

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ELMS BANK COMMUNITY HIGH SPECIAL  
SCHOOL**

Whitefield, Bury

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105378

Headteacher: Ms Lynn Lines

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton  
15173

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 193408

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:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ripon Avenue Whitefield Manchester
Postcode:	M45 8PJ
Telephone number:	0161 766 1587
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sylvia Gupta
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils or students taught?
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Mathematics Modern foreign language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
27734	Philip Johnson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology History Music	
20466	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Design and technology Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	English Art and design	
1987	George Davies	Team inspector	Geography Physical education Post-sixteen education English as an additional language	
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Science Personal, social and health education Equal opportunities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Elms Bank is a school for pupils aged eleven to nineteen with moderate or severe learning difficulties or autism. Currently, 146 attend, including 32 post-16 students. When they join the school, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. They all have statements of special educational need. 68 have moderate learning difficulties, 46 severe learning difficulties and 27 have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Five pupils have severe autism. A minority of pupils have additional physical disabilities, with a significant number using wheelchairs. The higher attaining pupils generally leave at the end of Year 11, which means that the post-16 students have mainly severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Around forty pupils present challenging behaviour, frequently owing to their emotional and behavioural difficulties or autism. Nearly all pupils are from the borough of Bury, although a small number live in neighbouring authorities. Eleven are from minority ethnic groups. In addition to English, Urdu and Punjabi are spoken in several of these pupils' homes. At the time of the inspection, a small number of temporary teachers were working in the school, covering unfilled vacancies or for absent colleagues, including one of the deputy headteachers.

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

Elms Bank is a very good school with a number of excellent features. Pupils and students make very good progress and achieve very well in their learning and personal development. The quality of teaching is very good and the school is led and managed very well. It provides very good value for money.

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

- The school is very successful in meeting the needs of all pupils, whatever their special educational need.
- The provision for personal development is very good and leads to pupils and students becoming increasingly independent and responsible.
- Teachers are highly skilled and knowledgeable and have very high expectations.
- The curriculum and environment are very stimulating and successfully encourage pupils and students to learn.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well – for example, by ensuring that staff share her determination to strive for excellence.
- Pupils' lives are enriched by the exciting provision for music and art and their involvement in very high quality school productions.

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

Because pupils and students are making such good progress, there are no significant areas for development. However, a small number of minor issues are identified in the report.

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

The school was previously inspected in 1997. Since then, it has made good progress. In most subjects, pupils now make much better progress, with the highest attaining pupils being successful in GCSE examinations. The quality of teaching has also improved well, with far more very good teaching seen during this inspection. Pupils' attitudes remain very good and their behaviour has improved – it was good and is now very good.

The school has tackled systematically the issues arising from the previous inspection. Although good progress has been made in most areas, annual reports still vary in usefulness. A variety of other important developments have taken place – for instance, a class has been set up for pupils with severe autism and there have been significant improvements to the curriculum and accommodation.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school set challenging targets for Year 11 pupils to achieve in 2001. These were met, and so the targets for 2002 are even more challenging. In 2001, three pupils achieved Grade C in GCSE art and one gained an E in mathematics. Additionally, about half of the Year 11 pupils gained Certificates of Achievement (GCSE Entry Level) in a good range of subjects. Post-16 students have their work in all subjects and courses accredited through nationally recognised schemes. They make very good progress and achieve very well. In Years 7 to 11, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in the majority of subjects. Progress and achievement are good in geography, history and French and excellent in art and design. Pupils and students with different learning difficulties make progress at equivalent rates, as do those with English as an additional language. For example, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties gain skills and knowledge in very small steps, but their achievement is very good when their particular educational needs are taken into account. A small number of higher attaining pupils make such good progress that they attend lessons in mainstream schools and a few go on to leave Elms Bank for mainstream education.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students are keen to learn and try very hard to do well. They take part enthusiastically in lessons, clubs and daily routines.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils and students behave very well during lessons and in their free time. Outside of school, behaviour is equally good – for example, when post-16 students attend college.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and students get on extremely well together and with staff. Throughout the school, they are willing to accept responsibility and they become increasingly independent as they get older.
Attendance	Below average last year, but currently satisfactory. Pupils are not usually absent unless they are ill.

Pupils co-operate and work together very well – for example, during physical education activities and school performances.

The school council makes a valuable contribution to the opportunities available to pupils – for example, by identifying where improvements or developments can take place. These have included ideas for raising funds for charity and the introduction of drinking water fountains.



Pupils and students learn to take responsibility for aspects of their lives such as choosing healthy food or travelling independently. Older pupils and students have very high but realistic aspirations for their future lives.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 14
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.*

English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education are all taught very well. The skills of communication, including literacy, are taught very well in lessons across the curriculum and numeracy is taught well. The school is very successful in catering for all pupils and students, whatever their needs: teaching and learning are very good for all. In art and design, the teaching is excellent. Teachers plan lessons very carefully, making sure they take full account of what pupils have already learned. They have very high expectations and plan activities that challenge pupils to try hard. Learning support assistants make very good contributions to pupils' progress. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well – for example, by keeping them interested and busy.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very broad and stimulating. Clubs, residential experiences, school productions and links with the local community and schools, all make very effective contributions to the very good provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Although no specialist support is available, the school provides pupils with the help they need in order to play a full part in lessons and develop their communication skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides very successfully for all aspects of pupils' personal development. Social and cultural development are catered for exceptionally well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Staff take very great care of pupils and make sure that they are safe, happy and comfortable.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

Good opportunities are in place for pupils and students to have their achievements recognised through accredited courses. In a number of subjects, the ongoing records of what pupils have learned need to be more detailed.

There are very good arrangements to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils – for example, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autism.

From Year 9, pupils are given good quality careers advice and guidance, including work experience or work related visits. The school works very hard to arrange suitable college courses. However, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, opportunities to learn about college life are very limited. Higher attaining post-16 students attend college for part of each week, but there are no suitable placements for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Relationships with the community and other schools are very good and include international links – for example, with schools in France and Germany.

The programmes for personal, social and health education, citizenship and life skills are very good. These make important contributions to pupils' personal development.

There are very good procedures for encouraging pupils to behave well and to make sure there is no bullying or racist behaviour. Systems for keeping track of attendance are not always rigorous enough.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's excellent leadership is supported very effectively by the deputy headteachers and other senior staff.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Governors are well informed, active and very committed to the school. They provide very effective and practical support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are effective systems for checking the quality of teaching. Pupils' examination and test results are considered carefully and information is being built up that will enable the school to compare how well different groups of pupils are achieving.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Spending is considered very carefully and the budget is very tightly planned and controlled.

The school is well staffed. Resources are good. The computer room is well equipped, but there is a need for more computers in other classrooms. The accommodation is good overall and it is cared for very well. The lack of proper drainage means that the playing field can seldom be used. The principles of best value are applied very effectively. The school is very strongly committed to including all pupils in every aspect of its life and to continually improving the service it provides.

## 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 school.</li> <li>• They make good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations.</li> <li>• It is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Children are helped to become responsible.</li> <li>• There are close links between home and school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small number of parents are concerned about the provision of homework.</li> <li>• A few feel that they are not well enough informed about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive views. The provision of homework is satisfactory. The school is now providing clearer guidance for parents, explaining the range of activities that make up homework. For example, parents may support work done in mathematics by taking children shopping or counting during everyday activities. Annual reports are satisfactory overall, but do not always set out clearly what children have learned and whether this is as much as was expected.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils and students make very good progress and achieve very well. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was at least satisfactory, but seldom very good, other than in a few courses at post-16. The most significant development has been the increase in accreditation achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11. Last year, for example, three of the 23 Year 11 pupils achieved Grade C in art GCSE and one gained an E in mathematics. This meant that the school achieved its challenging target. Additionally, about half of the pupils gained the Certificate of Achievement (GCSE Entry Level) in up to eight subjects. Post-16 students have their efforts recognised through the Accreditation for Life and Living and three gained Team Enterprise Awards. Most parents feel strongly that their children are getting on well at school.
2. During Years 7 to 11, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in the majority of subjects. Progress and achievement are good in geography, history and French, and excellent in art and design. In English, pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Their progress is enhanced by the very good provision for literacy across the curriculum, enabling them to practise skills and apply them in different contexts. Teachers support pupils' progress in numeracy with good opportunities to reinforce their learning, but these are not as well developed as those for literacy. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in their specialist information and communication technology lessons. However, it is a more variable picture when considering the provision for them to practise and apply their skills in other subjects. This depends on the availability of computers and the particular emphasis given to information and communication technology by different teachers. However, technological aids, such as switches and touch screens, are used very effectively to enable pupils with physical or communication difficulties to take part in lessons.
3. The school's higher attainers are those with moderate learning difficulties – although last year, a small number with severe learning difficulties gained Certificates of Achievement at the end of Year 11. These higher attaining pupils make very good progress and achieve very well, because the curriculum is designed to stretch them, leading towards academic success. In most subjects, flexible arrangements to group pupils according to their ability mean that teachers can focus their efforts on a narrower range of attainment, gearing lessons towards particular National Curriculum levels of attainment. A small number of pupils make such good progress that they are able to take part in lessons at mainstream schools – for example, to join GCSE design and technology lessons. Regularly, a few are able to return to mainstream to complete their education. Last year, each one of the Year 11 pupils either joined the school's post-16 provision or went on to further their education through college courses.
4. Pupils with more severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties gain skills, knowledge and understanding in very small steps. Nevertheless, when their particular learning difficulties are considered, their progress and achievement are also very good. They too benefit from being taught in groups made up of pupils with similar needs – for example, so that plenty of time can be allowed for them to make responses. However, they are also stimulated by lessons in which they learn alongside higher attaining pupils – for example, in art and design and technology – promoting the development of their academic and social skills. Special facilities (such as the sensory

garden) and courses (for example, 'yogacise') are very successful in helping pupils to make the most of their abilities.

5. The small number of pupils with severe autism have made very good progress since the specialist class was established and they are achieving very well. For example, at the beginning of the current year, pupils were taught exclusively in their class base, and could not tolerate the changes involved in working in specialist rooms. Now, they move happily to the art or music rooms, benefiting from the enhanced facilities and becoming increasingly adaptable. One pupil has already transferred to the main body of the school and another is gradually being prepared, by having some lessons with another class. Like others with communication difficulties, these pupils are encouraged very successfully to communicate in ways best suited to each individual – for example, by signing, exchanging pictures, or using electronic devices.
6. Pupils with physical disabilities are catered for very effectively. Other than the house rented by the school and the playing field, all parts of the site are accessible to pupils who use wheelchairs, so they can take part in lessons alongside their friends of the same age and attainment. Specialist rooms are becoming increasingly well equipped – for example, the food technology room has adjustable height sinks and tables, and a microscope attached to a computer enables pupils with visual impairment to observe details they might otherwise miss. Physiotherapists and teachers work together closely to maintain and develop pupils' movements, and the rich provision for sport, games and hydrotherapy means that there are ample opportunities for all pupils to be involved, make very good progress and achieve very well.
7. About one quarter of the pupils either have emotional and behavioural difficulties or have shown themselves to be capable of challenging behaviour. They too make very good progress and achieve very well, because the school has very effective procedures to help them to control their behaviour, so they can benefit from lessons. Additionally, this means that other pupils are not distracted from their work and teachers' time is not deflected away from them, so their learning is not disrupted.
8. A small number of pupils are from ethnic minority groups and have English as an additional language. No specialist support is available from the local education authority. However, because the provision for language and literacy is very good and staff know and support pupils so well, they are able to make progress and achieve at similar rates to other pupils.
9. Post-16 students, who generally have severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, make very good progress and achieve very well across the breadth of their curriculum. The clear focus on developing their independence and preparing them for adult life supports in turn their academic progress, because they are challenged to work hard and achieve as much as they can. Their curriculum is complex and enables them to make very good progress in key skills, such as literacy and numeracy, because they have many opportunities to develop and apply these during all courses and activities. Higher attaining students benefit from college courses that further their education and enable them to apply skills and knowledge in an adult environment.

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

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They are summed up perfectly by pupils and post-16 students in the school's promotional video. Asked why they liked school, they replied, 'Because we do exciting things, and it's really, really good.' and again, 'Because it helps you. It gives you loads of help.' 'I feel proud to be one of the pupils. I really like Elms Bank.' Pupils are busy and enthusiastic around the school. They are

always keen to get to the next lesson, club or recreational activity. Overwhelmingly, parents agreed that their children like coming to school. Pupils are ready to learn and they listen carefully to teachers. For example, in a music lesson, Year 8 pupils listened very hard, so they could join in a certain point. Pupils persevere with their work, even when their special needs make it difficult to complete a task easily. For instance, in a food technology lesson, a Year 7 pupil with autism focused intently on cutting green, red and yellow peppers into even sized pieces and then carefully arranged them on a pizza base to ensure an equal distribution of colour and ingredient. Pupils work very well together and will help each other to create and perfect a piece of work. In a dance lesson in the new sports hall, in itself an exciting experience for the group, pairs of Year 10 and 11 pupils explored a range of movements along pathways, and then refined them into a dramatic dance to modern pop music. Most of all, they are proud of their school and want to work as a team with staff and parents to improve its facilities and opportunities. During a school council meeting, pupils discussed how to make the best use of the new sports hall, reaching a democratic decision to introduce a wheelchair dancing club. To make this accessible to all pupils, they planned a loan system for wheelchairs. This was the final decision of a whole host of ideas from pupils across the school, all keen to make their contribution to improving their school. Post-16 students' attitudes display an increasing maturity in response to their work. For example, in a drama lesson, an element of frustration was edging into a lesson that required clear directions from one set of students to another. One student resolved the issue for the whole group with a clear explanation of exactly what to do, and re-captured the interest and focus of the lesson very effectively.

