

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MEADOWSIDE SCHOOL**

Woodchurch, Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105133

Headteacher: Ly Kane

Reporting inspector: George Derby  
OIN: 25349

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 June 2002

Inspection number: 194235

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pool Lane Woodchurch Birkenhead Wirral
Postcode:	CH49 5LA
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Morrison
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25349	George Derby	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Science; Design and technology; Information and communication technology.	Characteristics of the school; Pupils' results and achievements; The quality of teaching.
9189	John Horwood	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; The care the school has for its pupils; Partnership with parents; Links with business and the community.
20119	Tony Bell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
10099	Sue Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Modern foreign languages; Music; Special educational needs; Educational inclusion.	Assessment.
27243	Ian Tatchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art; Physical education; Religious education.	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; The school's strategic use of its resources.
13623	James Waddington	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Personal, social and health education; Post 16.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Meadowside is an average-sized, maintained day special school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19. Currently, it has 71 full and part-time pupils who have a very wide range of special educational needs. One sixth of pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties as their main special educational need, nearly a tenth have profound and multiple learning difficulties, a fifth have autism and a similar proportion has physical disability. A quarter of pupils have speech and communication difficulties and a very small number (five) have sensory impairment. Pupils are often taught in groupings sometimes based on their ability and sometimes based on their age. A group of pupils identified as having severe and complex learning difficulties, including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and severe learning difficulties, are mainly taught separately from the rest of the school. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for their age. Just under a half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Two pupils have English as an additional language (Chinese and Afrikaans) but they are not at a stage of early language acquisition. There is one pupil from a minority ethnic group. Nearly two thirds of the school's roll is boys. In the last two years, five of the 13 teachers have resigned, a high proportion.

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

Meadowside provides a sound education for its pupils. It very strongly promotes pupils' independence and their personal development. Pupils make satisfactory gains in their skills knowledge and understanding in subjects and achieve soundly. There is a strong ethos of care and concern for all pupils and a great sense of valuing pupils' efforts and contributions. As a result, pupils' response in lessons, and their enthusiasm for school, is excellent. The quality of the teaching is good. The school is soundly led and managed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. It gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils' attitudes to, and interest in, their work is excellent; their behaviour and their concentration in lessons are very good. There is no bullying and there are excellent procedures to prevent this.
- Relationships are very good and pupils work extremely hard, physically and intellectually.
- Teaching is good overall; almost all teachers expect a great deal from their pupils and pupils respond positively to this.
- Pupils' personal, moral and social development is very well promoted.
- The school's links with the community and Woodchurch High School are very strong.
- The school's extended curricular activities and activities outside lessons are a significant strength.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The provision for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties, including their progress.
- Communication within the school generally, including the relationship of some staff with the headteacher and each other.
- Governors' effectiveness in evaluating and improving pupils' achievements and school provision.
- Consistency of support for some pupils' independence, understanding, communication and writing through the use of signs, symbols, objects of reference and computer technology.
- The way the school works with parents.
- The accommodation, so that pupils with physical disability can readily access rooms and equipment.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection in May 1997. Improvements to the management of the school and to its provision have been reasonable. Although the school was judged satisfactory at the last inspection, the nine issues to which it had to respond entailed considerable work. Some staff found the pace of change, the demands made of them, and the different leadership style of the headteacher difficult to cope with; this has slowed the school's response. Nevertheless, the progress made in addressing all but one of the key issues is at least satisfactory. Financial planning is good and the use of the assessment information is effective. Statutory requirements are met. The school week has been lengthened and the curriculum is satisfactory overall, although some subjects still lack sufficient time. The Post 16 curriculum is now good but the accommodation has not improved. Support staff is now plentiful but the number of teachers has only marginally increased. Significant changes in staffing have been soundly managed. Despite a number of improvements to the accommodation, it still does not meet the needs of all pupils and is unsatisfactory overall. The quality of the teaching has improved although the teaching for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties is unsatisfactory and even poor.



## STANDARDS

The table below summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	By Year 11	By Year 14	<b>Key</b>	
speaking, and listening	B	B	<i>very good</i>	A
reading	B	B	<i>good</i>	B
writing	C	C	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
mathematics	C	C	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	<i>poor</i>	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in their IEPs*	A	A		

Pupils' and students' achievements are satisfactory. They are very good in physical education and art and design because of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and the way activities are devised to help the pupils to learn. They make very good progress towards targets set in their \*individual educational plans. Pupils make good progress overall in English, which is well supported by the school's approach to teaching literacy. Progress in reading, through print and symbols is strong given the pupils' starting points. Most do very well in speaking, listening and communicating. However, pupils with complex needs make less progress in English, because sign, symbols and other aids are not used consistently by staff. Writing is less well developed, although satisfactory overall. The pupils' achievements are satisfactory in mathematics. Achievement in French and personal, social and health education is good. Some weaknesses in the curriculum or assessment for science, information and communication technology, geography, history, and assessment in religious education limit the effect of the good teaching in these subjects; this results in pupils making satisfactory progress. In design and technology pupils' progress is unsatisfactory; not all aspects of the subject have been taught this year, although textiles work has been learned very well. The school prepares pupils well for the life ahead of them. Whole school targets are well considered and help raise pupils' attainment well. However, weaknesses in the provision for severe and complex learning difficulties pupils, including limited knowledge of how to help these pupils learn, mean that they make too little progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are very interested and responsive in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous to visitors. No evidence of bullying was seen.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school council helps pupils take responsibility for the school life and relationships are very good in the school.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is outstanding.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 - 11	Years 12 - 14
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is good and has some very good features. It contributes positively to pupils' good learning in lessons. The keenness and interest pupils have in learning is excellent and the effort they put into their work, very good. Teachers have a very strong commitment to improving pupils' individual achievements and want pupils to do their best. Pupils respond positively to this and to the good support provided by teachers and support staff. However, support staff are not as involved in some parts of lessons as they could be. Lessons are organised well and pupils are very well managed. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is strong. Their written planning is generally sound, but not enough attention is given in the planned activities to what different groups of pupils will learn and achieve. The teaching of English is good overall. Most staff support pupils' self-expression and reading very well. However, there is a lack of consistent support for some pupils' communication and writing needs. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory with some good features. Literacy and numeracy skills are soundly promoted during most lessons. The teaching of science is good; very good attention is given to practical work. Art and design, textiles work and physical education are very well taught, mainly because of the teachers' expert knowledge. In all other subjects, including information and communication technology and personal, social, and health education, the teaching is good. The teaching of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties is unsatisfactory; although there is great care and respect for pupils by staff, there are weaknesses in knowledge of, and the planning for, their needs. Homework supports pupils' learning well, but could be more systematically provided.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum provided is strongly relevant. Post 16 students now have a good, distinct curriculum. Links with the partner secondary school and further education college are very good. The school's extended curricular activities and activities outside lessons are a significant strength and add to the richness of the provision. However, some subjects receive too little time and all aspects are not taught sufficiently, for pupils to make the progress they could. Current award-bearing courses are usually well matched to pupils' individual needs and the school is extending its higher-level courses.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is promoted through the celebration of festivals, pupils' achievements and the incidental opportunities in lessons. Staff are very good role models, enabling pupils to develop a very good sense of right and wrong. They have very good relationships with pupils, talk about a range of matters sensitively, and promote moral development very well. Provision for social development is very good. A good range of cultural experiences is provided.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides good care with pastoral systems, which ensure that all pupils are well known by staff on a personal level. There is good welfare provision and good supervision for all activities. Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are particularly effective. The school monitors pupils' academic performance and personal development well. It has developed good assessment procedures, but in some subjects the recording of pupils' achievements needs to be more detailed and better use needs to be made of assessment data to inform teachers' planning.

Links with parents are unsatisfactory. Although they mostly have positive views of the school's work with their individual children, they have negative views of the management of the school and how the school communicates with them.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. Rigorous systems have resulted in a very well organised and managed school on a day-to-day basis. School development priorities have been rightly identified. The strong senior management team have clear lines of delegation and support the school's work well. However, communication within the school requires improvement as does teamwork by some staff. The school is aware of the deficiencies in the provision for severe and complex learning difficulties pupils, but improvement has been limited.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	A number of governors are relatively new and inexperienced and their role as a critical friend is under-developed. Governors are very supportive of the school's work but they are not yet sufficiently informed to effectively hold the school to account for its actions, quality and standards. Currently, their strategic role is limited.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Although the headteacher and senior staff have rigorously checked on staff's performance the support provided for them has not always led to improvement. This is unsatisfactory. Some staff view this, incorrectly, as 'policing', rather than as school and staff development. A broad approach to self-evaluation has generated a large amount of information, but this has not yet been analysed sufficiently to effect improvement. Co-ordinators' evaluation of subject provision is also limited.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning procedures are good and are well tied into school improvement priorities. Governors regularly monitor budgetary spending. Specific grants are used well. Best value principles are applied soundly.

The accommodation is unsatisfactory; there is limited access for pupils with physical disability. Staffing and learning resource levels are adequate.

## 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 like school.</li> <li>• Pupils' behaviour and teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school helps their children to mature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response to parents who approach the school with questions/problem, the school's work with them and the amount of information they receive.</li> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The progress made by children.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents. The school does not involve all parents enough in a 'partnership' and does not provide sufficient information on a range of issues. Some parents feel intimidated and are wary of raising concerns with the school. Activities outside lessons are very good, but parents do not have enough knowledge of all that goes on. Progress made by pupils is satisfactory, but it could be better. Homework supports pupils' learning well, but could be more systematically provided.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Strengths:**

- Very good progress in art and design and in physical education; very good progress in the textiles part of design and technology.
- Good progress in English, French, and personal, social and health education.

##### **Areas for improvement:**

- Subjects where curriculum or other issues reduce pupils' progress.
- Progress in all aspects of design and technology.
- The analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils, to ensure even more accurate setting of targets in relation to the needs of these pupils.

