By age 16, pupils make gains in self-awareness of their own suitability for a range of jobs and a good understanding of the world of work. They have a good understanding of their own transition plans and learn to handle and use careers information well. Pupils have had a placement on the work experience scheme, and most have attended college courses where they mix well with pupils from other schools. They study a curriculum with accreditation units on such topics as citizenship and democracy, and engage in lively discussion on a range of issues, such as those that arise from divided families.

165. The quality of teaching is good overall. A total of 11 lessons were observed. These included one lesson at the local college, (which was not graded for teaching), discrete lessons of personal and social education, the careers lessons and those that were focusing on accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme. Of these 11 lessons, five were good, two were very good and two were satisfactory. One lesson was graded unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching for primary-aged pupils is consistently good. It is more variable for secondary-aged pupils, and ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. Lessons that focused on careers education were good overall. The only unsatisfactory lesson did not provide any practical activities, resulting in off-task behaviour, which was not well managed by the teacher. Teaching is supported by effective deployment of teaching assistants, who make a particularly good contribution to the learning of lower-attaining pupils and those with additional needs. Teachers give good opportunities for discussion on the whole, although occasionally teachers talk too much, and do not involve all pupils. More often, pupils are encouraged to participate in discussion and most listen to each other and the teacher with courtesy and respect. A good example occurred in a discussion by older pupils on the topic of racial prejudice. The use of good quality resources contributes to learning.

166. Pupils' achievements are supported by a well-planned range of activities derived from effective schemes of work. Membership of the School Council and participation in the paired reading scheme give older pupils opportunities to develop self-confidence and raise self-esteem. The Options programme gives younger pupils the opportunity to make choices and to take part in activities with pupils from other teaching groups.

167. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinators who have worked hard to improve the provision. Good policy documents, a well-planned curriculum and successful assessment procedures, including specific targets set within IEPs, ensure good development in all aspects of the subject. Pupils develop self-confidence and learn to take responsibility, prepare to take an active role as citizens, develop good relationships with respect for other people and are taught to cultivate a healthy, safer lifestyle. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' SMSC development. The co-ordinators are aware that the use of ICT to support learning is in need of development.