11. Pupils' behaviour is invariably very good. They are very tolerant of each other's occasional idiosyncrasies, accepting that no-one's behaviour is perfect all of the time. For example, in the school house, where pupils had gone out to prepare themselves afternoon refreshments in a domestic setting, they accepted that one or two were being awkward. They knew that these were the same pupils who had stalwartly pushed wheelchairs for their non-ambulant friends. Last year, there were eight fixed-period and one permanent exclusion. Parents judge that generally the behaviour of the pupils is amazingly good. They appreciate that a number have behavioural difficulties that are linked to their special needs, but that there are very few incidents of deliberately hurtful actions. Pupils' behaviour in the playground is very good and it is noticeable that friendships exist between pupils of varying abilities and needs. There is a strong element of fair play in playground games and no evidence of over-boisterous or bullying behaviour that might be to the disadvantage of any of the pupils. Pupils behave very well in the lunch hall. They queue up patiently, make requests politely and do not fuss about clearing their meal away afterwards. This very good behaviour creates a harmonious, happy ethos in the school. Pupils and post-16 students behave very well out of school. At college, students mix with others in the refectory and their very good behaviour in classes makes a significant contribution to their increasing independence and confidence in new situations.
12. Pupils' personal development is very good and strongly linked to the excellent relationships that exist between pupils themselves and with staff. One pupil said, 'They (the staff) help us a lot. They put a lot of effort into it, and we work as a team.' The success of the mentoring scheme in place for Year 10 pupils is based on the strong element of trust that has been engendered in the relationships between pupils and adults. For example, a pupil whose mentor is a specialist baker, has benefited from skilled, professional advice on cake decoration and has been able to use her learning and new knowledge in a module of her design and technology work. Pupils and students are sincere in their commitment to helping others. For example, one pupil brought in his entire wage packet from his paper round to give to the school's fund raising efforts for the RSPCA. In the school council meeting, pupils demonstrated how

well they are learning about the responsibilities of citizenship, by earnestly discussing how they could make fund-raising fun for the whole school and further their ambition of supporting a child in Africa. In this case, they decided to organise a Red Day, when everyone would wear an item of clothing that colour. Many pupils are confident enough to look forward to continuing their education or making informed decisions about their future. One said, 'I'm going to do joinery, because I'm doing a GCSE in resistant materials'. School performances, such as 'The Sound of Music' reflect the very self-assured presence that pupils have in front of an audience. Despite the presence of video cameras, photographers and an audience of parents and friends, pupils deliver extremely professional performances and ensure that an equal billing is shared amongst able and less able pupils. They enjoy the wide range of residential visits, both nationally and in Europe, and have the confidence to use a foreign language when abroad. They become increasingly independent as they get older, and post-16 students take on more responsibilities, where they are able. For example, they go shopping for resources for lessons or travel to college independently. Pupils across the school enjoy caring for the domestic pets in the small animals club. At lunchtime, more able pupils are often seen taking good care of their less able friends. For example, one pupil was observed to wheel her friend to his place amongst a group, fetch and position a special table and collect his lunch, after asking him what he wanted. After the meal, she cleared his plate away and wheeled him off outside to join the rest of their friends.

13. Attendance is satisfactory. Authorised absences are higher than usual for a school of this type, but many of the pupils have had unusually long absences because of their medical conditions, and a few pupils have had extended holidays to the Indian sub-continent. There are only a few pupils who have had unauthorised absences, and this is much better than the national average. During the current year, there has been a decrease in the number of absences. Pupils are generally punctual. When they are late, it is usually due to traffic problems in the area. Ten pupils and students travel independently on public transport and they normally get to school on time.

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

14. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, a large proportion of lessons were taught very well. In nearly one in ten, the teaching was excellent and only a few were satisfactory, as opposed to good or better. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection, when four out of ten lessons were simply satisfactory, a small number were unsatisfactory and there was much less very good teaching. The improvement is particularly significant because, during the present inspection, four temporary teachers were working in the school, replacing teachers who had left or were ill. Teaching is of an equally high quality throughout the school.
15. Changes of staff account in part for the improved quality of teaching. Additionally, the size of the school means that many of the teachers are able to concentrate on working within their subject specialism. This ensures that they have skills and knowledge at their fingertips, and are up to date with developments such as the requirements for accredited courses. The quality of teachers' work is checked carefully by senior staff, and support provided when necessary. This means that consistency is achieved in subjects such as English, where a large number of teachers are involved. Further factors in achieving such high standards of teaching are the quality of relationships in the school and its ethos of openness and support. Consequently, staff are not isolated and have plenty of opportunities to share good practice or find solutions to problems.
16. A particular strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers cater equally well for pupils' extremely varied needs and learning difficulties. This is achieved because they

have such detailed knowledge of individual pupils and understand how to get the best response from each of them. When teachers are specialists in the subject, they are more able to focus on the pupils and how well they are learning. For example, in a very good food technology lesson, a group of post-16 students with very diverse needs, were making strawberry tarts as part of their City and Guilds course. The lesson was planned and structured very carefully, with clear expectations for what each student was to achieve. The higher attaining students were encouraged to be as independent as possible. As a result, they handled the rich pastry gently, cut rounds and pressed them into tins. They thought hard about the teacher's questions, making links between different aspects of their work – for example, it is cheaper to shop in supermarkets, but you need transport to get there. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties were also heavily involved – for instance, using a switch to operate a food processor, joining in the evaluation of the finished products, and helping to dry dishes. However, the size of the group and very challenging nature of the activity, meant that occasionally there were not enough staff to keep these lower attaining students occupied as much as the teacher would have liked. Even when classes consist of pupils of broadly similar ability levels, teachers take account of their particular strengths and difficulties. For example, during a very good mathematics lesson for the Year 9 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, the teacher was very skilled at providing just the right amount of support or challenge for each one. A pupil with a physical disability was helped with reading and writing but was expected to understand and use terms such as 'volume' when measuring water and to read graduations in twos. Pupils were allowed to work at different speeds on the same activities and the quickest workers were given plenty of challenge – for example, measuring the perimeter of the school yard. This meant that these pupils were beginning to work at a higher National Curriculum level than the others, although all were making very good progress.

17. 'Challenge' is a characteristic of most lessons and is a significant factor in pupils' rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers expect that pupils will try hard and do the best they can. For example, part of a very good resistant materials technology lesson required higher attaining Year 10 pupils to dismantle a clock in order to find out which drill bit they needed to use for making a suitable hole to take the hands of the clock they were designing. An action-packed music lesson presented extremely high levels of challenge to Year 10 pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and resulted in excellent progress in composing, performing and appreciating music. After performing scores they had composed previously, pupils recreated the Eastenders' theme, playing handbells. Not content that they had achieved this, the teacher asked them to play again, paying more attention and improving their performance. The varied activities kept pupils alert and totally involved. Later, they sang and moved to accompany CDs of pop music – for example, by Britney Spears. Those who were able, grabbed music stands or shakers, for microphones, and the teacher added coloured lights to enhance the performance. Several pupils and staff chose to dance with pupils in wheelchairs, so that they too could enjoy the music and sense of exhilaration. Towards the end of the lesson, pupils were asked to find 'shakers and shushers', with which they joined in 'Ebb Tide'. This produced a calmer atmosphere and underlined the lesson's superb structure, as a result of which, time had flown.
18. Lessons such as those described are planned in very great detail and build systematically on what pupils have already learned. They depend on teachers' detailed knowledge of what pupils need to do next in order to improve. Pupils' excellent achievements in art exemplify this – the teacher structures both projects and lessons extremely well, inspiring and stimulating pupils, so they make every effort to succeed. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils, working towards GCSE and Certificate of

Achievement, had previously worked with a variety of papers, embossing and embellishing them. During the inspection, they learned how to make paper, adding interest with feathers, leaves and sequins. The majority were engrossed in their work and also enjoyed examining samples of paper, illustrations of Japanese art and a wasps' nest – all calculated to extend the scope of their knowledge and creativity. Like most lessons across the curriculum, pupils had very good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills – for example, by answering questions. Teachers also plan reading and writing tasks, contributing very effectively to pupils' progress in literacy.

19. Support staff make very strong contributions to pupils' progress. For instance, in a very good science lesson, Year 10 pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties were investigating slugs and snails. The teacher had prepared very thoroughly – this was a contingency plan, bad weather preventing a foray into the sensory garden. The class shared a 'big book' on the subject and was then intended to encounter and observe real life specimens. Pupils were initially apprehensive, but the teacher and learning support assistants, by their own example, succeeded in prompting each one to touch the creatures, handling them very sensitively. Again, all staff asked questions, encouraging pupils to look closely, sometimes using magnifying glasses, in order to find out about the snails. One support assistant worked very effectively with a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties, so that she turned her head to look at a snail and reached out towards it – a very good response. A strength of the teaching was the way in which all staff allowed the pupils time to think and react. Very occasionally, teachers do not provide support staff with a clear enough role. This is then a waste of a valuable resource – for example, the skills of the French assistant.
20. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. Relationships are extremely good and the respect shown by adults to pupils is reciprocated. This means that pupils behave well because they enjoy being with staff and taking part in lessons. Additionally, teachers usually make sure that pupils are kept busy and are interested in what they are doing. For example, in a religious education lesson with pupils in Years 7 and 8 who have severe autism, a variety of suitable activities had been prepared, to help them learn about Buddhism. The pupils are capable of very challenging behaviour but, working with a very skilled learning support assistant, the teacher kept them firmly focused on their tasks – such as contributing to a large model of the Buddha.
21. Responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were emphatic in their opinion that teaching at Elms Bank is good. However, a small number have some concerns about the provision of homework. The school's arrangements are satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are set formal homework, especially in English and mathematics, and all pupils are regularly encouraged to contribute to lessons by bringing in items or finding out information. Additionally, parents are made aware of their children's individual targets and so are able to help them make progress by providing opportunities at home for them to practise skills or apply their learning in different situations.

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

22. The curriculum is very good. The exciting and colourful wall displays in classrooms and corridors reflect the very positive learning environment that the school provides. The result is that pupils enjoy coming to school, they relish learning and socialising, and they make very good progress. The National Curriculum is well established and there is a good length to the teaching week. The curriculum has improved well since



the previous inspection, with an increase in the time for science, and religious education is now in place for post-16 students. Pupils experience a very broad range of subjects from Year 7 through to Year 11. Opportunities for accreditation are well developed, and pupils in Years 10 and 11 exercise some choice of study through an options programme. The post-16 curriculum is very effectively organised to promote students' independence and communication skills and to prepare them for the next stage in their lives. It is particularly closely matched to the students' varied needs and learning styles, as demonstrated by the way that a programme of very well-structured sensory experiences has been woven into it, in order to meet the needs of those with significant physical and learning difficulties.

23. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and are developing well. A key aim of the curriculum is to improve pupils' communication skills. This is done very well, not only in English lessons but also by the inclusion in other subjects of methods that promote reading, writing, speaking, listening, and communicating through signing, symbols and other aids, as appropriate. Although an audit of the use of mathematics in other subjects has yet to be completed, teachers make good use of opportunities for pupils to use number skills in their lessons.
24. The standard of subject planning is very good overall, and never less than good. Provision for the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science is very good. The creative arts are very well established through excellent work in art, music lessons, highly enjoyable and professional musical productions, and dance. All pupils through to Year 14 study a modern foreign language, first French and then German post-16, and thoroughly enjoy the experience. There are no disapplications from the National Curriculum. Although the school is currently experiencing recruitment difficulties for French, and is using a non-specialist team at present, such is the very high level of commitment of this team that provision for French is good.
25. The school is very successful in promoting equality of opportunity for all its pupils. Subject plans take very good account of the learning needs of all pupils; and all pupils leave school with at least one externally awarded certificate. Pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties work towards accreditation in the Certificate of Achievement. The highest attaining pupils in mathematics and art are entered for GCSE examinations. A number of pupils attend mainstream schools for GCSE work, in design and technology, for example. There is, however, no provision for a small number of pupils capable of attempting GCSE in science and information and communication technology to take examinations at this level. All students post-16 follow the course in Accreditation for Life and Living, which seeks to develop their independence as far as possible, prior to leaving school.
26. Provision for pupils whose needs are significantly different from others in the school is very good. Those with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism or physical disabilities are fully included in the life of the school and have their needs met very well. The small number of pupils diagnosed with autism receive individual programmes that are very well planned to meet their needs.
27. The programmes for personal and social education and citizenship, for health education and for life skills are very good. They make a very important contribution to pupils' personal development. Skills for independence like shopping, cooking, handling money, travelling on public transport, home hygiene, and personal safety and hygiene are promoted very well, not only through lessons in life skills and personal, social, citizenship and health education, but also in other subjects like practical mathematics and food technology. The school has close links with the local Education Business Partnership and students compete in the 'Enterprise Olympics' to design, for

example, improvements to a pupil's wheelchair. All pupils have opportunities to attend residential courses as part of their personal and social education, tailored to their individual needs. Special travel arrangements, for example, are made for pupils with profound and complex needs so they can participate with their peers in trips abroad.