#### **Introduction**

1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge their attainment against age-related national expectations or averages. Pupils' attainment is well below average for most pupils when they enter the school in Year 7; for many it is below, or well below, National Curriculum Level 3. By the time they are in Year 11 only a few achieve levels near national expectations. A significant number of pupils now attain levels, throughout their life in the school, below Level 1 and are recorded on the nationally recognised differentiated performance criteria ('P' Levels) as between P1 and P8.

2. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand, and can do at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 as well as the achievements of pupils over 16 years. Judgements about progress and reference to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' Statement of Special Educational Need and their Annual Reviews. References to higher and lower attaining pupils and those with additional needs are made within the context of the school's population.

#### **Pupils' achievements across the school**

3. Pupils' achievements throughout the school are satisfactory overall. Pupils learn well in lessons because of the good teaching and the generally strong teamwork among staff, including therapists. In spite of the good teaching, pupils' achievements are no more than satisfactory overall; there are weaknesses in curriculum planning; the time allocation for some subjects is too short to ensure that all aspects are covered. The two pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) make the same satisfactory progress as the rest of the pupils. Even with the slightly stronger teaching which occurs in the Post 16 department and students ability to express themselves with increasing clarity and confidence during their time there, pupils' communication could still be better supported through information and communication technology (ICT) and communication technology. When all Post 16 students are taught together, including those who spend most of their time in the severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) base, their achievement is satisfactory. However, Post 16 students taught in the SCLD base, along with pupils from Year 7 to 11, make unsatisfactory progress; the pupils' needs there are insufficiently understood and planning

does not support their learning enough. Other pupils with additional special educational needs (SEN) or with physical or visual impairment make less progress than they might because the work and the equipment, such as computers at the correct height, are not sufficiently adapted to their needs.

4. The way the school has grouped pupils according to their attainment for some lessons and in mixed ability groups for others has been very well thought out and supports their attainment well. Pupil groupings are based on the assessment of pupils, using the national differentiated performance criteria ('P' Levels) and other assessments.

5. The school's extended activity programme on a Wednesday afternoon and outside lessons supports pupils' learning very well and especially enhances their personal development. These activities enrich the curriculum and add an extra dimension to pupils' learning and progress. For instance, the African drumming event during the inspection added much to pupils' ideas of rhythm as well as their cultural understanding of the different types of African drumming styles. The drama and role-play, based on the BBCs *Fawlty Towers*, helped pupils understand characterisation, prepare their roles and perform in front of their peers who were the 'audience'.

6. The school now has a good range of award-bearing courses at Key Stage 4 and Post 16, which meet the needs of its most of its pupils well and support pupils' achievements. Awards now include Certificate of Achievement, National Skills Profile and the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN), particularly for the lower attaining pupils. There are some gaps, however, and pupils in science who attain at higher National Curriculum Levels such as Level 4 or 5 at the end of Year 9 have little option other than to continue with the Certificate of Achievement at Meadowside. This has led to some underachievement and disaffection by these more able pupils. In lessons, they fail to show the higher levels of ideas and thinking in science they did previously because the work does not extend them sufficiently.

### **Pupils' achievement in subjects**

7. Pupils' achievement in English is good overall. Throughout the school, most pupils make very good progress in communicating and watching, and speaking and listening. Pupils' interest in books, signs and symbols is developed skilfully. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points. The pupils' achievement is less strong but, nevertheless, satisfactory in writing. The school's approach to writing, and the support pupils receive, is less well developed than for reading or speaking and listening, and not enough use is made of ICT to improve pupils' writing. However, pupils with severe or complex learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress in English. Their progress in pre-reading and writing skills is limited and there is insufficient support for their communication. Signs, symbols and objects of reference are not used enough to support their self-expression and understanding. They do, however, make sound progress in their awareness of others, their co-operation in English lessons and their attitudes to reading materials and stories.

8. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics from Years 7 to 11 as well as in the Post 16 department, and the level of achievement is also satisfactory for the majority of pupils. The introduction of National Numeracy Strategy has helped pupils' mental calculations and particularly their understanding of place value and they follow a broad curriculum overall. However, a lack of equipment for practical work and insufficient time for some groups limits pupils' opportunities to make progress. The use of the National Skills Profile in Years 10 and 11 helps to provide a framework and targets for pupils to achieve.

This motivates them well and they strive to reach the goals set so they can achieve the units in mathematics. The progress of pupils with SCLD is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of understanding of how mathematical activities can be made relevant for them or match their particular needs.

9. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory. The school's good attention to practical work, and the way the teacher makes this relevant and interesting for the wide range of needs of the pupils, means that pupils have good opportunities to gain knowledge, skills and understanding from the activities they undertake. However, equipment is not sufficiently modified to meet the physical or visual needs of some pupils. The curriculum has been planned thoroughly, but some topics occur within the topic cycle too infrequently for the particular learning needs of the pupils. This affects their ability to retain information. The effect of the good teaching in science is thus reduced and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Most pupils have good opportunities for gaining relevant awards in Year 11; however, the needs of the higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not sufficiently met by the courses provided by the school.

10. In ICT pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve soundly throughout the school. The teaching is good and this results in pupils' learning well in lessons. However, the inconsistent working of the intranet and Internet, the limited amount of time to learn the subject, and the insufficient emphasis on some aspects of ICT, such as control, mean that pupils' progress is only satisfactory. There is not enough time for pupils to learn all that they need, especially for higher-level award-bearing courses. The school's strong commitment to the well organised and successful computer club enhances the provision and many pupils volunteer for this at lunchtime and after school. The range of equipment and appropriate software to meet pupils' specific needs is limited. Opportunities for SCLD pupils to operate simple switches to aid communication are underdeveloped, although the ICT co-ordinator is now teaching pupils on an individual basis from the school's base for pupils with SCLD. Overall, the progress of pupils with SCLD is satisfactory.

11. Pupils achieve well in personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout the school. They make good progress, especially in their reasoning and problem-solving skills. The quality of provision in PSHE is good and includes an appropriate emphasis on citizenship. The school's ethos of care and concern for pupils and the strong promotion of their personal skills contribute well to their achievements. Practical work, including role-play relating to moral and ethical dilemmas, also makes a strong contribution to pupils' progress. There are good quality links with external agencies including voluntary groups and the police to reinforce and enrich learning in aspects of drug abuse.

12. In art and design and in physical education pupils make very good progress. The very strong provision in both of these subjects contributes positively to the pupils' very good achievements. Particularly strong features of this are the subject knowledge by teachers and the skill with which they adapt the activities to meet the particular needs of the pupils.

13. In French, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The wide range of ways of presenting and using the language, and the skilled use of assessment to guide planning result in tangible achievement and progress by the pupils.

14. In geography, history, and religious education pupils make satisfactory progress. The curriculum for geography and history is being revised, and is not yet fully in place. Assessment procedures in religious education are limited and are still an outstanding issue from the last inspection. All this limits the progress pupils are able to make and the effect of the good teaching in these subjects is not yet fully realised. In music, the teaching is good. The planning now encompasses all aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study,

although singing has been under-emphasised in the past. Some very good workshops, including those during the Wednesday afternoon extended activities, and visits to local performances enhance provision and pupil skills further.

15. In design and technology, although the teaching and pupils' progress is very good in textiles, there has been limited opportunity to learn other aspects of the subject. This results in pupils' achievement being unsatisfactory at present.

### **Pupils' individual targets and school target setting**

16. Teachers set targets in relation to what pupils should learn and achieve next. Targets are very precisely set to identify the most important things pupils need to learn. Targets are produced from a range of information, including the school's own assessment data and the National Curriculum programmes of study and test results. Pupils make very good progress towards these.

17. The introduction, last year, of the school's computerised record system has enabled pupils' progress in all subjects of the National Curriculum to be tracked and evaluated. The school has begun to analyse the results carefully, and use them to set whole school targets, to monitor individual pupils' progress and to set challenging targets for improvement. However, more could be done to analyse the achievements of different groups in the school such as those pupils with different learning difficulties.

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

#### **Strengths:**

- Excellent attitudes to school and work.
- Very good relationships with many examples of excellence.
- Very good behaviour.
- Very good attendance.
- Many responsibilities available for pupils.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- There are no significant weaknesses.

18. Pupils have excellent attitudes to the school and to learning and pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last inspection. They are very eager to learn and try exceptionally hard. This is mainly because of improvements in the quality of the teaching, which mean that work is highly interesting, and the very good range of activities outside lessons the school now provides.

19. Pupils arrive at school, mainly by provided transport, on which they are very well behaved, and are clearly very happy to come to school. Pupils are polite and well mannered to each other, to staff, and to visitors. Their attitudes throughout the school day are excellent and pupils concentrate well and work hard in most lessons, for example in a Year 11 mathematics lesson and a Year 7 religious education lesson where they worked highly productively and untiringly. There were no lessons where the pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory; in 93 per cent of lessons their attitudes and behaviour were good and in 78 per cent they were very good or excellent.



20. The behaviour of the pupils is very good in the majority lessons and sometimes excellent. For example, older pupils are particularly responsible and mature, when they go out on community-link visits to local stores. Around the school, including at break and lunchtimes, the pupils' behaviour is very good with no evidence of any bullying or any other type of oppressive behaviour. There is adequate supervision at all times during the day.

21. Relationships throughout the school are very good, and often excellent. There is a friendly, 'family' environment within the school in which all show mutual respect and trust. The school's promotion of moral values and of respect and care for one another is shown in the very positive way pupils respond to each other. Staff and pupils communicate very well with one another and relationships between them are very good. As a result, pupils work hard and learn effectively. In lessons, as was clearly seen in a PSHE lesson for Year 9 pupils, for example, pupils have a very good rapport and respond well to each other. Pupils' personal development is a significant strength of the school, with pupils becoming mature and sensible, as well as being confident, polite and trustworthy. They are keen to take on responsibilities, such as membership of the school council and to help in the classroom. A strength of the school is the way it aims to include all pupils in activities and the way terms of 'office' are time limited to enable others to have a 'turn'. For instance, pupils have a limited term on the school council. There is also a clear policy that school council meeting discussions should be reported back to the whole class, demonstrating that pupils have an effective input into decisions.

## Attendance

### Strengths:

- Very good attendance.

### Areas for improvement:

- Continue to raise the level of attendance.

22. Attendance levels are well above the national average and unauthorised absence is below average. There was one fixed-term exclusion of a pupil last year, but none this year. It was agreed that Meadowside was not an appropriate placement and the pupil has since moved to another school. Registration takes place at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and the procedures are followed well. Registers are swiftly returned to the office. Any unexpected absence is followed up on the same day - the school receives initial information via the transport escorts/drivers. Analyses of attendance data are carried out regularly. The school monitors closely the length of time taken for medical appointments to ensure that the authorisation is not abused. The figures submitted to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for 2001/2 show current attendance at 93.3 per cent which is a significant improvement on the previous year's figures which were also well above the national average.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

### **Strengths:**

- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects.
- The high expectations teachers have of their pupils.
- The very good way the pupils are managed.
- The use of homework to support learning.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The detail of some planning and the need to identify what different groups of pupils will do and learn.
- The uses of information and communication technology for teaching and for helping pupils learn and communicate.
- The teaching of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties.

### **The quality of teaching across the school**

23. The quality of teaching is good overall and has some very positive features. It is good in Years 7 to 11 as well as in the Post 16 department. However, some features of teaching in the Post 16 department are better than in the rest of the school. This is because of the staff's very good knowledge of the students' needs and the good use of external resources to enable students to be well prepared for their next stage of life.

24. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased significantly. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching has increased and now amounts to nearly a quarter of the teaching seen, while the amount of good or better teaching is now just over three quarters. In two lessons, the teaching was outstanding; a significant feature of this was the expert knowledge of the teachers and rich variety of ways provided to interest and involve pupils.

25. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, this was mostly due to a lack of understanding of the needs of the pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. These pupils spend most of their time taught by one teacher, although they are now beginning to have some lessons taught by other subject specialists. This is successfully widening the opportunities these pupils receive. In addition, the teachers new to teaching these pupils are considering well, and planning effectively, how experiences in their subjects can be taught. In addition, some pupils spend time being included with pupils of their own age group, so for instance Post 16 students in the severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) base have some lessons with other Post 16 students. This has been a successful move, as subject teachers have worked hard to plan meaningful and relevant ways for these pupils to be included in activities and, particularly in music and physical education, this has been very successful. This has helped to improve the quality of these pupils' learning and they are now better included in the life of the school.

26. As a result of the good teaching, the pupils learn well. A particularly strong feature is the tremendous effort they put into their work, despite their disabilities. Teachers generally expect a great deal from their pupils and keep the pace of work brisk, giving pupils an idea of the time they have to complete an exercise or a goal to achieve, say, as part of a process. This results in pupils being clear about what they are to do and to achieve, and helps them to work very productively. Their interest in their work is excellent, because of

the very positive, supportive and encouraging learning environment which staff create. The pupils concentrate well and their ability to work independently is good. This would be further improved if some staff were more aware of aids, adaptations and communication devices which could support pupils with specific physical or communication needs.

### **The quality of teaching in subjects**

27. The quality of the teaching in art and physical education is very good. It is also very good in the textiles part of design and technology, which was the only aspect of the subject seen taught during the inspection. The main reason for the very good teaching is the expert knowledge of teachers and their ability to adapt materials and ideas to help the pupils, who have a very wide range of needs, to learn. These teachers also have a very good understanding of the pupils' needs and of how their disabilities can affect learning. The teaching is good in science, information and communication technology (ICT), French, geography, history, music, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education. Teachers are dedicated to finding imaginative ways to interest the pupils and help them learn effectively. The teaching of English, including literacy, is good overall and has some very good features. Lessons generally have a clear English focus, and are very closely linked to pupils' individual literacy needs. There are some weaknesses, however, due to the lack of experience or understanding of some of the needs of lower-attaining pupils and those with SCLD and how best to support literacy and self expression with these groups. In mathematics the teaching is satisfactory with good features; although there are some very positive aspects, planning lacks clear objectives and detail in general and more constructive use could be made of marking so pupils are clear on how to improve, especially in the layout of their work.

### **The features of teaching**

28. A strength in the school's teaching comes from the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and the effective ways through which they generally teach the basic skills. However, a relative weakness is the way some teachers find it difficult to modify activities or materials for the particular needs of some pupils. For instance, in science, the teacher is very adept at explaining scientific ideas and helping pupils understand some quite complex ideas. It is the teachers' expert knowledge and enthusiasm in art and design and in the textiles part of design and technology which has a significant effect on motivating and inspiring pupils to do well and increase their own skill.

29. There are many good opportunities during lessons for reading and speaking and listening, although not all teachers make the time to develop pupils' emerging writing skills, using handwriting or ICT. The support to enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills is very good. Teachers use their voices and diction exceptionally well which helps to keep pupils' attention and to make the spoken word easier to understand. Although there are notable exceptions, insufficient attention is given to the reinforcement of numeracy skills in other curriculum areas.

30. Teachers' use of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory overall. However, in some lessons, the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' learning are not identified in enough detail for teaching to focus sharply on areas for improvement. A particular feature of the very good teaching is the way teachers use questioning effectively to help pupils understand

their reasons for their answers; for example, in an ICT lesson pupils were asked about the process of identifying the address of a previously used website and this led to good reinforcement of how to do this quickly using drop-down menus. Good teaching also drew on previous learning effectively, to establish memory and increase understanding better.

31. The management of pupils is very good and is a major strength in teaching. As a result, pupils are able to settle down to work quickly and a constructive atmosphere for learning is created. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils and humour is a feature of most lessons, which makes for a relaxed, friendly and co-operative atmosphere. It helps pupils to concentrate and complete their tasks, to work harder with fewer interruptions and eventually to learn more.

32. The planning of the work by teachers, to guide the structure of their lessons and their pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. However, some teachers' planning, particularly in the SCLD base or in mathematics, does not support pupils' learning enough because it does not specify clearly the outcomes for the end of a lesson or series of lessons. Some teachers merely list the activities the pupils or the teacher will do. On the other hand, there are some good examples, such as in science, where teachers are clear about what the pupils should have achieved. In addition, a weakness in the planning of some lessons is the failure to identify precisely the learning objectives for the different groups within the class so that pupils can focus their efforts more effectively.

33. Teachers and support staff work well together so that good use is made of their different skills. Some very good examples of staff helping pupils were observed during lessons; for instance, in an ICT lesson many support staff had a good working knowledge of the programs the pupils used, although they sometimes had difficulty with more complex routines, such as when encountering problems with the Internet. Occasionally, some support staff are not used effectively enough during the whole parts of the lesson managed purely by the teacher, so that in some whole-class introductions, opportunities for additional help, for recording observations or for making assessments are missed. In addition, support staff do not always work with the same group of pupils from lesson to lesson. In some practical subjects, such as design and technology and science, the support staff do not have enough subject knowledge themselves. Sometimes they have to be guided by the teacher during the lesson and occasionally they miss errors made by pupils. Some teachers reported that although their working relationships were now good with support staff, they had to work hard at this, as they perceived that their ideas about planning, teaching methods and the role of support staff in encouraging, rather than doing things for pupils, were accepted reluctantly.

34. The homework provided by staff is good and reasonably challenging. Pupils approach it with enthusiasm and often ask for it to be provided. However, the quantity varies over the week. In some areas, such as English, mathematics, science and ICT, it is well used but for other subjects there is not always a consistent approach.

35. The teaching of pupils with additional special educational needs (SEN) is unsatisfactory overall. The teaching which takes place in the SCLD base, as opposed to other specialist and peer groupings, is unsatisfactory and fails to meet the SCLD pupils' needs. These pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve to their potential. Many staff have limited knowledge and understanding of the necessary teaching and learning techniques, which affects their use of time, support staff and resources. The use of assessment information to influence day-to-day planning is under-developed and has an impact on the expectations staff have of pupils on a day-to-day basis and their planning of meaningful experiences for them. Although all staff demonstrate a high level of care and concern for these pupils, and support staff work extremely hard, potential learning opportunities are not sufficiently

exploited and some pupils spend too much time disengaged from what is going on. Pupils spend a great deal of time out of school, on visits, and little monitoring of what they are doing, in relation to targets set, takes place. The school is aware of these issues but needs to be more assertive in its approach to dealing with the causes of the weaknesses. Furthermore, it is unclear what the 'base' aims to achieve. Given the current successes in teaching and learning when pupils are taught by some other subject specialists or with their peers, the school should urgently review the role of the facility.

36. In many classes in the rest of the school, the needs of pupils are well understood by staff which helps in the selection of activities that match well their needs. Although this information is not always written on plans, the use of individual education plan targets help focus teachers' minds on the particular learning needs of their pupils, such as to ensure that they listen to and work well with others. However, the particular approach to meeting their needs or the modified or adapted activity is not identified on plans for such pupils. Some newer staff have a limited knowledge of relevant and adapted materials for pupils to use is limited; for instance, in science the use of electrical connectors which pupils with physical needs can manipulate, or pictures which pupils with visual difficulties can see.

37. The use of ICT to aid learning, and the use of signs, symbols, objects of reference and other communication devices, such as electronic aids is also limited. There were many occasions during the inspection where pupils would have benefited, and been better included in lessons, if these were used more consistently. Opportunities were missed, in particular, for pupils to develop and make effective choices and statements throughout their day or take part in day-to-day decision making. Not enough use is made of switch technology to enable pupils with SCLD to control and make choices about their environment is underdeveloped. Information and communication technology (ICT) is also insufficiently used to support pupils' learning. Teachers' planning shows little reference to the use of ICT, and although they have generally benefited from the national training programmes they make too little use of computers to enhance their teaching. Nevertheless, teachers make use of the ICT suite and some are beginning to use the school's interactive white board successfully, although this is a very new 'tool'.