28. Pupils are prepared well for leaving school. The careers education and guidance programme is well planned from Year 9, there is good support from the careers service and links with local employers are very well established. Work experience placements for pupils able to participate are very well organised and monitored. There are very good alternative work-related activities for pupils with the most severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties when they visit different places of work and use computers and symbols to record their experiences. Physically disabled pupils carry out a disability access study. They communicate their findings to those responsible for local transport and for the shops and services in the town centre, and are pleased to receive responses on their findings. The higher attaining post-16 students attend college for part of the week, but colleges are not able to provide placements for the post-16 students with the most profound learning difficulties. Unfortunately, the availability of vocational courses at college for Year 11 pupils has gradually declined and is now very limited. This means that for pupils who leave at the end of Year 11, their induction to college life is confined largely to a relatively short visit to the college, prior to transfer, and visits from college staff to the school, during a careers evening for example. An industry day is well organised to give pupils a realistic view of work opportunities and they evaluate the usefulness of the information they receive.
29. The school has very effective links with the community and with other schools to widen pupils' educational experiences and to promote their personal and social development. The headteacher is instrumental in creating new links and sustaining old ones to maximise the range of learning opportunities available to pupils. The links established with schools in Germany and France provide very good opportunities for pupils to learn and socialise in different settings, to practise their skills in speaking French and German, and to develop their knowledge of other cultures.
30. There is a very good range of breakfast, lunch time and after school clubs – for example, trampolining, basketball, football, gardening, computers and library clubs. A popular and very well organised small animal club provides an important sensory and social experience, especially for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The music club is very well attended by a wide cross section of ages and abilities. It provides wonderful lunchtime entertainment, with excellent promotion of pupils' self-confidence, respect for each other's choice of songs and social skills. Pupils derive the same enjoyment and enthusiasm from their involvement in school productions – for example, 'The Sound of Music'.
31. Overall, the school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Staff work very hard to ensure that the potential for independence and self-fulfilment within each pupil is sought for, whilst accepting that a number of the pupils will always need support and their inner needs and desires remain unknown.
32. Spiritual provision is good and has improved well since the previous inspection. The school plans carefully for moments of reflection in each curriculum area and during assemblies and tutorial time. These special times are occasionally highlighted by the symbolic lighting of candles or burning of incense. Religious education lessons encourage pupils to appreciate and respect the range of faiths and beliefs across the world – for example, when creating a Buddhist shrine in a classroom. In English lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect – for instance on the motives and characters

of people in literature – and a successful assembly asked pupils to consider the power of words in games, songs, lessons and conversations. The school tackles sensitively issues that may be distressing – for example, the death of a pupil. Their friends are encouraged to remember their special qualities and the contribution they made to the life of the school.

33. The provision for moral development is very good and the school is careful to emphasise that making a moral judgement about another person is a weighty responsibility. For example, in a lesson in the school house, where one pupil was very keen to inform the teacher of certain misdeeds of another pupil, the teacher asked him to think carefully about why he wanted to 'tell tales' and did he really want his classmate to be corrected. In the event, he decided that he did, but the moral argument made him think. Pupils are taught to care for the environment and there is a very active recycling campaign in the school. The high profile of sporting and team activities promotes fair play and acceptance of a referee's decision. Pictures, symbols and signs are used very effectively to ensure that pupils with autism learn about moral issues – for example, not to hurt anyone in your family. Staff are consistently fair with pupils and provide exemplary role models.
34. The way in which the school promotes pupils' personal and social development is excellent. They are provided with a wealth of experiences and life skills that stimulate and develop their personalities and ambitions. Parents are especially happy with this provision. Residential experiences open pupils up to a life outside of their home and school, often for the first time. Post-16 students have the responsibility to shop for and organise a tuck shop for the whole school, and to ensure that the produce they sell is healthy and fresh. The house system encourages competition amongst pupils, and the opportunity to be in part of a greater group than pupils' immediate class. School lunches are extremely well organised, and the catering staff encourage pupils to extend their experience of different foods. Pupils who integrate with mainstream schools benefit from the social inclusion provision of being with their peers. Post-16 students attend college and are encouraged to become increasingly independent of the support assistant who accompanies them, so that in time they do not need any support to find their way around.
35. The cultural provision is outstanding and exhilarating. The building's walls and corridors are covered with pupils' work in superb displays that enlighten the whole school, and offer pupils the chance to learn about a wide range of traditional and modern artists, both national and international. Through close contacts, for example, with a school in Bosnia, visits to schools in Germany and France, planned trips to Spain and Internet connections with France and Germany, the pupils are made aware of the very different cultures of these countries. Music permeates many aspects of school life and pupils have very good opportunities to perform and appreciate a very wide range of styles, from different periods and countries. They are encouraged to take a keen interest in contemporary music, which also contributes to their social skills. Music and drama combine in the school's very high quality performances, of shows such as 'My Fair Lady'. In this instance, sumptuous costumes helped to inform pupils about dress and traditions in history.

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

36. The school takes very good care of its pupils. Health and safety issues are well co-ordinated, although there is still not a regular, formal system of health and safety audits across the school. However, the school recently commissioned a full audit related to access for disabled people, and this was very useful in identifying a number of health and safety issues, to which the school is responding. Safety procedures in

the hydrotherapy pool are well documented and observed. The arrangements for ensuring the safety and dignity of pupils when attending to their personal needs are very good and are carried out discreetly and efficiently. Arrival and dismissal arrangements are well organised and ensure that safety is paramount when there are vehicles in the vicinity of pupils. Medical care and therapy arrangements are well thought-out and there are a number of first aiders, as well as the school health adviser and her assistant, to take care of pupils' health. Arrangements for child protection are very good. Staff are all very aware of the referral procedures and are supported by the school health advisers' specialist knowledge in this area.

37. There are weekly meetings with the educational welfare officer to review any issues relating to attendance and to plan appropriate action. However, some aspects of the arrangements for promoting and monitoring pupils' attendance require improvement. The school had introduced a good system for following up speedily any cases of unexplained absence, as a number of the pupils are independent travellers to school. However, in practice, this system has lapsed due to the pressure of office administration work. The codes written in registers do not always accurately reflect the reasons why pupils are absent. Letters and messages that explain a pupil's absence are stored in their individual files. This means that it is not possible to gain an immediate and accurate overview of the reasons why pupils are absent from school.
38. The procedures for making sure there is no bullying or racist and discriminatory behaviour, are very good. The school's race equality policy is up to date and indicates a very good awareness of issues and the sort of sanctions and actions that are needed to respond to any bullying behaviour. The pastoral procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour are very effective in maintaining a sense of discipline, good humour and tolerance amongst pupils. The school has identified that about one quarter of pupils have potentially challenging behaviour. As a result, their personal targets frequently include ones designed to help them to control their actions. The class tutor system ensures that a close eye is kept on how successful they are, and time with tutors is used to emphasise and promote good behaviour. Pupils with autism, who may have challenging behaviour identified as part of their difficulties, are catered for very well in the specialist class. Stories, with pictures and symbols to enhance their meaning, are produced by the teacher and used to good effect to promote the right sort of behaviour. The school offers pupils very good personal guidance through their class tutors and individual targets for personal, social and health education. The introduction of mentoring programmes for a number of Year 10 and a few Year 9 pupils has offered them useful support from a wide range of people in different jobs. The school is very active in celebrating the achievements of all of its pupils, most visually in the stunning displays around the school, but also more formally through achievement assemblies, records of achievement, merit letters and house points.
39. The school uses a range of systems to measure pupils' progress and achievement. Within the first term of joining the school, they are assessed in mathematics and English using the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's 'P' scales, which measure levels of attainment in very small steps of progression. This information is used very effectively within mathematics to identify areas for curriculum development as well as providing information on which to base appropriate individual and school targets for improvement. The school recognises the value of this process and is using a similar approach in English and science, though as yet the data has not been analysed to provide the same level of detail.
40. Since the previous inspection, there have been satisfactory improvements in the arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' attainments in the subjects of the curriculum. However, there are still variations in the quality and quantity of the

ongoing recording of pupils' progress in a number of subjects – such as history and French. Portfolios of pupils' work are maintained in subjects such as music and information and communication technology and these are used to keep track of pupils' progress over time and when reporting to parents.

41. There are inconsistencies in the end of year and annual review reports. Teachers' comments do not always reflect what pupils have learned but refer more to their level of application and behaviour. Where progress is monitored consistently – for example, in mathematics, English, information and communication technology and design and technology, the information provided is of good quality and is based on clear evidence.
42. The arrangements for pupils' annual reviews have similarly improved since the previous inspection. They now provide information about all subjects and are instrumental in identifying the next individual education plan targets.

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

43. Parents' views of the school are very positive. They are unanimous in their satisfaction with the progress that their children make. They feel that the school cares deeply for their children and that they are well looked after and challenged academically. As one parent said, 'The fact that the children follow the National Curriculum to their ability is excellent. I want my daughter to cover as much of the curriculum as she can.' Parents approve of the values and attitudes that the school teaches and are moved by the help that pupils offer each other. Overall, most are content with the amount of homework given to their children and judge that it is pitched at the right level.
44. The school's links with parents are very good and parents are especially comfortable with its approachability. They feel welcome to make suggestions and confident that these are considered carefully. For example, the promotional video that the school now sends out to the families of new pupils came about through a parental suggestion, as did the breakfast club. The school makes frequent use of questionnaires to seek parents' views on the annual written reports, curriculum outlines and feedback on each child's progress and development. Teachers often speak to parents and carers on a daily basis about their children and many families make good use of home/school diaries to keep in touch with teachers. Appropriately, these are not used by all pupils, as those who can communicate well with their families are not expected to require one. The school has identified a number of pupils and families who would benefit from extra support and closer links with the school. This close partnership, organised by two learning support assistants, supports a number of families – for example, through home visits, sorting out problems about benefits or giving time to discuss specific issues.
45. The information provided to parents about their children's progress, through the annual written reports, is satisfactory. However, these do not consistently reflect pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Instead, in a number of subjects, the written commentary is based on the attitude and personality of the pupil. Lively newsletters go out on a regular basis and parents value receiving information about the curriculum areas that their children are going to be studying. The school has inaugurated a website, and parents feel that this will be a very useful way of keeping up their links with the school. Although only a few parents can come into school to help – for instance, in the hydrotherapy pool and with reading – the school welcomes volunteers. Parents of post-16 students come into school on a termly basis to discuss issues linked to the students' personal development and future. Parents support and associate with the school on many levels – for example, by being a member of the Parents and Friends Group. Behind the scenes of the school's very professional

musical productions, a team of parents works on costumes, make up and stage props, and a number of visits benefit from parental support.

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

46. The leadership and management of the school are very good and both have developed well since the previous inspection. This fully supports the parents' extremely positive views. The school benefits from the excellent leadership of the headteacher who is supported very effectively by the senior staff and the governing body. The senior management team comprises the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and the teachers with overall responsibility for pupils of different ages – for example, those in Years 8 and 9 or post-16 students. Each has a very strong commitment to the school and sets very high standards for themselves, staff and pupils. The headteacher provides visionary leadership, based on the conviction that all pupils should be fully included in all the work the school does. This is evident in the way that pupils who have additional special educational needs have full access to lessons and the strong emphasis upon providing pupils and students with accreditation for their work, ensuring that they achieve very well. There is a very clear commitment for pupils to attend other schools for some lessons and there has been good success in transferring pupils to mainstream schools.
47. Senior managers provide very effective support to the headteacher, having specific responsibilities in order to share the work. The two deputy headteachers undertake significant tasks – for instance, for planning what pupils will learn and the day-to-day timetable for lessons and activities. Other managers lead aspects such as organising the post-16 curriculum or liaising with feeder primary schools. Because they fulfil their roles so effectively, the headteacher has time to provide a strong presence in school and have a wider influence in providing the vision and leading developments. The post-16 department is very well led and managed and provides a distinct education for students, whilst building on their previous work.
48. The headteacher is very clear that her role involves ensuring that high quality staff are recruited. Foremost of her criteria is that the teacher wants to work with children – particularly those with special educational needs – and a rigorous selection process, involving governors and staff, is applied. With the deputy headteachers, the headteacher takes a leading role in checking the quality of teaching. They visit lessons and work effectively with teachers to improve the standards of teaching and learning. This has led to a significant number of improvements that benefit the school. For instance, a number of staff have identified the need to improve their skills in using computers to help pupils with their learning. This is being arranged and is having a good effect on increasing the opportunities for pupils to practise their information and communication technology skills.
49. The governing body is well informed and has a very good overview of the performance of the school. Governors are active and provide very good support. They are very committed to the school and have very good knowledge of its strengths and areas for improvement. For instance, there are two governors with special links with literacy and numeracy, and each week they help in school. Governors check the school's plans for development very well and challenge the school when they feel it is necessary. For instance, very appropriate targets were set for the headteacher, centring on increased involvement with other schools and institutions so as to gain further insights for school development. This is proving to be a very good choice, since it has enabled the school to share ideas about, for instance, the inclusion of pupils within the school and in schools locally.