38. Teachers work closely with external agencies, such occupational therapist, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy, and they make good use of the advice available. This helps the pupils to generally make sufficient progress in communication and movement. Teachers working with these pupils have limited specialist equipment at their disposal. The limited storage space adds to the teachers' difficulties, though they make every effort to overcome these problems. Some therapy services, such as speech and language therapy, are limited and there is not enough support for staff or the pupils themselves.

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

### Pupils' opportunities for learning

#### Strengths:

- Good provision for students over 16 years and for English, French, music and personal, social and health education; very good provision for art and design and physical education.
- A very strong programme for activities outside lessons which strongly support pupils' learning.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Some teachers' planning.
- The provision of all aspects of information and communication technology and design and technology; the planning for history and geography.
- The curriculum for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties.
- The amount of time for mathematics, and information and communication technology.

39. Since the last inspection, the action taken to remedy shortcomings in the curriculum has been satisfactory overall. There is now a clear whole school curriculum policy statement, a distinct curriculum for Post 16 students and a coherent programme for teaching personal, social and health education (PHSE). Short-term planning has improved, though planning by some teachers is still inadequate. The links made with other subjects are still developing; for example, in mathematics there are some links with teachers of other subjects where they use mathematics in their lessons, but they could be planned more systematically. The delivery of the curriculum is monitored or evaluated more regularly. Teaching time is now in line with that recommended for both key stages. However, some subjects still receive too little time. For example, pupils up to 16 years have only three lessons of mathematics and older pupils have only two lessons. Other subjects, meanwhile receive too much time, for example some pupils attend GCSE lessons in a mainstream school in addition to the lessons they already receive. Provision of personal and social education has improved. Two subjects, information and communication technology (ICT) and design technology need improvement. Some progress has been made in addressing weaknesses in the provision for pupils with more complex needs, but it remains unsatisfactory. However, this provision is still unsatisfactory.

40. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory. Provision is good in English, French, music and personal and social education. It is very good in art and design and physical education. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with more complex needs is unsatisfactory. Pupils have limited opportunities and time to experience some elements of programmes of study in design and technology and ICT. Schemes of work are being revised in history and geography by the new co-ordinator and are not yet fully in place. However, the curriculum is relevant to the needs of most pupils, and there have been significant improvements in the provision for students over 16.

41. The allocation of teaching time is appropriate for most subjects apart from ICT, where the problem is compounded because pupils do not have enough opportunities to reinforce their ICT skills in other areas of the curriculum. There is not enough time for pupils to study ICT and as this is not sufficiently used to support learning, few additional opportunities are

able to be provided through other subjects. The length of time for some lessons is problematic. Pupils who attend GCSE courses in a mainstream school also have additional lessons in school. For example, two pupils have mathematics in the high school, thereby missing other subject lessons.

42. The school has recently implemented both the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy with pupils up to the end of Year 9 and has a clear plan for the development of these. Overall, this is working satisfactorily in English and mathematics lessons and attention is given to key vocabulary in other subjects, although this is could be more specifically promoted.

43. Numeracy is promoted through subjects such as science and design and technology but better planning for both literacy and numeracy could help to ensure that ideas introduced in other subjects use skills better matched to pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. Writing, in particular is supported inconsistently in subjects other than English.

44. The curriculum provision for meeting the range of pupils' special educational needs (SEN) is unsatisfactory overall. The provision for pupils with more complex needs is unsatisfactory. It is insufficiently broad and balanced, although staff work hard to interest pupils. More able pupils, mainly pupils with autism, and pupils with additional difficulties in other classes in the school, receive appropriate work and provision is satisfactory. However, some planning to meet their needs lacks detail and assessment is not always fully used to assist planning.

45. The provision for pupils' PSHE is well supported by the ways in which the targets in this area are set within pupils' (IEPs). Pupils work on specific individual targets and complete a record of their progress on a daily basis. This in no small part is responsible for the high standards of behaviour throughout the school. Teachers and classroom assistants help in relating all the work pupils do to their (IEPs) targets. However, teaching assistants are not with the same pupils for every lesson; they vary according to the subjects being taught, making it more difficult to provide effective support.

46. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. A range of in-school and after-school activities enhance the quality of curriculum offered; they contribute very well to pupils' understandings, skills and knowledge and very strongly extend pupils' learning as well as their enjoyment of life. The school organises a very effective Wednesday afternoon 'activities' session which includes drama, line dancing, cross country running and wheelchair racing. Additionally, Key Stage 4 pupils have extra numeracy and literacy lessons once a week at lunchtime. After-school clubs include swimming, singing and Post 16 gym at the sports centre. A high quality ICT club operates twice per week, at lunchtime and after school. Extension activities include sports day, carol service, leavers' assembly and special curricular or annual events with tutors and classes. Subject leaders plan events in and out of school to enrich their subjects. Last year the school had a composer in residence and sculptors for several workshops.

## Links with business and the community

### Strengths:

- Very good contribution of the community to pupils learning and development.
- Very good links to secondary and post 16 education establishments.
- Very good partnership with local industry.
- Vocational education is a high priority.

### Areas for improvement:

- Partnership with primary schools (in order to develop a strong partnership with parents of new pupils so they can quickly become confident in the good care and the facilities at Meadowside).

47. The community makes a very strong contribution to the pupils' learning and their preparation for adult life. The school has a very good system of 'education in the community' whereby the older pupils visit local amenities and superstores which are very supportive of the school's work in promoting pupils' opportunities for community work and learning. The pupils are well prepared for such visits by, for instance, preparing shopping lists and also shopping for others. The visits provide very good opportunities for personal development through independent activities, including paying at the checkout and using the restaurant facilities. Pupils behave well; they get on well with other shoppers and the store staff. The experience is clearly a very good preparation for independence. The Wednesday afternoon school-based 'activity' sessions are of high quality and involve many aspects of the community through guest speakers, visits and specialists brought in to lead sessions, such as African drumming.

48. Vocational education has a high profile within the school. A subject co-ordinator has recently been appointed and is developing policies and planning to separate it as a subject from its present location in personal, social and health education (PSHE). While the status of vocational education as an individual subject is still in an early stage of development, the provision is good and includes good career guidance through informed teaching.

49. The school has very good links with its partner institutions. Currently 10 pupils now attend Woodchurch High School for specific lessons and Post 16 students attend sessions at the Wirral Metropolitan College for catering, information technology and ceramics. The facilities and opportunities provided through these links are of considerable benefit to the pupils. There is a good exchange of information about pupils' progress between the establishments and support staff and the learning mentor are used well, both to aid pupils' inclusion and to support their understanding of the work they are doing in Woodchurch. Links with the primary schools ensure a smooth transition for pupils by means of an induction day and tutor visits. However, these links could be stronger and thus help allay some of the concerns expressed through the parental questionnaire and meeting. Through developing a strong partnership with incoming parents, the school could instil confidence in the good care given at Meadowside, from a very early stage.

50. The school benefits greatly from its many strong business links. European funding through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) has enabled pupils to benefit from design technology provision through the Laird Foundation. Local industry has provided very good support through financial contributions, funding trips and training, donating paintings and helping with refurbishment projects etc. The business connections of the individual governors bring specific skills to the governing body.



## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

### Strengths:

- The school's ethos promotes opportunities for moral, social and cultural development well.
- Provision for moral and social development is very good.
- Some subjects, such as English, music and personal, social and health education, make a strong contribution to pupils' opportunities.

### Areas for improvement:

- Specific planning to promote pupils' opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, especially for pupils' reflection and to gain even greater multi-cultural understanding.

51. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, though the provision is incidental rather than planned through schemes of work in the different subjects of the curriculum.

52. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to develop their own values and beliefs as well as awareness of the values and beliefs of others; for example, in lessons in religious education when understanding different religious beliefs and reflecting on human achievement, progress and suffering. In geography, pupils gain a respect for environmental issues and in personal, social and health education (PSHE) they consider a whole range of social and moral issues. They gain a sense of awe and wonder in their swimming and science lessons respectively, when achieving a few strokes for the first time or discovering the 'magic' of electricity and the electrical properties of some materials. Most pupils are willing to express their views and pupils show respect for each others' views. Pupils have made visits to the adjacent Holy Cross Church and travelled to Liverpool to see the two Cathedrals as part of their work in religious education. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing religious education since the last inspection. However, formally planned opportunities for reflection, and for participating in acts of worship, are too limited.

53. The very strong work in PSHE and in religious education lessons very successfully promotes the very good moral development of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of other people, honest with themselves and to distinguish right from wrong. The praise and support of staff raise pupils' self-esteem and pride in their learning. This encourages honesty, appropriate behaviour and moral development. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative and accept responsibilities, for example pupils assist in assembly, and some are elected to represent their class on the school council. Pupils are regularly given the opportunity to discuss the meaning of right and wrong in lessons.

54. The social development of pupils is very good and is very well promoted. Pupils make many visits outside school to shops, museums and sports facilities. Some pupils join mainstream classes at a local high school and college as part of the school's inclusion scheme. Pupils interact well and many socialise with their friends at the wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs. Elected pupil representatives on the school council meet regularly with members of staff to discuss improvements to school routines and new opportunities for pupils, and report back to their classes.

55. The school gives its pupils good experiences to enlarge their own cultural and multicultural understanding. The provision for studying local culture is good with visits into the local community of Wirral and contrasting areas farther afield such as the Bendrigg Activity centre in Cumbria. Wider cultural experiences are made available to pupils with

reference to religious festivals such as Divali and the Jewish Passover in religious education. Art and music reflect the influences of different cultures in their projects. During the inspection a visiting musician led a workshop called 'Fun with the Drum' encouraging pupils to explore and play a range of multi cultural percussion instruments including the Djembe drums. Geography and history also provide pupils with a wide range of information about life and customs in other countries, with a perception of previous times and the effects of world events, such as war, on people around the world. A 'multi-cultural activities day' is being planned to coincide with the Commonwealth Games. It will include, for example, music, dance and art from other cultures. Visits also contribute well to the cultural development of pupils. However, the multicultural aspects of the wider community beyond the school are not sufficiently emphasised or evaluated in teachers' planning.

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

### The school's pastoral care and welfare

#### **Strengths:**

- Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour.
- Procedures for promoting good behaviour and attendance.
- Adequate supervision throughout the day.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Governors' involvement in health and safety issues.

56. The school provides good care for its pupils and has good procedures in place for child protection. The teacher designated as the child protection co-ordinator is well trained and is appropriately named in school procedures. All staff in the school receive good training in child protection issues and are well aware of what to do if issues arise; the headteacher has received training and acts as a backup, in case of absence of the responsible teacher. The school has a sound approach to health and safety with procedures in place, but governors are insufficiently involved and they should, for instance, follow up the weaknesses identified in the recent local education authority (LEA) audit. Activities throughout the day, including use of the swimming pool, and the site itself are adequately supervised. The LEA audit confirmed that the school carries out fire drills and alarm tests on a regular basis and that good records are kept. Medical facilities are good and include a well-equipped and well trained nursing staff. The school enjoys a good level of support from the therapy services based in the school and visiting external medical specialist staff, although the amount of provision for speech and language and occupational therapy is limited. Furthermore, the occupational therapy service would like to provide more advice regarding pupils' access, but staff are not sure whether the school would wish this. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required.

57. The welfare of the pupils is underpinned by the very close relationships within school, ensuring that pupils are well known to staff and that the pupils feel safe and secure. A number of pupils at the school are being 'looked after' and the school has good procedures in place to ensure that they receive the necessary support and that staff are informed of any essential information if there are particular problems for them. A number of pupils spend time at the local high school where they receive good personal support through the learning mentor from Meadowside, as well as the staff at Woodchurch.

58. The learning support staff in the school support the teachers well in ensuring that the pupils' personal development is monitored. The PSHE provision is well planned and integrated into the curriculum to facilitate personal development. The procedures within the

school ensure that good information on personal development is available for staff through the pupil database. Personal development is clearly a priority of the school and plentiful information is provided for parents prior to the annual review, although there is little opportunity for parents to discuss the information before the review takes place.

59. The school monitors attendance very closely and analyses data to enable issues to be addressed. The attendance figures are well above average demonstrating that the procedures are effective. The policy of contacting parents on the first day of unexpected absence is a good demonstration of commitment to pupil care.

60. The behaviour policy contains appropriate rewards and sanctions which staff and pupils understand. The school analyses data on behaviour incidents to keep aware of the success of the policy, but interpretation over time is difficult as the population changes and only small numbers are involved. The standards of behaviour seen indicate that the procedures are very effective and the complete absence of any oppressive behaviour is a credit to the school. Exclusions are unusual within the school and none have occurred this year.

61. Pupil care was good at the time of the last inspection and this has been maintained. The health and safety issues identified at that time have all been addressed and the school has been successful in improving both behaviour and attendance.

### **Assessment and the monitoring of pupil's academic performance and support for pupils' special educational needs**

#### **Strengths:**

- The recent adoption of P Levels.
- The computerised system now makes analysis possible.
- Development work in assessment in subjects such as music, French and design and technology.
- Assessment and monitoring in English and physical education and use of the information gained.
- Work with therapists in English and physical education.
- The new format for individual education plans.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Lack of therapy time and support for pupils' additional special educational needs.
- Use of assessment to inform planning by some teachers.
- The use of augmentative communication systems to help pupils such as those with severe and complex learning difficulties.
- Further development of assessment and monitoring tools, particularly in non-core subjects.

62. Good procedures are now in place for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. In some areas of the school's work, such the support for pupils' personal and social development they are now very good, a significant improvement since the last inspection, when procedures were unsatisfactory, inconsistently used and individual education plans (IEPs), in particular, were underdeveloped. Assessment and monitoring systems for over-viewing pupils' academic progress are sound and have been recently strengthened by a number of developments, such as the revision of IEPs formats and the introduction of a computerised database that tracks the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Individual education plans (IEPs) are now satisfactory. The new format ensures that staff are clearer about exactly what is being targeted and how pupils' progress towards targets will be measured. Most teachers take careful account of pupils' targets when

planning their lessons and their emphases and teaching within lessons reflect these. An assessment co-ordinator is now in post and the senior management team look carefully at the data which is now accumulating as to pupils' attainments and progress, setting whole school targets and individual pupil targets with staff.

63. Procedures for the Annual Review of the pupils' Statement of Special Educational Need progress in relation to the progress they have made are carried out appropriately and the school is trying to involve pupils and parents more in these. However, some parents still feel that the style of the meetings, and of report writing, makes it difficult for them to contribute and that their views are not always given adequate consideration. The school recognises it now needs to look carefully at the form of these reports and meetings, which are the main forum for the discussion of pupils' progress, to ensure that everyone, including parents, understands what progress has been made and the evidence for this. The current format means that some parents, and school staff, are unclear as to what are pupils' most important learning goals for the year and how best to support progress towards these in all subjects and at home.

64. As a result of the Annual Review, targets are set for pupils in all subjects. Progress towards these targets is not, however, always clearly identified in subsequent reviews, as some reports indicate more what pupils have experienced and whether they enjoyed these experiences, rather than what they have learned. Some of the written reports are of high quality however, and other professionals, such as the speech and language therapists, contribute appropriately to the review process. In addition, pupil profiles are carefully prepared and shared with parents; samples of pupils' work and achievement are kept in these, including photographs and sometimes video material. However, not all of these are annotated with details of when and how the work was obtained, how much support was given, and some profiles are less useful as exemplars of progress because of this.

65. Sound use is made of the available support from the therapists and the school nurse within the school but the amount of speech and language therapy is insufficient to meet the complexity of needs within the school. Nevertheless, the English department makes good use of the available support, liaises well with the therapists and has done some successful joint teaching. Similarly, staff try very hard to follow up physiotherapy and occupational therapy advice and, on the whole, the therapy teams and the school staff work well together to ensure minimal disruption and maximum benefit within the time available. However, there is insufficient time for therapists to help staff develop the skills they need in investigating and meeting the needs of those pupils with more complex communicative and learning needs. For example, the use of signs, symbols, objects of reference and ICT to support pupils' communication is inconsistent in the school and some staff do not understand the implications of the specialist assessments, by speech and language therapists, occupational therapy and sensory support staff, nor do they see how the advice when given, should influence their teaching. This is particularly so in relation to those pupils with more complex learning difficulties, and for some with physical and sensory impairments. There is a need for the local education authority (LEA), school and the health trust to review the levels of therapy and external support offered to the school. This is to ensure that all pupils who need access to therapy and external support receive it, and that the school staff can subsequently gain skills and understanding in the various techniques involved to ensure that best practice in meeting pupils' communicative, sensory and physical needs can be incorporated into teaching and classroom organisation. This is an urgent requirement for pupils with more severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD), who are cared for very well, but who are insufficiently challenged in their learning because of inconsistencies in the communication systems used with them and because of the limitations in the curriculum and in the teaching styles to which they are exposed.

66. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress in subjects are good overall and are an improving aspect of the school's work. The school has adopted the nationally agreed differentiated performance criteria for the early National Curriculum Levels as descriptors for pupils' attainments ('P' Levels) alongside National Curriculum Level descriptors, to help them monitor pupils' progress. Furthermore, they are involved in a regional group that moderates the levels that teachers assign. In addition, the annual review system used means that pupils' progress in each subject is reviewed. However, not all subjects are using fully developed and sufficiently detailed assessment profiles to enable progress (or the lack of it) to be identified in all aspects of the subject and some are still insufficiently tied into the nationally agreed descriptors. This is particularly so in religious education and in aspects of design and technology. In other subjects, such as music and French, assessment procedures and profiles are too new to have impacted fully on standards and teaching, but have some good and very good features. Assessment is strongest in English where the National Curriculum and P Levels are supported by use of specialist reading and spelling tests and the speech and language therapy assessments and in physical education where there is very good use of the assessments by teaching staff and therapists to plan teaching programmes. In other subjects such as French, design and technology and music some good development work is linking pupil assessment well into programmes of study.

67. Individual education plans (IEPs) are produced for all pupils. Most are in a workable form with a particularly strong emphasis on personal and social development. Pupils work on specific individual targets in relation to these personal skills and complete a record of their progress on a daily basis. This in no small part is responsible for the high standards of behaviour throughout the school. Some other targets set in IEPs and Annual Reviews are however too broad to be used effectively in lesson planning and so, for example, opportunities for reinforcing a communication or literacy target may be lost. Some targets do not have clear success criteria by which the pupils' progress will be measured. For Post 16 pupils there is a need to ensure that learning targets are more age relevant and take account of the changing demands of curriculum and life for pupils within this phase.

68. Assessment procedures have been strengthened by the introduction, last year, of the school's computerised records which enables pupils' progress in all subjects of the National Curriculum to be tracked and evaluated. The school has begun to analyse the results carefully, and use them to set whole school targets, to track individual pupils' progress and to set challenging targets for improvement. The school plans now to develop further its procedures for other subjects both for checking on individual pupils' progress over time and to examine standards in subjects.

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

### **Strengths:**

- Parents like the good teaching; they are pleased their children like school and the staff help them to mature.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Parents' views of the school overall.
- Communication with parents
- The welcome that parents get when they visit the school.
- The presentation of information such as the prospectus.
- Parents' involvement in the school.

69. The partnership between parents and the school is unsatisfactory. Parents' views of the school, expressed through the questionnaires and the parents' meeting, are very mixed and raise concerns in several significant areas. Approximately one quarter of parents returned the questionnaires and attendance at the parents' meeting was average for this type of school; a small group of parents also talked with inspectors during the inspection. The small size of the school does mean that a few comments can have a significant effect on the analysis, but common themes were returned to in all contacts with parents.

70. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the good teaching, that their child likes school, the behaviour within the school and the maturity acquired by their children. All other areas within the school were areas where parents would like to see improvements. The pleasing aspects were confirmed during the inspection and areas of concern were investigated. The main concerns were about the welcome parents get and the lack of involvement they have in their child's education as a result of poor communication. The inspection team agree that the school should improve systems for communicating with and involving parents, including their welcome into the school. Concerns about homework were investigated and it is clear that the school does need to introduce a consistent policy. Individual comments from parents were all considered. Most of these are in the areas discussed above; several parents expressed concern as to the difficulty approaching the head teacher, but were supportive of the teaching staff. Several parents were concerned about the large staff turnover and questioned the reasons. In addition, there were individual concerns over lunchtime arrangements and expectations of the children. The team consider that all the issues raised were indicative of poor communications and partnership with parents, and have been further complicated by personnel issues. The school should review procedures to ensure that all parents feel equally welcome, valued and included.

71. The information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school produces regular newsletters which go to parents as a 'home-school association newsletter' - a more accurate identification as a school newsletter should improve its profile. In addition, there are letters about specific matters as required. The school brochure is informative, but could be better presented so that the opportunities available within the school were made clearer to all parents. The governors' annual report to parents, whilst meeting its legal requirements, has similar weaknesses. The reporting system to parents meets requirements by having a comprehensive report and annual review; again, there is plenty of information provided, but the way in which some of these are written is sometimes too complex and makes it difficult for parents to have a clear picture of what their child has learnt and will now go on to learn next. Similarly, some parents feel that the manner in which the annual review meeting is conducted does not allow their views to be considered adequately.

72. The home-school association provides very good support by organising events and fundraising. The interest in this, however, has declined recently, as some parents feel

unwelcome and others are unable to become involved. The involvement of parents in the school is a weakness which is significantly affected by the security of the school. As increased security measures have been put into place, some parents have felt less welcome and kept away by the school. It is important that the school addresses such perceptions carefully, particularly the ways in which parents are welcomed once they arrive at the school. It is an issue the school needs to address to allow more involvement for the many parents who clearly want to be involved and would benefit from seeing the care and education their child is receiving, especially when their children first transfer to the school. In addition, there are restricted opportunities for parents to support their children at home because homework quantity varies and effective communications are clearly not developed.

73. The partnership with parents has deteriorated since the last inspection partly as a result of staff turnover, but mainly due to poor communications and the relatively few planned informal or formal opportunities to involve parents in the school's everyday life and in their child's learning.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

### Leadership and management

#### **Strengths:**

- Very good day-to-day management.
- Good improvement in the systems and procedures of the school since the last inspection.
- A strong desire for school improvement and improved quality of teaching.
- A comprehensive school improvement plan with correctly identified priorities.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Relationships between the headteacher and some staff.
- Some staff's attitude to school improvement and the monitoring of their work.
- The work of governors.
- The role of co-ordinators in monitoring teaching and learning.
- Clearer and simpler systems which are communicated to all staff and well understood regarding school self-evaluation and the ways to improve.

74. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection the headteacher and deputy headteacher were newly appointed and they have worked hard to address the numerous deficiencies identified at the time. Well-defined systems and procedures are now in place which enable the school to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

75. The school now has a comprehensive improvement programme in place which is regularly and thoroughly reviewed so that the mid-term adjustments can be made. However, some criteria for measuring the success of actions taken are insufficiently specific, such as 'pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) / profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) respond positively to the curriculum and make good measurable progress'. Furthermore, subject co-ordinators' long-term action plans, although identifying key areas for subject improvement, are not written in the same rigorous way as the school plan and this limits their effectiveness and the school's ability to evaluate progress made in these areas. Weaknesses in policy statements dealing with curriculum and the provision for additional

special educational needs (SEN) have been satisfactorily addressed, since the last inspection. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching and have been put in place. There has been a clear focus by the headteacher and deputy headteacher on improving the quality of the teaching and learning. Records of senior management team meetings, including those relating to the work of the governing body are now much improved. Strenuous efforts have been made to reduce the number of long-standing vacancies on the governing body and these have been partly successful. The governors' annual report to parents meets statutory requirements. The school's staffing has been strengthened and this is now beginning to move the curriculum forward for pupils, although there is an urgent need to develop further the curriculum and provision for those with severe and complex needs. Performance management arrangements are of good quality and meet statutory requirements. The school's aims are well reflected in its work. A particularly strong feature, well promoted through the school's values, is pupils' personal development. The self-confidence, tolerance and self-esteem of pupils and students are very good and pupils and students are prepared well to take responsibility for themselves and their learning.

76. The headteacher has a clear vision of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the direction the school should take. She has been determined to improve the quality of provision and has put many systems in place to monitor the work of staff. Some staff have found it difficult to cope with what was perceived as a radical change in practice and the headteacher has not always found it easy to get staff to respond in line with the school's priorities for improvement. For instance, some staff do not provide planning with the detail and standard directed by the headteacher, while others provide high-quality rigorous plans which supports their teaching very well. The school has experienced a period of high staff turnover in the past two years, particularly of teaching staff, and this has placed further strain on the communication systems within the school. The need to raise the quality of teaching and learning has been well transmitted to staff but the strategies by which this is to be achieved successfully have not been clear enough. The school has a 'coaching' system to support staff whose teaching has weaknesses, but recognises that it does not possess all the expertise necessary for internal coaching to be effective in all cases. The staff changes, new management style and the need to address so many issue has had an unsettling effect on the teamwork necessary for the school to meet the challenges of a changing pupil population and more effective evaluation of the school's performance. As a result, although morale is not low and staff are committed as individuals to improvement across the school, there is not yet a shared agreement as to how the improvement, identified as necessary in self-evaluation and review, can be taken forward. Urgent consideration should be given to ways of ensuring that all staff are engaged collaboratively in the raising of standards and committed to the implementation of change arising from school self-evaluation and review.

77. The senior management team is small in number and heavily deployed with the responsibilities of managing and co-ordinating the work of an average sized, but complex school. Delegation of responsibilities to senior staff is appropriate. Subject co-ordination is improving, although subject leaders' roles are not fully developed; for example they are not involved in monitoring the work of other staff teaching the subject, except in informal ways. The school is, however, making effective use of the professional expertise of the local education authority (LEA), for example in developing the planning capabilities of the co-ordinators for humanities and religious education. Consideration should be given to broadening the management team over time and establishing further delegation, including training and equipping staff for any additional roles.

78. The governing body is not yet effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. There have been considerable changes during the past two years in the membership of the governing body. A number of governors have little or no previous experience as governors and they are not



yet fulfilling their roles as 'critical friends'. The governing body does not always have, or is given, information on which to base decisions, for example on matters relating to health and safety audits. Governors are aware of their basic roles within committees. However, while governor training has been put in place, this has not been sufficiently focused for the governing body to develop a clear view of its strategic and monitoring roles in relation to the quality of the school's performance and for setting a clear direction for the future development of the school. As a consequence, the governing body is insufficiently proactive, for example in determining the follow-up to evaluation of the school's educational performance. As yet, though very committed to the school, they are limited in the way they can support the school in a knowledgeable way and ask the right questions. Governors need additional professional advice and training to enable them to agree with the headteacher the key information they need access to, for them to fulfil their role in relation to the strategic direction of the school.

79. Overall, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the taking of effective action as result of this, is unsatisfactory. The school has adopted a broad-based 'perceptions' approach to school self-evaluation and review. Parents, pupils, governors and staff are commendably involved in a survey in submitting their views on detailed aspects of the school's performance. This has generated a large body of data. Unfortunately, it is by no means clear that the questions asked within the questionnaires are understood by those contributing. More significantly, the process by which action is to be taken on the information produced by this large-scale exercise has not been defined or communicated to those participating and in particular, to the governing body. As a result, implementation of change following the administration of this survey has been unsatisfactory. Self-evaluation needs to be made more manageable. The governing body, in collaboration with the headteacher, should consider a more selective approach to self-evaluation, with particular topics such as 'standards', 'pupil progress' etc tackled on a rolling basis. Where there has been specific monitoring, for example in relation to monitoring of lesson planning and teaching, the wider issues of the quality of the teaching and learning have not been sufficiently shared with staff and governors; consequently some staff regard such monitoring more as a 'policing' activity than professional development. This means that the changes necessary in their own teaching and planning have not always been embraced with enthusiasm and have not proceeded quickly enough.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

#### **Strengths:**

- Well experienced support staff who are effectively deployed with numbers considerably increased since the last inspection.
- Good training programmes and clear identification of staff training needs.
- Attractive building exterior and sensory garden.
- Good resources in art and physical education.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Unsatisfactory accommodation which does not meet the needs of pupils with physical disability.
- Limited resources in mathematics, history and textiles and insufficient resources for pupils with complex needs, especially relating to information and communication technology use and for communication.

80. The school has sufficient qualified, experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. A significant number of teachers have left the school in the past few years and new teachers have been appointed. This change has generally

been soundly managed and new teaching staff are enthusiastic and well qualified in their subjects. However, some have had little previous experience of pupils with physical and sensory needs and require further guidance on how to adapt materials and equipment for them.

81. Overall, the staffing of the school represents a satisfactory balance of subject expertise and knowledge of special educational needs to ensure sound provision. There is a generally sound match between the qualifications and experience of teaching staff and their curriculum responsibilities. Where staff lack expertise, this has generally been identified and support and guidance have been provided, although these actions have not always brought about the desired improvement.

82. The school has a large number of effective support staff, who are well integrated into the life of the school and play a significant role in helping to extend pupils' learning opportunities. However, sometimes, they do not have enough knowledge of the subject to support pupils, such as in mathematics, science or design and technology, and they are not always used well in the parts of lessons where the whole class is taught together. The school has a comprehensive training programme open to all staff and this is linked well to the school's performance management scheme. The school received an Investor's in People award in 2001 for its systems in supporting staff and their professional development. It enables many staff to develop additional skills in meeting aspects of the particular SEN reflected in the present pupil population. An appropriate induction procedure is in now place for all new staff. The previous inspection report indicated that there were insufficient numbers of staff. Despite a lack of increase in funding arrangements, creative management by the school has resulted in an increase of the number of teaching staff by 0.5 and over 10 additional support staff.