50. There are very effective and well considered systems for identifying priorities for development, planning the necessary action and checking how well the school is achieving its goals. All staff with management responsibilities – for example, subject leaders – play a part in influencing developments for school improvement. In this process, staff are supported very well by senior managers, whilst being encouraged to take responsibility and initiative. The school's success in planning improvements is evident in the successful way that the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies have been implemented for pupils up to Year 9. The school is thoroughly committed to achieving high standards. It sets annual targets for pupils to achieve and checks their success – for example, by providing the governing body with a copy of the results. Pupils' results in accredited courses are considered alongside those of mainstream schools, to ensure that they achieve comparably well. The school is now more efficient in the way it records the levels at which pupils are working in English, mathematics and science. As this data build up, it will be easier to use the information – for example, to compare how well different groups of pupils are making progress.
51. Spurred on by the headteacher, the school is outward looking, constantly seeking ways to improve the work it does. It challenges itself on the standards achieved and tests this out. For instance, it has achieved recognition through the Sportsmark Gold, School Achievement and Curriculum Awards. The headteacher is very active in promoting opportunities for pupils to work alongside pupils in mainstream schools. This includes considering if the acquisition of 'Beacon' status' would enable the school to spread its success in the wider community – for instance, the way that it enables so many pupils to gain external accreditation.
52. The school has a very good system of deciding what it wants and needs to spend its money on. The spending is very well thought out in advance and is checked each month. The headteacher, the governing body's financial committee, and an officer from the local education authority work together very effectively, and the budget is very tightly planned and controlled. Major spending is very well considered, and is often supported by raising large amounts of money from donations and special grants. The new sports hall and changing rooms, for example, have been very expensive, but have been paid for by a combination of special grants and school money. Many official grants and voluntary donations are received for particular purposes. As with all of its spending, the school goes to a lot of effort to make sure that the money is well spent. It checks that purchases are being well used by pupils and staff, and that services such as staff training are put to good use in the classrooms. Costs are compared with those of other schools. Very good efforts are made to ensure that the school is doing as well as it can for its pupils and their parents. Senior staff have a particularly good awareness of how to obtain the best value they can from the services and goods they receive. The school's finances were last audited three years ago, and the report was positive. There were no major issues, but some minor matters of procedure were raised, which have since largely been addressed.
53. There are sufficient teachers and support assistants to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the special educational needs of the pupils. Their experience and qualifications are well matched to the duties that they perform and they are very well deployed. A technician has been appointed to provide support for information and communication technology but support is not available for design and technology and science. Recently appointed teachers and support staff confirm that induction procedures are very good. They receive very relevant help through the carefully considered formal induction process and in addition are very well supported by colleagues. The wide range of training opportunities undertaken is carefully linked to the school's priorities and those of the staff. The school is very successful in promoting the personal development of all staff and has a successful history of helping support

staff gain additional qualifications, including qualified teacher status. The strategy and arrangements for appraisal and performance management are good.

54. Overall, the accommodation is good and the school makes full use of the space available. The recently completed sports hall is having a significant impact on the teaching of physical education, as is the hydrotherapy pool. In addition, the very carefully planned sensory garden and small animal facility make very relevant contributions to the pupils' and students' learning. The accommodation is enhanced by a nearby house, rented from the local council, which provides good opportunities for many pupils and students to practise the skills needed for everyday living.
55. The post-16 provision is provided in a suite of rooms which, by their design and location, reflect and contribute to the students' developing maturity. They have access to their own kitchens and secluded outdoor leisure area but do not have a common room. The school is very keen to develop such an area but has not yet been able to acquire the necessary funding.
56. The lack of proper drainage for the playing field means that its use is significantly restricted. This has an effect upon the overall amount of space that is available during playtimes and the efficient use of time for physical education – team games or athletic training have to take place off site when the field is waterlogged. Additionally, pupils using wheelchairs cannot negotiate the steep bank at its entrance.
57. The building presents a very lively living and learning environment, because of the very attractive displays of pupils' and students work in classes and around the school and the care that pupils, staff, caretaker and cleaners take of it.
58. The overall level and quality of resources is good. They are very good for English, art and music. However, there are not enough resources for teaching history. Although the resources available for information and communication technology are good in the specialist room, there is a need for more computers, to enable pupils to use them during lessons in other subjects.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

59. The headteacher, staff and governors should consider the following issues:
  - I. Make sure annual reports of pupils' progress let parents know how well their children are getting on in each subject. In order to achieve this, teachers in all subjects will need to record consistently the gains pupils make in knowledge, skills and understanding. (paragraphs 41,45)
  - II. Continue to seek opportunities for all Year 11 pupils and post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties to experience college courses. (paragraph 28, 142)
  - III. Improve the procedures for monitoring attendance, in order to continue to reduce levels of absence. (Paragraph 37)
  - IV. Continue working with the local education authority to develop the facilities for physical education by improving the condition of the playing field and making it accessible to all pupils. (paragraphs 56,119)
  - V. Provide more opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance their learning across the curriculum. (paragraphs 58, 105)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	59	34	6	0	0	0
Percentage	9	54	31	6	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	146
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	38

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

**Attendance**

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	12.04*

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.09

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

\*Last year, a number of pupils had unusually long absences for medical reasons.

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

GCSE results			1 or more grades A*-G
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the last reporting year	Boys	Girls	Total
	8	6	14
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys		1
	Girls		2
	Total		3

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	102
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	8	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20.09
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.9
Average class size	8

**Education support staff: Y7– Y14**

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	943.75

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	00-01
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	£
Total income	1254915
Total expenditure	1250379
Expenditure per pupil	4700.67
Balance brought forward from previous year	926
Balance carried forward to next year	5462

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	146
Number of questionnaires returned	53

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	26	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	8	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	49	6	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	33	18	7	7
The teaching is good.	72	28	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	26	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	28	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	32	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	29	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	26	0	2	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

60. The provision for English, including the teaching and the breadth of what is taught, is very good. This results in pupils' progress and achievement also being very good throughout the school.

#### Key strengths

- At the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils are successful in the Certificate of Achievement (GCSE Entry Level).
- Lessons are very carefully planned and structured.
- The curriculum is very broad and with very good opportunities for pupils to learn and practise skills in other subjects.

#### Area for improvement

- Greater use could be made of computers to help pupils learn and present their work.

61. In speaking and listening, pupils make very good progress from Year 7 to Year 11. During lessons, teachers create many opportunities for them to listen, understand and answer. Pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties make different sounds or hand movements – for example, to indicate that they are pleased or that they want something. They often pay good attention to what is happening in the class around them, as well as when staff are working individually with them. A number use large coloured switches to say 'yes', 'no' or 'hello'. Several have learned to use symbols to ask for things such as drinks or the toilet. Others, such as the autistic pupils, use symbols to discuss their timetable each day. At first, pupils who are rather more able – for example, with severe learning difficulties – often answer direct questions briefly, but do not expand on their answers. Teachers are very skilled at prompting them for more information, about, for instance, what they think of the World Cup, or what they have been doing over the previous week's holiday. Towards the top of the school, a number of these pupils still have difficulties in giving full answers, or speaking in long sentences. Their responses tend to be single words or short phrases. Many of the higher attaining pupils, with moderate learning difficulties, join in discussions in class and, by the time they are in Year 11, take part in role play activities with increasing confidence. They have sensible ideas to put forward in discussions, and they organise their thoughts and answers well. They learn to take their turn, and to listen to what other people in the class are saying. Often, pupils speak spontaneously – for example, to congratulate others on how well they have performed a task. Many play effective roles in drama productions such as 'My Fair Lady' or 'The Sound of Music', and will speak aloud confidently in class or assemblies. The emphasis placed on pupils' social development has a significant impact on their speaking and listening. Pupils enjoy communicating with each other and with adults, chatting and gossiping in spare moments.

62. Pupils' reading skills develop very well. The progress can be seen more in individual pupils than in whole year groups, because each is so different. Lower attaining pupils, with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, begin to identify different people, pictures, photographs and real things. They learn to recognise symbols on cards or in displays, and understand what they mean. This awareness gradually increases during their time in school. By Year 11, a few of these lower attaining pupils

are able to understand a range of different symbols, and a very limited selection of printed words, such as their own name. Higher attaining pupils, with severe learning difficulties, read simple texts, such as story books. They are very hesitant at first, and make many mistakes. With help and prompting, they gradually learn the sounds made by letters and how to join them together to build up words. By Year 11, the more able of these pupils learn to read passages for information, such as magazines and newspapers, although they read without expression when they are reading stories that should be exciting or funny, for instance. The highest attaining pupils, with moderate learning difficulties, gain skills relatively quickly and, by Year 11, many of them refer to timetables, telephone directories, magazines, newspapers, and pages on the Internet to gain the information they need. Most are able to use the library without help and know how to find the right section in a book, by using the contents page or the index. One group of pupils increase their learning through the library club, which is held each week. They learn how to choose books, and have a good opportunity to talk sociably together.

63. Pupils' writing skills develop very well. Most find writing difficult and take a long time to achieve small steps in learning. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are helped to hold a pencil, crayon or brush to make marks. Higher attaining pupils, with severe learning difficulties, learn to write over faint words or copy words that are already on the page, and are developing the skills needed to copy words from the board or from another page. Many learn to use computers to record their work. In one very good lesson, Year 7 pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties were very interested in the topic of items needed when going on holiday. The teacher had planned very effectively, to enable them to record their ideas in different ways, making very good use of her knowledge of each pupil. For example, one pointed to pictures she had selected, while a support assistant typed the words. Higher attaining pupils used the computers more independently and one wrote by hand, copying words he had dictated to the teacher. By the time they are in Year 11, a number of these pupils use the computers with only a little help, perhaps with their spelling or capital letters, for instance. The highest attaining pupils, with moderate learning difficulties, learn to write neatly. What they write is a good reflection of what they want to say – perhaps about their recent visit to an art gallery, or why a person in a play was behaving in the way they did. Pupils study stories and plays, looking at the different characters, and they create their own dramas, with their own characters and events. These are sometimes based on television programmes that they like such as 'The Simpsons' or 'Coronation Street'. These starting points successfully encourage pupils to write and use their imagination, and they enjoy acting out their scenes with some style for the rest of the class. These more able pupils also learn how to write for a variety of different purposes – for example, letters to friends, formal letters, their own versions of newspaper reports and stories that they have made up themselves.
64. The teaching of English is very good, and is shared by eight different teachers. They know their pupils, and the subject, very well. They are often enthusiastic, so lessons are lively, with teachers and support staff working very well together in supporting pupils' learning. For example, in one excellent lesson a class of Year 7 and 8 pupils with autism were building up their own version of a book called 'The Gruffalo' as they read the story over a period of several weeks. The teacher and support assistant read the book in an exceptionally lively way that had the pupils enthralled and joining in with actions and sounds. The pupils very clearly loved the story because of the way the staff presented it and because they enjoyed drawing, colouring and writing pages to add to their own version. The teacher was very adept at praising pupils for their particularly high level of involvement, attention and effort, even in sharing glue sticks (when sticking names next to each picture of a different animal, or arranging

sentences in the correct order). The lesson was a joy. Its challenge and liveliness brought out the best in this group of pupils.

65. This subject is very well led and managed by the English and communication and speech development co-ordinators. They are dynamic in their plans for the subject, although these do not include clear ideas for developing the role of computers. Computers and other electronic equipment are valuably used to support learning in many lessons, but these opportunities could be increased if there were more computers and similar aids available in all classes. Resources are very good and are used imaginatively, whether they are collections of 'big books', reading schemes, or work sheets that staff have made themselves. English is very well supported in lessons for other subjects. For example, listening to and following instructions in physical education or writing about projects in art, visits in history and geography or investigations in mathematics and science. In almost all lessons in other subjects, teachers stress the key words that are a central part of the learning. In English, effective use is made of outside people and places, especially with visits by travelling theatre groups, outings to a theatre and the library, and having volunteers coming in regularly to help pupils with their reading. There has been a good improvement in this subject since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

66. The provision is very good. The quality of teaching and pupils' progress and achievement are very good and much improved since the previous inspection.

### Key strengths

- Girls and boys make very good progress throughout the school and achieve very well in examinations up to and including GCSE, because teachers understand their learning needs very well and plan work accordingly.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics because teachers provide plenty of practical tasks that are fun, and an interesting annual numeracy week, aimed at improving their independence skills.
- The department is very well led and managed, keeping up to date with national developments.
- The co-ordinator has a very clear picture of how well pupils are learning in each area of mathematics, because assessments are very thorough and information is used very well to check pupils' progress and plan the curriculum.

### Areas for improvement

- Annual reports do not always indicate clearly how well pupils have made progress in knowledge, understanding and skills.
- More use could be made of computers in mathematics lessons.
- A good start has been made in planning for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects.

67. In lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9, much of the work is practically based and pupils have many opportunities to use and apply mathematics to solve problems. Boys and girls learn very well through this approach. Learning is fun, and as a consequence pupils concentrate very hard in lessons. The highest attaining pupils in Year 7, for example, learn about lines of symmetry in a circle by working in pairs in a competition to design pizza toppings. They eat the results of their work! By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils use and understand vocabulary such as 'perimeter', and can calculate the perimeter of the playground. They plot co-ordinates on a graph, measure angles with a protractor, and can calculate area using the correct units. The lowest attaining pupils in Year 9, without speech, communicate their counting skills to number five, using switches and gestures.

68. There are examples of the excellent use of computers to support learning in mathematics. Year 7 higher attaining pupils, for example, each have access to a computer to learn how to enter mathematical data on to spreadsheets. A pupil with physical difficulties in this class has additional support and time to complete her tasks and she uses a joystick to move the cursor when entering data on to the spreadsheet. There is scope to extend the use of computers further in other mathematics lessons. Teachers ensure that lessons provide equally well for pupils with varying needs. For example, during one lesson, the lower attaining pupils in Year 8 developed their understanding that two halves make a whole, through producing sandwiches for a morning snack. Pupils without speech confidently communicated using a picture exchange system and a pupil with profound physical disabilities and learning needs persevered to operate a switch to turn on a cassette of number counting songs. Her sensory curriculum is very well matched to her learning needs whilst she also benefits socially by learning with her classmates.
69. Pupils with autism progress very quickly in their understanding of counting in tens to 100, and finding two digit numbers on the 100 square, because the teacher and assistant make very good use of the resources. They not only have a very well developed skills in teaching and supporting mathematics learning but also a very good understanding of the nature of each pupils' autism, so work is very well matched to their learning needs. A picture exchange system is also used very well for the pupils with autism. Throughout the school, pupils are helped very well through speech, signing, symbols and pictures to communicate their understanding of mathematics.
70. In Year 11, the highest attaining pupils reach GCSE standard. They were taking their examinations at the time of the inspection, with the prospect of grades up to Grade E. Pupils with more severe learning difficulties in Year 11 travelled on an imaginary journey to Japan to watch the World Cup football. They found out airline flight times, converted their currency into yen, and gained some understanding of the distances involved. They enjoyed learning through solving problems.
71. Assessment procedures are very thorough so that even the smallest steps in progress, through to GCSE standard for the highest attaining pupils, can be monitored and recorded. The co-ordinator has made very good use of assessments in mathematics to ensure that teachers plan for balanced coverage of each aspect of National Curriculum mathematics. There are some very informative annual reports where a pupil's gains in each area of mathematics are clearly explained to parents and where progress from year to year can be easily tracked. Annual reporting of this high quality is not consistent, however, across the department, and this is an area for development.
72. The department has made a good start in introducing the National Numeracy Strategy and teachers are successfully implementing the three-part lessons, consisting of whole class and individual or group work activities. Teachers of other subjects make good use of mathematics to support learning in their lessons. This is especially evident in life skills lessons for pupils with severe or profound and complex learning difficulties. In Year 11, for example, pupils consolidated counting, timing, and measuring when setting the table and preparing a snack of beans and sausage on toast, with a drink of orange squash. The department has still to complete a check of how mathematics is used across the curriculum, in order to ensure that teachers make the most of every opportunity.



## SCIENCE

73. The science provision is very good, resulting in pupils making very good progress and achieving very well. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

### Key strengths

- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils.
- They plan very well and challenge pupils through providing opportunities for them to investigate and find things out for themselves.
- Teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, so they all make very good progress and achieve very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not record gains in learning that pupils make during lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work does not include words of encouragement or advice.

74. In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about living things, materials and physical processes and are given many opportunities to explore scientific ideas for themselves. The co-ordinator's planning ensures that, each year, pupils build on what they learned the previous year. Those that are able, are given more and more responsibility for their own learning.

75. In their study of materials, younger pupils describe the qualities of a range of materials and sort them into groups while pupils with greater difficulties learn that materials have qualities such as softness by being given soft things to feel and to eat. In Year 8, they learn about hot and cold things and use thermometers to measure temperatures. They carry out experiments to discover how mixtures of materials can be separated. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils carry out many investigations themselves – such as finding out which materials wrapped around containers of warm water are best for keeping the water warm. The pupils learn that for the test to be fair they must use the same amount of water in each jar.

76. The teachers plan alternative activities for lower attaining pupils who are not able to investigate for themselves. These pupils are able to find out about the many qualities of materials through observing and touching a wide variety of materials in and out of the classrooms. Teachers and assistants make every effort to arouse pupils' awareness or to stimulate their interest. In their study of soft materials, a furry cloth stroked on a pupil's cheek stimulated a smile. In another lesson, about living things, the teacher brought in snails for the pupils to observe. When he explained that their eyes were on stalks, one pupil reached out for a magnifying glass, so demonstrating her interest.

77. Teachers clearly value what pupils have to say, and this encourages them – for example, to think hard or try to explain what they have observed. They ask the pupils what they think will happen and they listen seriously to their responses. They congratulate pupils for their efforts and for attempting answers to questions, which encourages greater response. For example, when studying flowers, a teacher pointing to the female part of a large lily, asked the class what it was. When a child described the female part of a flower as the 'mummy', the teacher told the pupil that that the answer showed that she had understood well, before asking her to suggest another name for it. In another lesson, pupils with autism were managed very well as they found out about floating and sinking, by experimenting with plasticine and foil boats. As

a result, a higher attaining pupil deduced which model boat was best, 'Your boat holds the best cargo because it holds twelve paper clips.'

78. At the end of Year 9, test results show that the majority of pupils have reached the standard required for them to begin the accredited Certificate of Achievement course. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the whole range of modules for this course. They are achieving very well and last year, ten pupils were successful in this examination. The standards that the present Year 10 pupils are achieving in lessons indicate that a few of them may be able to be entered for GCSE.
79. In their study of the solar system, the higher attaining Year 10 pupils display an admirable level of maturity in their ability to study. In one lesson, they worked in groups to discuss questions that the teacher had posed about the solar system. The teacher had also challenged them to make predictions about the distances of the planets from the sun. They listened to each other in an adult fashion and one pupil wrote down their suggestions. The pupils showed delight when the teacher informed them of their correct answers. In a later lesson, the pupils were required to use a variety of books to find information about the order of the planets and to produce a drawing with labels to show what they had found out. All of them achieved this objective, some being supported by the teacher and assistants, who encouraged the pupils to find out as much as they could for themselves. One pupil used the class computer. The pupils' achievement and interest level was high and a few were motivated to write more than they were asked. The teachers' high expectations and the way in which pupils' efforts are respected encourage the joy of learning. Pupils are given many opportunities to investigate. For example, through investigation, they have discovered the difference between series and parallel circuits, found out how an electromagnet works, building on earlier work on magnetism and they have calculated their own lung capacity during their study of the lungs.
80. At the end of each lesson, teachers conscientiously consider how well pupils have learned, but they do not record this information. Such records would provide data about each pupil's rate of progress and would serve to identify any gaps in his or her learning. Similarly, pupils' written work is discussed with them, but much of it remains unmarked. The addition of comments or stickers would celebrate the pupils' successes and offer encouragement. Written advice would help the pupils who read well and provide useful information for parents.
81. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject very well. He has produced a valuable programme of work and has established very good teamwork and teaching within the department, with the result that pupils' progress and attitudes are very good. In the two science rooms, storage and preparation space is inadequate.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

82. The whole of the provision is extremely good. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and they achieve particularly well. This represents very good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Key strengths**

- The art teacher sets very high standards and is highly skilled, imaginative and dedicated.
- The range of what is taught is exceptionally wide and includes an excellent range of three-dimensional work and work in the style of innumerable famous and lesser known artists.
- Very good use is made of artists and facilities from outside the school.

- The highest attaining Year 11 pupils are successful in GCSE examinations.

Area for improvement

- More computer-related art could be introduced.

83. Pupils increase their skills, knowledge and artistic appreciation in a progression that sees an extremely high level of achievement by the time pupils are in Year 9. By Year 11, pupils have developed very good skills using a very wide range of materials such as paints, inks, pencil, crayons, wax, clay, papier mache, glass decoration, textiles and embroidery. They undertake a wonderful amount of work in the styles of different artists. These include the most famous ones such as Lowry, Modigliani, Mondrian, Klee and Kandinsky. Pupils have also learned to work in the style of more unusual artists and sculptors. They produce sculpture outdoors in the style of Andy Goldsworthy, glass decoration like Rennie Mackintosh, dotted patterns such as Chris Ofili's, art nouveau drawings based on the work of Alphonse Mucha, painted plates inspired by Clarice Cliff, and more. The whole school is an exhibition of superb work by the pupils. The breadth and quality of three-dimensional work is extremely good, from miniature versions of the 'Angel of the North' to giant insects, ceramic fish and pop art masks. The range of different printing techniques, for example, includes lino prints, potatoes, compressed polystyrene, leaves (on cellophane, black paper and clay), sponges, string, and light sensitive paper and fabrics. Sketch books are used imaginatively for design and to practise work. Pupils love the lessons, and art, as more than just another subject. Most pupils take great care in their work and enormous pride in making the finished product as good as possible. The least able pupils are very well involved in the lessons. Although they cannot work without help, they take as active a part as they can, choosing materials and colours whenever possible, handling brushes, and moulding the clay, for example. Pupils with autism become increasingly independent and learn to make and communicate choices – for example, the colour of thread they intend to use. The most able pupils take full GCSE exams at the end of Year 11, and others take the Entry Level course, leading to the Certificate of Achievement. Their work is exceptionally good, thorough and imaginative.
84. The teaching is excellent. The planning and preparation for individual lessons is very clear and thorough. The teacher has excellent knowledge of the subject, is completely dedicated, and has very good relationships with the pupils, as well as very high expectations for their efforts and concentration. In one excellent lesson, for instance, a group of Year 10 pupils, with learning difficulties ranging from moderate to profound and multiple, made stencil pictures on panels of ceramic tiles, using sponges and special paints. They had designed their pictures in previous weeks, and chosen their colours carefully. The teacher's introduction and demonstration were very effective, reminding pupils about what they already knew and filling them with enthusiasm. They were amazed at the early results, and then delighted as they built up the different colours and textures across a series of tiles. The pictures of a butterfly, dragon, fish, dolphin and their own initials were exquisite. Towards the end of the lesson, pupils and staff were discussing the kind of wooden frame they would make for their panels, and how they would colour the frames. Occasionally, support staff can be too quick to help pupils, but not on this occasion.
85. This subject is led and managed extremely well. The co-ordinator and teacher is exceptionally well qualified and enthusiastic. She is undertaking a considerable amount of extra training in different aspects of the subject. The plans for what will be taught are extremely broad, imaginative, challenging, and sufficiently flexible to include subjects that are topical – such as Japanese paper-making, origami and painting during the World Cup. Very good use is made of outside people and places, including, for example, a visiting professional artist who showed a class how to make very

effective sculptures of clay fish during the inspection. There have been several other artists in school in recent years, and many visits to local art galleries that have inspired new work in school. The resources are very good, and the art room is a veritable treasure house of pupils' work, as well as books, posters and inspirational sculptures. There is even a lunchtime club, the 'Drawing Small Animals Club', run by a support assistant, and with some very well displayed work on the walls to prove it.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

86. The quality of provision, including the quality of teaching, is very good and has improved well since the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils now make very good progress and achieve very well.

### Key strengths

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress, especially in developing their skills in designing and making.
- There are very good opportunities for the oldest pupils to achieve accreditation in resistant materials and food technology.
- Relationships are excellent and pupils are keen to learn and willing to co-operate with each other to improve their skills.
- The very good expertise of the specialist resistant materials and food technology teachers ensures that pupils receive expert guidance to realise the very high expectations for them to learn.
- A small number of pupils receive lessons in mainstream schools, achieving higher accreditation and gaining in social skills.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers to help them learn.
- On a small number of occasions, in resistant materials technology, higher attaining pupils need additional tasks to provide them with more challenge.

87. Pupils of all abilities, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and physical disabilities, achieve very well and make very good progress. This is because teachers have very good expertise and plan very effectively for pupils to achieve the challenging work provided for them. Pupils throughout the school enjoy the opportunity to work in well-equipped specialist rooms. A significant strength in all lessons is the way that teachers consistently ensure that pupils develop their own designs and influence the outcomes of their work. Similarly, they learn that it is important to evaluate their completed work to determine if they have succeeded in their intentions. For instance, pupils in Year 7 considered the designs for their plastic key rings, modifying them as they made decisions about the shape and thought about making them more interesting with the use of bending apparatus. In food technology, they made very good progress in understanding how they can alter a basic recipe, by choosing to add other ingredients, making, for instance, cranberry or banana muffins. Pupils evaluated their work very well, deciding which muffins were the most successful.