83. Despite a very attractive exterior, and buildings which are well maintained by premises staff the quality of the accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. Although the school has a limited budget and tight financial constraints it has worked hard to improve the outside and inside environment and pupils in general show respect for their surroundings; repairs and upgrades to the premises have been carried out systematically. These include the creation of a library, roof repairs, internal courtyards and kitchen improvements. Improvements to the outside include the creation of a sensory garden, internal courtyards and a new playground. However, a recent survey by the local education authority, and confirmed by inspectors during this inspection, identified a significant number of elements of the accommodation as poor. For example, several rooms are too small, given the SEN of the pupils, and furniture is inadequate. Pupils are unable to manoeuvre safely when in wheelchairs and sometimes scrape their hands on the narrow door frames. There is insufficient storage, the staff room is small for the number of staff, there are inadequate numbers of toilets, the library is inadequate and changing provision is unsatisfactory. Additionally, there are issues with internal and external access for pupils with additional physical needs. In several rooms, wheelchair access is restricted because of lack of space and tables are too low to allow wheelchairs under them. Some emergency exits from classrooms have steps which inhibits wheelchair access in emergencies.

84. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. Resources are good in art and physical education. However, resources are unsatisfactory in mathematics (for practical work, in particular) and history and there is insufficient outdoor equipment specifically for pupils with more complex learning difficulties. Inadequate use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) as an additional resource for learning in subjects. In the ICT suite itself, pupils have access to a good number of computer workstations and a variety of relevant software. However, wheelchair access is inadequate and there is insufficient equipment such as roller balls for pupils with specific needs. Resources for 'practical'

subjects such as science and design and technology are adequate (except textiles) and the use of tools and equipment in specialist classrooms is well supervised by teachers to ensure pupils' health and safety. The library area is too small and often used as an individual support room; this means that pupils have limited opportunities to develop independent study skills. Although there is a good range of books, particularly fiction in the library and classrooms, non-fiction materials are limited, particularly those other than books, such as CD-ROMs, Internet access, videos and artefacts which would allow pupils more ways of obtaining information, as well as support their reading and study for pleasure.

### **The school's strategic use of resources and financial planning**

#### **Strengths:**

- Good improvement in financial planning systems and in monitoring the budget since the last inspection.
- Good use of specific grants.
- Good day-to-day administration.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- The school's understanding and use of the principles of 'best value'.

85. The significant weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed successfully. At that time, sound financial decisions were unable to be made as there was no specific basis, such as a school development plan, on which to do this, nor was there strategic thinking in relation to contingencies which might be needed, such as for unexpected spending requirements. The school's strategic use of its resources and the way its educational priorities are supported through financial planning are now good. The school currently makes good use of resources but the extent to which the principles of best value are applied, although satisfactory overall, are an area for development. These principles are not fully understood by the governing body, although obtaining the best value from financial purchases is very well established and school does consult its 'consumers', albeit in too complex a way for it to be meaningful to some. However, other aspects such as comparison with other similar schools or how governors should challenge themselves and the school to improve are insufficiently developed.

86. The headteacher and the visiting bursar evaluate proposed expenditure as part of the budget planning process. The budget is directly linked to the school development plan; it is discussed and agreed by the finance committee and approved by the whole governing body. The combined plans cover three years and include projected costs and evaluation procedures.

87. Day-to-day financial administration is efficient and includes effective systems for financial control. The school makes good use of new technology for administration and curriculum matters, for example, the compiling a pupil database to track progress and the use of computers by some teachers to construct their planning. However, the use of technology to provide pupils with communication difficulties with effective access during lessons or to support pupils' learning in other subjects is unsatisfactory.

88. The school has responded satisfactorily to suggestions made in the last audit report and the school fund accounts have been independently audited. The finance committee receives regular budget up-dates and discusses any issues at their meetings. Information from these meetings is used to keep the whole governing body informed of the progress of budget expenditure. Specific grants made to the school are used efficiently, for example

funds from the 'New Deal' were used for a much needed playground renewal project, providing pupils with a stimulating and safe place to play and a new school roof.

89. Taking account of the pupils' low attainment on entry, their socio-economic backgrounds, the sound progress they make over time and the costs per pupil compared with similar schools, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

90. In order to improve the educational standards and rectify the weaknesses the headteacher, senior management team and governing body should:

- Improve the school's leadership and management and communication systems so that:  
(Paragraphs: 74 – 77)
  - \* there are positive relationships between the headteacher and staff and that all staff follow school policies;
  - \* staff are fully aware of change and development and the reasons for this, and fully contribute to the process of school development;
  - \* rigorous monitoring leads to effective evaluation and results in better provision and pupil progress;
  - \* the senior management team and co-ordinators are proactive in identifying deficiencies in provision, and plan to rectify these as rapidly as possible, so that pupils have all the opportunities they need to make sufficient progress;
  - \* co-ordinators' roles are developed in line with the national standards for their role;
  
- Improve the effectiveness of the governors in improving pupils' achievements and school provision by ensuring that governors:  
(Paragraphs: 78 – 79)
  - \* have all the information about the school's work, especially about curriculum and staffing issues which affect pupils' progress;
  - \* are prepared for their strategic and monitoring roles, including that of a 'critical friend', and being rigorous in evaluating the outcomes in order to effect improvement;
  - \* have a clear view of where the school needs to develop;
  - \* monitor all aspects of all subjects are taught, especially design and technology, so that all pupils can make at least satisfactory progress;
  
- Improve the provision for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) by\*\*:  
(Paragraphs: 3, and 35)
  - \* reviewing the role and function of the provision, what it aims to provide and to whom;
  - \* ensuring that the quality of teaching markedly improves - that it is lively and imaginative in the context of what pupils are intended to learn, that teachers' are knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils and that planning takes full account of these and subject requirements;
  - \* extending the role of the co-ordinators and senior staff in monitoring and evaluating the work of all the teachers who teach these pupils, and the provision overall;
  - \* reviewing the use of computers and electronic aids to enable these pupils to fully participate in activities;

- Improve the use of signs, symbols, and objects of reference for those pupils who would benefit from these and make greater and more consistent use of augmented communication systems, and aids for writing, especially, technologically-based devices;  
(Paragraphs 7, 93, and 94)
  
- Improve the way the school works with parents by\*\*:  
(Paragraphs 69 – 73)
  - \* ensuring they feel welcome when they enter the school;
  - \* ensuring that parents feel that their opinions and views are valued and that their concerns and problems are responded to with empathy;
  - \* encouraging parental involvement in the children's learning at school and home;
  - \* providing a wide range of clear, easily 'digestible' information about their child's progress and involving them fully in target setting and evaluation of progress;
  
- Improve the accommodation so that all pupils with physical disability can move around rooms and access equipment easily.\*\*  
(Paragraph 83)

91. In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- Ensure that there is full understanding of the principles of best value and of how the use of these can contribute to school improvement.  
(Paragraph 85)

\*\* These are identified in the school's improvement plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	73
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
<b>Number</b>	2	15	40	13	2	1	0
<b>Percentage</b>	3	20	55	18	3	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	71
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	33

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	8.0	School data	0.92

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9), Key Stage 4 (Year 11) and in the Post 16 phase (Year 14)**

Too few pupils took the National Curriculum tests or award bearing examinations to report their results.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black - Caribbean heritage	0
Black - African heritage	0
Black - other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	70
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

**Teachers and classes**

**Qualified teachers and classes:**

**Y7 - Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.8
Average class size	8.1

**Education support staff:**

**Y7- Y14**

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	679

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	<b>2000-2001</b>
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	£
Total income	712031.00
Total expenditure	724755.00
Expenditure per pupil	9663.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	11566.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-1158.00



**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out  
Number of questionnaires returned

71
17

### Percentage of responses in each category

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	63	25	6	0	6
My child is making good progress in school.	35	41	6	12	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	53	0	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	41	12	29	6
The teaching is good.	44	38	6	0	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	29	12	29	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	29	29	24	18	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	35	18	12	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	35	12	29	0
The school is well led and managed.	25	31	19	19	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	63	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	29	18	12	12

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

### ENGLISH

The school's provision for English is **good overall and has some very good features.**

#### **Strengths:**

- The good leadership of the subject.
- Very good progress in speaking and listening and good progress in reading and writing for most pupils.
- The support from the high school and from the learning mentor for pupils who are taught English at Woodchurch.
- The very strong contribution English makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and drama and role-play
- Good assessment procedures.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Unsatisfactory progress for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- Limited use if made of information and communication technology.
- Limited use of sign, symbols, and augmentative communication technology.
- Limited monitoring and evaluation by the co-ordinator.
- Writing across the curriculum and the approach to phonic work.

92. At the last inspection, pupils' progress in English was considered to be at least satisfactory and sometimes good. It was strongest for pupils between Years 7 and 9 and for the most able. Support for communication and listening was identified as a strength of the school. Since the last inspection, progress in English has been sound. Although there have been a number of staffing difficulties which hindered development of the subject, English, and the support for communication and listening, has been strengthened by the introduction of the school's response to the National Literacy Strategy. Schemes of work in particular have been improved and there are plans to develop these further in line with the Framework for teaching English in Years 7 to 9. Short-term planning has been also been strengthened and a range of appropriate reading material is now in place, although the library provision is still limited, however. Teaching is now good overall and occasionally very good, with very little unsatisfactory teaching. Where this does occur it is primarily linked to a lack of understanding of how to teach English to pupils at the earliest stages of language acquisition and the lack of challenge and consistency in provision that surrounds this.