88. There are consistently good opportunities for pupils to practise their reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills in lessons. Teachers plan very well to ensure that pupils learn the important words associated with the lesson. They write the words on the whiteboard at the start and refer to them during the course of the lesson. In this way, pupils incorporate the words into their everyday vocabulary and this helps them to explain their work – for instance, to name the tools or equipment they are using. However, the opportunities for promoting literacy in lessons are not always fully

exploited. For instance, in a lesson for pupils in Year 9, the higher attaining pupils could have had more challenging worksheets than other class members, in order to expand their literacy skills further in reading and recording their work on structures.

89. Teachers plan lessons very effectively to ensure that all pupils make equally good progress. This was very successful in a resistant materials lesson, with a group of lower attaining pupils, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The teacher had chosen the task particularly well – making bowls out of glued paper shapes. Progress was very good, because the teacher and support staff ensured that they made their own choices of design and created their products with as little help as possible. Similarly, lower attaining pupils in Year 11 chose flags from different countries from the display on the computer screen. They joined the printed-out flags to sticks to cheer on teams in the World Cup. Planning is also very effective for autistic pupils in Years 7 and 8. For instance, in one lesson, they designed and made pizzas. As with most lessons in design and technology, the teacher made the most of opportunities to promote pupils' numeracy skills. This was most impressive in deepening pupils' understanding that the pizza topping was symmetrical and they developed greater understanding of fractions as they shared their finished product.
90. Pupils achieve very well in accredited work by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils study for the Certificate of Achievement in resistant materials technology and food technology. They have created a very good range of products in the workshop. Their boxes and electric clocks demonstrate a wide range of individual design. The teachers' very high expectations encourage pupils to try very hard. It is clear that pupils are considering important factors when designing – for instance, they are aware that they need to bear in mind the cost of their clocks. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 11 had already completed their work for accreditation. However, they continued to make very good progress in a series of lessons to study food from other countries. In one lesson, they bought ingredients and co-operated very effectively to prepare a Chinese banquet. Lower attaining pupils achieve very well in the City and Guilds preliminary catering accreditation. This provides very good opportunities for them to learn skills that will help them to be more independent. A small number of the higher attaining pupils benefit very well from the opportunity to receive a few lessons in mainstream schools. During the inspection, two pupils in Year 11 attended a local high school to join a GCSE class, creating designs for food packaging. A learning support assistant provided very effective support, so that they contributed to the lesson – for example, suggesting that packaging for soft margarine should be capable of refrigeration.
91. The subject is led very well and this has ensured that there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. This is particularly the case with the very good range of accreditation for pupils and the gradual improvement in the food technology accommodation. Although teachers have a small amount of computer equipment, they are keen to increase the resources. For instance, the computer in the workshop does not have a colour printer. Similarly, teachers would benefit from better equipment for producing photographic evidence of pupils' work in order to provide evidence of what they have achieved.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

92. The provision, including the quality of teaching, is good. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They do well in discrete geography lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in the geography component of the humanities course in Years 10 and 11. The good progress identified during the previous inspection has been sustained, while there has been satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching.

### Key strengths

- Teachers effectively link previous work to new learning. For example, pupils' knowledge of the local environment is used effectively as a foundation for extending their learning about other parts of the British Isles and the world.
- Work is challenging and well matched to the pupils' different learning styles and special educational needs.

### Area for improvement

- There is a need for a system to enable teachers to record pupils' achievements and provide reports to parents that have sufficient detail about how well their children are developing geographical knowledge, skills and understanding.

93. During Years 7, 8, and 9, pupils build on their previous learning as they develop their knowledge of the immediate locality. They improve their understanding of the geography of the British Isles as, for example, they study transport systems and distinguish between the demands of industry and farming. Previous simple work on maps is extended to the use of maps for different purposes – such as for recording the weather or plotting motorway routes – and their work on local weather is developed into an understanding of the difference between weather and climate. Their awareness of different world climates is effectively linked to life in different countries such as Brazil and the Arctic, with work on the former providing a good basis for considering sustainable resources and man's effect upon the planet. Pupils enjoy geography and, because of the interesting activities undertaken, they work with effort and concentration. Good questioning and prompting helped pupils in Year 7 with severe learning difficulties to identify entertainments found in a sea side tourist resort – Blackpool – while the higher attaining Year 8 pupils responded very well to the teacher's introduction to manufacturing when he had them produce a simple paper aeroplane. Their motivation led to a very good discussion, during which they tracked the development of a seed through to the flour mill and subsequently to the bread in a sandwich. Making a sandwich using other manufactured products – tins of sardines – added another enjoyable dimension to the lesson. Pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties in Year 9 listened with rapt attention to the teacher's dramatic reading from the big book, 'Rain and Us'. They enjoyed identifying photographs of old and new buildings in Bury as part of their combined geography and history work to produce a tourist guide. Higher attainers of the same age responded with some wonder to the teacher's use of books to show how earthquakes take place. This work was linked effectively to their study of Japan, as they read letters from the survivors of the Kobe earthquake. The well-targeted help provided by the teacher and support assistant enabled all to respond successfully to the questions and produce a good record of what they had learned.
94. During Years 10 and 11, pupils extend their knowledge of their immediate locality to a better understanding of how Bury relates to Greater Manchester and to other major cities in the British Isles. Higher attaining pupils have their work accredited through the Certificate of Achievement. Their early map skills are developed into a more accurate use of compass points and they identify that a location is north-east or south-west of Bury or another given point. Lower attaining pupils enjoy making a booklet about the weather, in which they identify different types of weather, such as fog, rain and snow, and recognise the weather map symbols that represent these conditions. Visits to such places as the Bury Country Park provide pupils with opportunities to re-visit earlier work on rivers, valleys and their use in industry. Higher attainers enjoyed responding to the teacher's very careful questioning and prompts about who needs to know about

the wind, identifying such people as farmers and pilots. The teacher introduced the Beaufort Scale, using a carefully selected video and subsequent question sheet – ‘Why does smoke from a chimney go straight up?’ and ‘Could we wind-sail if it were calm? Their answers showed that pupils had begun to grasp the principles behind the scale and had worked with very good effort and significant concentration.

95. The subject is well led by the recently appointed co-ordinator. She has a clear view about how she wishes the subject to develop and has already started to modify the programme of work in order that it more accurately reflects national guidelines and incorporates new approaches to teaching of some of the units. The co-ordinator recognises that this review provides a much needed opportunity to make sure that units of work have clearly identified outcomes. These will help teachers to record accurately pupils’ achievements and to provide more detailed information when reporting to parents. Despite the subject being well resourced, the co-ordinator has identified the need for a more powerful computer in order that more varied reference materials can be made available to the pupils.

## HISTORY

96. The provision, including the quality of teaching, ranges from very good to satisfactory, but is good overall. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well.

### Key strengths

- Pupils make good progress within lessons and higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successful in an accredited course.
- The programme of work is clear and helpful to teachers.
- The best lessons bring the subject alive and provide good opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities.

### Areas for improvement

- There are not enough learning resources.
- More useful methods for checking how well pupils are learning and recording their achievement need to be established.

97. The programme of work for history provides a good basis for non-specialist staff to teach good quality lessons. The co-ordinator works with staff to ensure topics are matched well to the needs of all pupils and to support and give ideas for suitable activities. Where lessons are very good, as in a Year 8 lesson for higher attaining pupils on the Black Death, teachers use imaginative approaches. In this case, the teacher used a dramatic introduction to the lesson, feigning illness and asking pupils if he looked unwell. He revealed black spots on his arms with red rings around each, indicating that he had the plague! The introduction captivated, enthused, entertained and stimulated the pupils. The teacher then revealed a covered tennis ball simulating a ‘boil’, and pupils began to appreciate the severity of the illness. They were gathered in one area of the classroom and pretended to be a village community. Three pupils (and the support assistant) were told that they had the plague and had to leave the village. The impact of the plague on local communities was immediately apparent to the pupils, and the lesson concluded with a boy walking up and down the classroom calling out ‘Bring out your dead!’ Progress was very good within the lesson. In a Year 7 class of higher attaining pupils, they studied the Roman gods and selected a god that they would like to help them with their daily lives; one pupil chose a ‘God of Homework’ to help him. Pupils began to make a tombstone to commemorate a Roman person, with an inscription to their chosen god. They learned that words are spaced with triangles and circles and the male and female ending of Roman names.

The use of a video and a textbook helped to ensure that pupils remained engaged in the lesson. The teacher showed good subject knowledge and encouraged them to use the Roman version of their own names on their work.

98. At the end of Year 9, pupils are assessed and given a National Curriculum level, which helps teachers to decide which pupils will follow the accredited course in Years 10 and 11. They are aware of how well pupils are learning, but do not consistently record their judgements.
99. Within Years 10 and 11, the higher attaining pupils follow an accredited humanities Certificate of Achievement course. They make good progress and it is anticipated that the current entries will match previous years' successes. The co-ordinator is investigating accreditation opportunities for the lower attaining pupils to ensure due recognition is given to these pupils for the work they undertake. During the inspection, a mixed class of Year 11 pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties split into two groups. One discussed and prepared a wall display of the life and times of Robert Peel and the other compared the town and lifestyles of the people of Bury with the life experiences of those people in the area in the past. Pupils showed good observational skills and offered suggestions for the poor clothing and appearance of the workers in the photographs and related it appropriately to working conditions, low wages and lack of health care. The pupils made satisfactory progress within the lesson, but could have consolidated their knowledge further with less teacher input and more opportunities for them to be involved in the discussion.
100. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and committed to the development of the subject and she leads and manages it well. Although assessment opportunities are identified in the programme of work, there is insufficient guidance on recording pupils' achievements. The activities and suggestions provided offer scope to include all pupils, both higher and lower attaining pupils as well as those with autism. There is an insufficient range of artefacts and resource materials and an over reliance on commercially produced worksheets. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. There is still a need to increase the range of resources available and the reliance on worksheets remains. However, the introduction of the accredited course for the higher attaining pupils has brought more rigour into the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

101. The provision, including the quality of teaching, is very good overall. As a result, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well during lessons and over time.

### **Key strengths**

- Lessons are very well planned, have clear learning outcomes and are matched very well to pupils' levels of attainment.
- Teachers have good levels of knowledge and expertise and have high expectations for pupils to achieve.
- Pupils make very good progress by learning new skills and consolidating those previously learned.
- Resources are good in the information and communication technology suite.

### **Areas for improvement**

- In a number of other subjects, insufficient use is made of computers to support pupils' learning.



- The range of accreditation available for the higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 should be extended.
- Not enough computers are available in classrooms other than the specialist room.

102. Within Years 7 to 9, pupils follow carefully planned programmes of work, building and enhancing their skills in using computers and other equipment. For example, in a Year 8 lesson for lower attaining pupils, the teacher introduced the concept of control by asking the pupils to follow her instructions, to stand up, sit down, and turn around. She then explained how to control a cassette player, by giving it instructions to follow, making the link between how the pupils had followed instructions and how they controlled the cassette recorder, using the play, stop or eject buttons. There was a strong link to numeracy in ensuring pupils recognised the square and triangular shape of the marked buttons and then matched them to a pre-prepared set of cards with the respective shapes on them. As a result of this careful planning, pupils made good progress and were able to match the shapes and identify the correct buttons on the cassette player and load and play the cassette tape. In a very good lesson, with higher attaining pupils of the same age, a good variety of work was presented as they were entering data into a spreadsheet program, with an extension activity for the most able pupils. The majority entered single items and amounts in a shopping list, whilst one pupil moved on to entering a formula to calculate the cumulative cost of the shopping. All pupils worked with a strong sense of commitment and interest and were ably supported by the teacher and support member of staff. The portfolio of pupils' work indicated the wide range of experiences they had had in completing their projects. A project on motorbikes had involved one pupil collecting data from the Internet, downloading and printing a selection of motorcycles and then using the information as the basis for producing a bar chart of the favourite motorcycles of the pupils in the class. The ensuing chart was printed and provided a good example of how the pupil was using and handling data.

103. In Years 10 and 11, the higher attaining pupils follow an accredited course leading to a Certificate of Achievement. They are committed, enthusiastic and show good levels of independence and skill. The routines of the specialist room are well known to pupils. They use the resources without fuss, so the most is made of the time available for learning. The effective use of questioning by the teacher during the introductory part of a Year 10 lesson confirmed the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the activities they were about to undertake. They could describe and give verbal instructions as to where the appropriate command could be found to save their work; 'Go to *file* and click on *save as*.' Good account was taken of pupils' particular needs. For example, a physically disabled pupil used a large tracker ball instead of a mouse to control the on screen cursor and was seated at an adjustable height trolley to ensure maximum access was provided. During a Year 11 lesson, higher attaining pupils were working on their projects on comparing life in Bury with that in Japan. The lesson focused on word processing and pupils showed their knowledge and understanding when responding to the teacher's questions: 'How do you right / left justify or centre text?' They could explain verbally how to achieve these tasks and suggest how they could vary their work by using different font styles, changing the size of the text and entering pictures into their sheet. The well structured programme of work and teaching of the subject ensures previous learning is recapped and built upon in a methodical and systematic manner. Pupils show great confidence and competence in undertaking their work and produce very creditable outcomes. Currently, the highest level accreditation available to pupils is a Distinction in the Certificate of Achievement. Consideration should be given to extending the range of opportunities available to the most able pupils, to ensure they receive appropriate levels of recognition.

104. Leadership and management are very good and the subject has developed well since the previous inspection. The policy has been revised, the programme of work and the assessments and monitoring strategies are effective in supporting other colleagues and measuring pupils' achievements. The co-ordinator recently organised and ran a training day for staff and she supports and encourages colleagues throughout the week. In turn, she is well supported by a technician for two days per week. He ensures that equipment is operational and acts in a supportive manner to staff. No risk assessment has been conducted of the information and communication technology room to ensure pupils' access to the computers meets with appropriate health and safety regulations.
105. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is developing with the increasing amount of equipment available. However, teachers in other subjects do not always make effective use of the computers currently available within classrooms. Very good use is made of technological aids to support pupils with physical or communication difficulties in accessing the curriculum. For example, they use 'talkers', touch screens, switches and touch pads.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

106. The provision for modern foreign language is good. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. There are difficulties recruiting a subject co-ordinator for French, and the subject is currently taught well by a temporary team.

#### Key strengths

- Girls and boys enjoy learning French and this very positive response helps them acquire a good basic vocabulary.
- There are very strong links with schools in France and Germany.
- The provision makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural and social development.
- The temporary, non-specialist, teaching team for French has a strong commitment to maintaining standards until a subject co-ordinator can be appointed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Formal assessment and recording of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient information about pupils' knowledge and skills in reports to parents.
- The use of computers in lessons requires further development.

107. Girls and boys in Years 7 to 9 make good progress learning the French vocabulary for simple greetings, parts of the body, clothes, animals, and objects in school, home and supermarket. They learn to sing number songs. Pupils persevere to say 'Tres bien' in response to 'Ca va?' They understand simple greetings like 'Bonjour'. The higher attaining Year 7 pupils can say phrases like 'J'habite Bury', 'Je m'appelle .....', 'Il est sept heures dix'. Year 8 pupils extend their vocabulary and understanding of French and are beginning to learn about French landmarks and customs. Those with severe learning difficulties enjoy singing about the parts of the body. They understand the new vocabulary quicker than they can speak the words. Gradually, they overcome their shyness to speak, as well as point to, the different parts of the body when they hear the teacher call out the names. Higher attaining pupils with physical disabilities and communication difficulties are fully involved in French lessons. With the good support they receive they make good progress. A Year 7 boy with autism is making good progress learning French by joining another Year 7 class for his French lessons.

This arrangement is very good for his social development as well as the opportunity it provides to learn a modern foreign language.

108. Girls and boys continue to enjoy learning French and make good progress during Years 10 and 11. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. This year, for the first time, the higher attaining pupils are beginning to access work for the Certificate of Achievement. They conduct a survey in French – 'Quelle sorte de musique aime tu?' – and record the results in a column graph. They distinguish between 'J'aime' and 'Je n'aime pas'. They use these phrases to express preferences for different television programmes. Pupils with severe learning difficulties attempt to learn simple directions – 'droite' and 'gauche'. They practise counting to ten, and know the French names of some foods and colours. Pupils with the most profound and complex learning difficulties are attentive in lessons and enjoy hearing songs, choosing drinks and responding to sensory stimuli. They can sign in response to the greeting 'Bonjour'.
109. The temporary co-ordinator has planned the curriculum thoroughly for this term. During the inspection week, a small number of pupils benefited from very good temporary teaching conducted entirely in French. The majority of pupils, however, are taught by a temporary team of non-specialists. Teachers do not always make the best use of the skills of the French assistant. Although staff have good informal knowledge of how well pupils are learning French, the formal arrangements for assessing and recording their progress are unsatisfactory. There is little information in annual reports to parents about the knowledge and skills that pupils have gained in French during the year. Computers are not used sufficiently in lessons. This is an area for continuing development. Older pupils have very good opportunities to visit France and develop their awareness of the language and culture. The subject makes a very good contribution to their cultural and social development.

## **MUSIC**

110. The provision, including the quality of teaching is very good. As a result, pupils make very good progress in lessons and over time.

### **Key strengths**

- Pupils make very good progress as a result of teaching that is often excellent.
- Whatever their ability, pupils respond positively and enthusiastically to music.
- Lessons are very well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Outside lessons, excellent activities are offered to pupils.

### **Areas for improvement**

- More use could be made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.
- The current procedures do not enable the progress made by the lowest attaining pupils to be measured accurately.
- No external accreditation is offered to higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.

111. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of the pupils in music lessons is as a result of very good teaching and a commitment by the music co-ordinator, who ensures that music plays an important part in the life of the school. The subject has developed well since the previous inspection. The teacher has a very good awareness of how best to involve all pupils in lessons. For example, in an excellent lesson, pupils with autism participated fully in the welcoming song for the group, with one pupil, who is reluctant to vocalise, singing and identifying the next pupil to be welcomed. They were then

given responsibility for selecting instruments and joining in the next song. The very high expectations of the teacher and appropriately pitched lesson content enabled pupils to learn extremely well. In a class of lower attaining Year 7 pupils, the teacher sang a 'welcome' song to the pupils and encouraged them to strum the guitar as she changed the chords. A pupil with communication difficulties used his 'talker' to select the next pupil to be sung to, and another pupil, with a physical disability, beat a tambourine in time to the music. In another lesson, higher attaining Year 9 pupils made very good use of musical vocabulary, using the terms 'flat' and 'sharp' when locating notes on a keyboard. The lesson was carefully structured and formed part of a series of lessons leading towards the pupils playing simple tunes independently. The progress of these higher attaining pupils is measured and recorded more accurately. Their skills and achievements are recognised through pupil portfolios and checklists of skills acquired. However, further attention needs to be given to ensuring the small steps of progress made by lower attaining pupils are fully recognised.

112. In a very challenging Year 10 lesson, higher attaining pupils created a soundtrack of special effects to accompany a cartoon using a range of musical instruments and a keyboard. They watched the video without any sound and selected instruments to suit the effect on screen. The teacher explained the difference between soft and hard sounds and assigned one pupil to notate the score, using symbols to represent hard and soft sounds. The pupils showed a good sense of timing and anticipation and were able to sustain a very good level of concentration. Each took turns to notate the 'score' that accompanied the group's efforts for that lesson. They showed very good knowledge and understanding of the task and made very good progress within the lesson, selecting and playing the appropriate instruments. However, pupils' work is not externally accredited. In another Year 10 lesson, pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties were given the opportunity to act as conductor and use a baton to orchestrate the group. They know, understand and use the correct terminology and were actively engaged in composing their own score. Lower attaining pupils were fully engaged and responded appropriately to the commands of the conductor – for example, playing instruments to correspond with particular symbols.
113. There is a very good range of resources, including guitars, keyboards and a range of wood blocks, bells and xylophones. This indicates a significant improvement since the last inspection. The specialist music room provides a very good base from which to teach music and full use is made of it by the co-ordinator. There remains, however, a lack of information and communication technology equipment within the music room.
114. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and there is a clear commitment to the promotion of music within lessons and throughout the school. The programme of work builds systematically on the skills and knowledge acquired as pupils move through the school. The co-ordinator has very high expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour and pupils respond very well to these. Her commitment to the development of the music curriculum and the promotion of music within the school sees her involved in a range of extra curricular activities including running a lunchtime music club and taking a leading role in organising the school musical productions. The lunchtime music club involves pupils of all ages and abilities and is well attended. The club is used as part of the school's preparations for its musical productions. The recent performance of the 'Sound of Music' was a very good example of how music plays a significant and important part in the life of the school providing excellent opportunities for social and cultural development and building self-confidence and self-esteem.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Pupils' achievements are very good and they make very good progress in lessons. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in the provision overall and in particular in the quality of teaching – both are now very good.

### Key strengths

- Lessons are consistently very well planned.
- The methods and organisation that teachers and support staff employ ensure that all pupils, including those with significant physical disabilities, are fully involved and have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Collaborative working between teaching and support staff is of a very high standard.
- The very wide range of relevant qualifications that teaching and support staff possess ensures that pupils receive very high quality instruction and guidance when taking part in a wide range of activities.

### Areas for improvement

- In order to provide parents with sufficient detailed information about progress in team games – such as football, cricket and basketball – there is a need to create a recording and assessment system which is comparable to the very good systems that are in place for other activities.
- Drainage and access problems associated with the playing field prevent the fullest use being made of this very good on-site facility.

116. During Years 7, 8, and 9, pupils make very good progress as they take part in the six key areas of the school's programme of work. Developing running, jumping and throwing skills contributes to their abilities in athletics. In the sports hall, Year 9 pupils responded very well to their first lesson on sprint start positions and they listened very attentively to the teacher's clear instructions about the use of the changing rooms and safety procedures associated with the new venue. Improvement in gesture, travel, balance and the creation of pathways enhances their development in dance and improving ball handling, dribbling and passing skills help them to make progress and enjoy basketball and football. In addition, carefully developed activities to improve their striking, throwing and catching skills contribute to their progress when playing rounders and cricket. Very good progress is made in gymnastics as pupils also use skills developed in dance to improve their locomotion, weight transfer and to create sequences while working independently or in pairs. Very good use is made of the school's hydrotherapy pool and a local swimming pool to promote their progress in swimming. Pupils with significant physical and learning difficulties make clear gains during their sessions in the pool and work with effort and enjoyment. The wonder and satisfaction shown by one pupil on swimming across the hydrotherapy pool for the first time confirmed that she knew that she had made progress. A local park is effectively used to develop orienteering skills and local rock outcrops are used to promote climbing skills.

117. During Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make very good progress. In particular, they improve their ability to take full part in team games and off-site competitions. The school football team is a successful member of a local league and has taken part in tournaments. In addition, some of the pupils compete in swimming galas and the school is planning to take part in the Manchester Youth Games. As they make progress through the school, higher attaining pupils' abilities are recognised through awards such as a Certificate of Achievement in physical education. They also gain externally accredited awards in skills like gymnastics, trampolining and swimming and a range of internally developed awards for their work in rebound therapy, hydrotherapy

and rock climbing. Teachers and support staff are very well qualified, ensuring that pupils always receive very expert instruction and guidance.

118. Because of very well planned lessons and the specialist teacher's high expectations, pupils' achievements in dance have now developed to a high standard. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate this clearly as they work with significant effort and perform at levels that approach those seen in mainstream schools. Such was the enthusiasm generated in them by their teacher that they carried on practising even when allowed a break. The same degree of effort and commitment was seen in a circuit-training lesson. Pupils listened carefully to the teacher's clear reminders about the role of warm-up activities and showed that they could work independently in a responsible manner. The teacher and support staff's constant praise and encouragement ensured that all felt pleased with their achievement and this motivated them to work harder. This was particularly well demonstrated by a girl who, despite her physical disability, carried on with her pushing exercise after support staff help had finished. This lesson, as well as the very well organised 'yogacise' lesson, demonstrated clearly how staff make sure that every pupil, irrespective of learning or physical difficulty, is provided with the fullest opportunity to take part and achieve success. During trampolining, pupils showed that they understood the safety demands of the activity, as they demonstrated that they could wait and watch with patience and appreciation while others performed – spontaneously clapping when pupils performed particularly well. This activity provided a very good example of how much of what is done in physical education lessons contributes to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
119. The subject is very well led. An enthusiastic co-ordinator is ably supported by other teachers and learning support staff with the quality of their collaborative working being of the highest standard. A well considered policy and programme of work reflect National Curriculum guidelines and the aims of the school and is translated into practice through the provision of a rich and varied programme of activities, including lunchtime clubs for football, swimming, trampolining and basket ball. The wide range of activities provided and the organisation of the subject within the school have recently been recognised through the Sportsmark Gold award – an excellent achievement. Ongoing assessment during lessons is good, as demonstrated by the carefully targeted individual help that pupils receive and the careful grouping that takes place, but there is a need to create a system for recording and assessing progress in games. The very good system for such activities as trampolining, hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, swimming, dance and yogacise will serve as a good model for this development. Overall, the resourcing of the subject is good both in quality and quantity. However, as identified in the previous inspection, the lack of an appropriate drainage system for the school playing field and access to it for wheelchairs, means that it cannot be used by all pupils or as often as it should be.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

120. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well throughout the school. The quality of teaching is nearly always very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching and learning were good.

### **Key strengths**

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in learning about world faiths.
- They have good opportunities to gain accreditation by the end of Year 11.
- Lessons are very interesting and encourage pupils to learn and develop very good attitudes to the subject.

- The subject makes a very important contribution to promoting pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development.

#### Areas for improvement

- In a minority of lessons, teachers could plan the written tasks for pupils more effectively to match each pupil's needs, particularly higher attaining pupils.
- Pupils could use computers more to research information or to complete written work to enhance their learning further.

121. Pupils make good progress and achieve very well. There is usually very good planning to match the tasks to their ability, including those who have additional special educational needs, such as autism. This ensures that all pupils make equally good progress. Planning is very good for pupils to learn about Christianity and a good range of other world faiths. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make very good progress learning about the artefacts in churches and dates that are special to Christians. Teachers ensure that they have good opportunities to understand, through visits to churches and by Christians explaining aspects of their life – for instance, what happens during a service. In a lesson for pupils in Year 8 with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, there was a good link between the story of the Creation and modern life. Through watching a video and discussion, pupils understood that they had stewardship of the world and that it was important to act responsibly by conserving resources and recycling. Pupils develop a very good awareness of other faiths. Lower attaining pupils, including those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, play a full part in lessons because teachers plan the work very well to meet their needs. For instance, they dress in costumes, in order to understand more about what it means to be a Hindu.
122. The teacher plans very well for the class of pupils who have autism. During the inspection, they learned about Buddhism. They remembered important facts about the faith – for example, that red, yellow and orange are important colours. The teacher employed very effective methods to reinforce frequently the main points by checking, for instance, that pupils know the sign for Buddhism and how to position their hands when meditating.
123. Lessons include very effective guidance for pupils about how they should behave in society. In Year 9 for instance, pupils make very good progress in understanding that there are people who are able to provide them with support. They appreciate that some people value the support that they receive from members of their faith. Through skilled intervention from the teacher, they learned how their own actions can affect other people and how they can resolve differences. Because relationships are so good, pupils feel comfortable to express their feelings and opinions.
124. Higher attaining pupils follow an accredited course for the Certificate of Achievement and achieve very well at the end of Year 11. They demonstrate that they have made very good progress learning about Christianity over their time in school. The teacher is very skilled in planning lessons to provide plenty of reinforcement. Her very high level of expertise enabled the teacher to ensure pupils understand the main features of faiths such as Buddhism. She is able to describe interesting anecdotes about personal experiences – for example, meeting people from different faiths. These motivate pupils very well and contribute significantly to their enjoyment of lessons and their success in the subject.
125. A very good feature is the way that teachers ensure that they introduce important words at the start of the lesson and provide pupils with the necessary practice in using them. This ensures that pupils learn for instance, to describe what they will find when

they visit the local church. Pupils usually record their work suitably, although there is occasionally a missed opportunity to provide different written tasks for pupils' varying attainment. For instance, in a lesson for pupils in Year 8, they filled in the same missing words in sentences about the Christian church, so higher attaining pupils did not have additional challenge.

126. The co-ordinator manages the subject very well. Although teachers strive to provide good resources for lessons, overall the provision for resources is simply satisfactory. The co-ordinator intends to improve resources, particularly to provide more opportunities for pupils to use computers for research and for recording their work. Pupils learn to respect other people and their customs and opinions, and understand basic information about a range of faiths. This helps to prepare them very well for life in a multicultural society.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

127. This area of the school's work is very good. It is divided into a variety of subjects including personal, social and citizenship education, health education and life skills education. These three subjects are provided for all pupils and in Years 9, 10 and 11, pupils also have careers education. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well.

### Key strengths

- All aspects of the subject are taught systematically and certain aspects are repeated at intervals to match pupils' stages of development.
- Very good teaching by committed teachers and assistants gives pupils every opportunity to enhance their personal development and to acquire the skills that will help make them good citizens.

### Area for improvement

- Teachers need to record pupils' achievements in order to provide accurate information about their progress and to identify gaps in their learning.

128. In health education and life skills education lessons, pupils learn how to keep clean, healthy and safe and the very good standard of teaching ensures that they make very good progress. In a Year 8 class, pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties learned how to wash their hair, while one pupil learned how to make a healthy drink. Their teacher patiently explained the processes, using pictures and words to reinforce the stages involved. She encouraged the pupils who were physically unable to take part to observe and to enjoy the experiences of the other pupils, by inviting them to smell the shampoo, touch the hair of the pupil whose hair was washed and to taste the snack. She helped those with speech difficulties to contribute to the discussions by showing them the correct picture and word. By the end of the lesson, some pupils' responses to a picture sequencing task showed that they had learned the skill of washing hair and knew that fruit juice is a healthy drink. Other pupils had responded with pleasure to the experience.
129. Keeping safe is an important element of the health education programme. While on visits, teachers remind pupils of the road safety rules they had learned earlier. Pupils are made aware of their rights and that if they have concerns they should tell someone. They are advised about whom they should speak to – for example, if they think they are being bullied.
130. Older pupils learn about different types of families and relationships and appropriate behaviour. They begin to understand about how hard it is to resist pressure from



others – for example, to smoke or drink. Very good relationships with staff mean that they are willing to share their experiences and discuss sensitive issues. In sex education lessons, pupils learn about privacy, choices and safe sex.

131. Citizenship lessons help the pupils to become aware of other cultures and that they live in a multicultural society. In one lesson, Year 7 pupils were introduced to the idea of multicultural Britain, by sampling bread from other countries. The teacher used the bread and the pupils' prior knowledge of flags as a stimulus for discussion about people of other cultures who live in Britain. In another lesson, the pupils learned about Italian culture through experiencing it. The teacher had prepared an Italian meal that was shared with the pupils and assistants. They listened to an Italian opera and talked excitedly about food, opera, the Italian language, Italian football and about their previous learning about Italy. Pupils made very rapid gains in knowledge and understanding, as a result of this extremely well planned and stimulating lesson.
132. Careers education involves preparing pupils for the world of work through providing the pupils with work experience, taking them on visits to various places of work and teaching them work-related skills. For example, during a Year 9 careers lesson, the teacher introduced pupils to a wide variety of jobs through a game of matching 'soap' stars to their jobs. The topic helped maintain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm, and they developed their awareness that some people travel to work and others work in their local community.
133. The whole personal, social and citizenship and health and careers programme provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' personal development and prepares them very well for their lives outside school.

## **POST-SIXTEEN EDUCATION**

134. The provision for students over the age of sixteen is very good. Because of very good teaching and the excellent relationships that exist between students and staff, students enjoy coming to school, and make very good progress and achieve very well. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the quality of the provision was more variable.

### **Key strengths**

- Students achieve very well, particularly in developing key skills and skills for independent living.
- The curriculum is very relevant and very effectively prepares students for a future life that may include work, leisure and further education.
- Teaching very effectively reflects the students' different rates and styles of learning.
- The excellent relationships between students and staff contribute significantly to their learning and to their personal and social development.

### **Area for improvement**

- The department lacks a common room that reflects students' growing maturity and status as young adults.
- The school has been unable to locate suitable college courses for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

135. In varying degrees, all courses provide students with very good opportunities to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. In addition, discrete English lessons are carefully woven into the curriculum when there is a need to teach specific skills, such as those required in letter writing, form filling, using the telephone

or discussing current affairs. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are carefully helped to recognise basic symbols, such as those for their daily timetable, while those with particularly severe learning difficulties read single words or labels on food tins and packages. Teachers make greater demands of higher attainers, who read simple recipes when preparing food or instructions when making items as part of their mini-enterprise or Young Enterprise work. Higher attainers have progressed to being able to write short sentences – for example, when recording what they have done over the weekend. The need for good handwriting was effectively built into a preparation for shopping lesson, with students appreciating with some humour the problems that can be caused by arriving at the shop with an illegible list.

136. The formal lessons and incidental use of English in other curricular areas combine to make a significant contribution to the students' achievements. Teachers and support staff constantly and effectively promote their communication skills. For example, the independent travel programme and visits to off-site venues, such as supermarkets, libraries and leisure centres, make significant demands on their skills as they read symbols, signs and short sentences. Students achieve very well in English because teachers are very successful in providing a very carefully balanced programme of opportunities to gain skills and practise and apply them.
137. Students' number skills are also promoted through a very well balanced programme which includes lessons for learning key number skills and opportunities to use these skills in other subjects and in real life situations. During lessons for accreditation of number skills, students learn how to recognise and handle money and know which measurements to use when weighing. They are improving in their ability to measure height or length. Teachers make sure that the number elements of life-skills modules involving food preparation are appropriately stressed. When students are going to buy food for a healthy snack, they are carefully led to make judgements about possible costs and are equally carefully helped to check actual costs on their return from the shop. The very successful Eden Project, which led to making and selling aromatherapy products, increased their understanding of the role of banks and helped them to have a basic understanding of profit and loss. Carefully organised visits to local shops, supermarkets and snack venues are also effectively used to promote the use of money, as do mini-enterprise activities, such as making and selling muffins.
138. Tasks in lessons are always very practical – such as when students were carefully led to understand the need for standardised measurements. Carefully targeted questions and good prompting by the teacher helped them identify where they would find weighing machines in the home – kitchen and bathroom – and they enjoyed weighing and recording their weights on a well prepared record sheet. Higher attainers responded successfully to the challenge of estimating who was the heaviest and lightest person in the class and the significant majority of the group knew that a trundle wheel measured distance. A pre-shopping lesson equally had a strong practical element because individual students had to make judgements about how much their purchases would cost and had to select the correct amount of money to take with them. Through effective teaching, students are well prepared for the demands that will be made of their number skills after they leave school.
139. As part of the very well balanced curriculum, students have opportunities to work at a wide variety of activities. In science, they make progress in their understanding of the need to re-cycle material and show wonder at the variety of life forms in the school pond. A very well planned food technology lesson involving making strawberry tarts not only helped students acquire higher level food preparation skills but also provided them with an opportunity to evaluate their own work and to identify the differences, including cost, between commercially produced and home made items. Very good

planning made sure that students with profound and multiple learning difficulties were fully involved in the lesson – for instance they were helped to switch on the food processor and touch, smell and taste the food. In art, students enjoy looking at the work of famous artists and responded particularly well to the very effective lesson about the work of Mark Rothko, when they choose bands of colours that went with different scents. Students also have opportunities to participate in a wide range of physical activities with those with the most complex learning difficulties achieving particularly well because of intensive support that they receive. The excellent lesson during which they explored ‘Galaxies’ through the use of a parachute and foam rubber, demonstrated this very clearly, while a circuit training session demonstrated that more mobile students try very hard when working independently – for example, when on the ski trainer, jogging or toe touching.

140. A combined religious education lesson and opportunity to worship was of excellent quality, because students could understand the relevance of the topic – bullying and relationships. As a result of very sensitive prompting by the teacher, they discussed both in a very insightful manner. This lesson made a significant contribution to their spiritual and moral development and provided a very good example of the strong sense of fairness and social justice that is present in the department.
141. The strength of the school’s provision for promoting the students’ social development, including independent living skills, confirms that the department is very successful in achieving one of its main aims. The emphasis placed upon developing independence is reflected in most of the courses offered, with the very well structured and carefully applied independent travel programme contributing significantly to the success of other activities. Lower attaining students move around the school with confidence, higher attaining students travel independently to local shops, while other students with varying degrees of help travel into Bury, find their way around the centre and learn to use lifts and escalators in a safe manner. They are equally confident when on courses such as drama and poetry at the local college of further education. This degree of independence contributes much to students’ self-esteem and is a valuable tool that enables them to access a wider range of experiences. Students who are leaving at the end of the year are significantly more confident about going on to further education because of what they have learned from the independent travel programme. Health education modules contribute to their development of good personal hygiene habits and an understanding of healthy eating, while the very well structured home management course consolidates work done in food technology lessons and provides them with an opportunity to apply science in the home. Teachers constantly provide students with very relevant opportunities to accept responsibility, including for many of the daily routine jobs in the class. They also enjoy the responsibilities associated with the very good range of mini-enterprise activities that form regular parts of the departmental programme – for example, as members of the board of directors. Current affairs lessons are effectively used to develop their awareness and understanding of local and global issues, while their residential links, including the link with a German school, provide them with experiences of some of the issues in a practical context. Their German language lessons help them acquire a simple vocabulary, such as that needed for social greetings, counting and naming parts of the body, and is another example of how links between different courses are consistently and effectively built into the curriculum.
142. There is very good provision for careers education and advice. Students learn what it means to have job and why money is needed. Skills and knowledge gained in careers education lessons and through other areas of the curriculum, such as the life skills course, Young Enterprise and Team Enterprise activities, are used when students go on carefully selected taster placements in day centres, colleges and work places and

on work experience. Such visits are further supplemented by speakers from industry and colleges as well as a Careers evening involving the careers service, colleges, and training agencies. Access to a rich and very relevant curriculum and the very good quality of the teaching and advice provided by staff ensures that students and their parents or carers, are very well prepared for making the choices and decisions that lead to the most appropriate post-school placement. Discussions with students confirm that they are very well prepared for life after school and have been carefully and sensitively helped to make choices that are realistic in terms of individual aspirations. Unfortunately, local colleges do not offer courses suitable for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

143. The department is very effectively managed by a head of department with a very clear idea about how the provision should continue to develop. Collaborative working in the department is excellent. All staff know the students very well, and carefully measure and record their progress. All students' achievements are recognised through the Accreditation for Life and Living award scheme; higher attainers are accredited for their Team Enterprise work and the department is currently piloting a course that will lead to an Event Volunteering qualification. Awards gained in other areas of the curriculum, such as for trampolining and swimming, are also incorporated into the awards system. Accommodation for students is good. Both the type and location of teaching areas available for the department reflect the students' status as responsible and mature young men and women. However, the absence of a common room for their leisure and free time activities continues to be a deficit.