93. Pupils' achievements in English are good overall, and are very good in speaking, listening and communicating and watching. Achievements in reading are good and sometimes very good, when related to pupils' starting points; they are less strong, but still good in writing, because, although a range of opportunities are provided, the approach to writing is less well defined and developed and only limited use if made of information and communication technology (ICT) for those pupils who would benefit from it. Pupils with severe and complex needs (SCLD), including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), make unsatisfactory progress. These pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall in speaking listening and communicating. Their progress in pre-reading and writing skills is also limited, although they make sound progress in their awareness of others, their

co-operation in English lessons and their attitudes to stories and to books. They could make significantly more progress if there was more systematic use of signs, symbols and objects of reference to support their self expression and understanding. In addition, not enough use is made of technological aids and ICT to support these pupils' communication and literacy in English and in other subjects and lessons.

94. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with wide ranging differences in their communication and spoken English skills. Most are at, or below, National Curriculum Level 1 in English, although individual pupils' have achievements that are higher than this on entry, and closer to those of other pupils of their age. Pupils' confidence in self-expression increases as they progress through the school. By Year 9 pupils' speaking and listening and communication skills have developed very well. Lower-attaining pupils use short phrases, and have extended their vocabulary of words, signs and symbols. They readily contribute to lessons, take turns more effectively and answer teachers' simple questioning about the books they are studying. Very good co-operation between the speech and language therapist and the English teacher supports pupils' self expression as they talk about favourite games or discuss their likes and dislikes of fruit. Pupils listen increasingly carefully to each other and learn to give considered explanations and reasons. The very good feedback from the teacher and therapists enables them to improve steadily in this area and allows others to learn from their ideas. Pupils with more SCLD needs attend more readily to adult direction and support for longer periods of time. They progress in their use of switches to make responses, gestures and vocalisation. They have a growing repertoire of signs and words to help them to make choices, to indicate their understanding and to offer contributions to lessons, although they would make more progress if these were used more consistently by staff.

95. By Year 11, pupils show increasing confidence and maturity in self-expression. Their use of language and vocabulary matures, and they make good contributions within English and other subjects at the level of their ability. Higher-attaining pupils talk fluently about their experiences and emotions, and they comment on their work or the books they are reading. For example in a series of lessons around *The Importance of Being Earnest*, higher attainers were able to compare the language used by characters in the book with the vocabulary that is used today. They used the new vocabulary with humour and adopted relevant accents as they said 'I am spiffing today' and had a good understanding of words such as 'accent' and genre. Lower attainers hold simple conversations with visitors about their interests, and try their best to answer questions appropriately. In lessons, they listen carefully with interest, and respond to adults and to each others' comments appropriately, expressing views on characters in stories and have acquired a range of social and language skills. Pupils with SCLD make simple choices which support their independence, can express their likes and wants to others and some have increased their language and vocabulary further. However, the limited use of technological aids for communication, and the inconsistent use of sign and symbols in some classes, leaves some pupils less independent in their communication and literacy skills than they could be. Throughout the school, drama and role-play is used to extremely good effect in English and in the Wednesday extended activity times. This strengthens pupils' understanding of the literature that they read, of issues in the world around them, but also supports their confidence in talking with others, presenting to others and sharing their ideas. Some very good drama activity was observed during the activity session when pupils were taking on character roles for interviews of famous people.

96. The pupils progress very well in their reading skills and in their enjoyment of reading throughout the school. Progress in writing skills is good. Many enter the school with very little confidence and very few skills in these areas, and the school's systematic support for reading text and symbols enables them to make significant gains. Although many still have

very limited reading and writing skills in relation to their age, individual pupils have skills closer to their chronological age and some are able to take part in lessons at Woodchurch School to enable them to take higher level courses such as GCSE in English. By Year 9, lower-attaining pupils read simple stories, are beginning to discuss the characters and know that an author is the writer of the book. They can explain what they enjoy reading. Most write simple sentences, using symbols to help them, and re-tell the basic events of a story or event they have read or shared. Their presentation and handwriting improves steadily, and they complete simple worksheets relating to topics they are studying. All pupils make increasing use of letter sound ('phonic') clues continues to expand and their reading and their spelling improve as a result. Higher attainers read fluently and discuss the author's choice of words in poems such as *The Storm*, demonstrating a good understanding of alliteration and reading the elements of the poem with a feel for the appropriate mood. Their writing has extended in length and they begin to incorporate new vocabulary and try out different styles, using writing frames at times to help them.

97. By Year 11 some higher-attaining pupils produce work of GCSE standard, although most pupils take Certificate in Education courses. Those pupils who attend Woodchurch High School are given good support, by the English teacher and the learning mentor as well as the high school staff, to help them become more independent in their writing and homework and in evaluating and improving their work for themselves. Pupils' reading progresses steadily in Years 10 and 11 and the many opportunities provided in other subjects as well as in the everyday life of the school enable them to apply their reading skills, at whatever level, in daily relevant tasks as well as in their English work. This means most try hard to read what is around them, although some still have very limited ways of approaching new words. More use of symbols in displays around the school, as well as a more defined approach to phonic skills and spelling work would help these pupils to progress further. Higher-attaining pupils readily help lower attainers and celebrate their achievements with them. Both higher and lower attaining pupils have a very good foundation in confidence and attitude for progressing with their reading and writing skills as they move on to the next stage of their education in their Post 16 years.

98. English makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the texts that are studied and the discussions around them. In addition, the social use of language programme develops significantly pupils' awareness of others and of their views. A strong ethos of mutual respect and listening to each other is developed in lessons. Drama activities and role play, as well as the use of humour and celebration of success further reinforce pupils' awareness of others and of self.

99. The quality of teaching in English is good overall and has some very good features. Occasionally, it is unsatisfactory. The weaknesses in teaching relate particularly to a lack of experience or understanding of some of the needs of lower-attaining pupils and those with SCLD and how best to support literacy and self expression with these groups. Where teaching is good or very good, it has a clear English focus, and is very closely linked to pupils' individual English needs. These lessons allow pupils' experiences within the subject to be systematically built on, and ensure broad exposure to all aspects of English. Teachers' lessons include opportunities for everyone to be involved, but also carefully select activities for individuals and groups that make the learning activities meaningful and motivating. Humour is used well and the teacher clearly signals to pupils what is good about what they have said or written. Pupils' understandings are carefully and systematically built on, as in the series of lessons about *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Teachers' planning demonstrates strong awareness of the English elements she wishes to get across, as well as the needs of individual pupils and the work planned challenges all pupils well. A particular feature of the strongest teaching is the way opportunities for extending pupils' language are seized upon. Good use is made of groupings in English within each key stage. Teachers

have good relationships with pupils and promote an atmosphere in their classrooms of mutual respect and listening to others. Support staff work very effectively with class teachers, and make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning. They are particularly good at supporting pupils' communication, and extending their involvement with others. Occasionally, they direct pupils' learning too much. Although generally used well, there are instances when the support staff are given no clear role in lessons, especially when the whole class is taught together. Homework supports pupils' learning well but it could be more consistently provided.

100. Pupils' response in English is very good; this is directly linked to the strength of the relationships that the teacher has established, her encouragement of a 'can do' attitude from the children, and the interesting ways in which she presents material. Many pupils arrive at the school with limited confidence in their own ability in English and are passive learners. The good and sometimes very good teaching particularly supports their self-esteem, confidence and valuing of each others' efforts, so that they respond well to advice as to how they can improve and encourage each other well.

101. English policy and practice has been reviewed to accommodate the school's response to the National Literacy Strategy. Support for literacy is strong in identified literacy sessions, but the school recognises that, in some subjects, not all teachers make effective use of opportunities to support pupils' emerging skills, particularly in writing. Assessment within English is good. It has been strengthened by the introduction of the differentiated performance criteria (P Levels) and the use of additional reading and spelling tests. All pupils have English targets within their (IEPs), and progress towards these is carefully assessed.

102. Resources for English are satisfactory. There have been some recent purchases of high quality books and software, and resources made by teachers are generally of very high standard. The school makes very good use of local resources, such as museums, the library service, and theatre and drama groups. The local environment and community are used to extend pupils' social use of language experiences. Information and communication technology (ICT) is currently underused as a resource to support aspects of English, because of lack of availability of computers in the English room, although there are timetabled sessions in the ICT room.

103. After a problematic time, because of staffing difficulties, English is now well led by the English co-ordinator, who is highly committed to the development of the subject, but has only limited time and opportunity to monitor and evaluate it across the whole school. She works closely with other teachers and has access to their planning and although the teaching of literacy has been monitored she has as yet only a limited role in this. Development plans for the subject are appropriate and recognise the importance of continuing to develop the school's literacy response, including the approach to writing across the curriculum, as well as to define schemes of work further.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall the provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- The pupils' very positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships and their high level of interest and concentration.
- Aspects of teaching including management of pupils, challenging work, relationships with pupils, monitoring and support in the lessons.
- Effective use of classroom support staff.
- Displays of pupils' work positively enhance their working environment.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The amount of time for learning mathematics and the use of assessment.
- Lack of practical equipment, modern classroom computers and software, and the use of the computers the school has.
- Accommodation, including storage and access for wheelchair users.
- Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs.
- Monitoring by the co-ordinator.

104. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory overall. In the lessons observed, the pupils' progress was often good. However, with pupils in the severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) group progress is unsatisfactory due to a lack of understanding of how to make activities relevant and match their particular needs. In number work, most pupils make the best progress, where lessons are closely linked to the National Numeracy Strategy. However practical activities, such as weighing and measuring and the use of computers is limited due to a lack of equipment. Overall, the achievements pupils have improved since the last inspection; at that time, pupils in Years 10 and 11 made unsatisfactory progress in one in three lessons. Progress in these year groups is now satisfactory. There is a lack of time for learning mathematics for some groups and this limits the progress those pupils could make.

105. The school is developing the National Numeracy Strategy effectively. Most lessons are planned using the recommended format. The impact of this is seen in the pupils' skills in mental calculation so that by the end of Year 9, more able pupils understand place value in relation to hundreds, tens and units and decimal notation. They rearrange three numbers in different ways to make the highest and lowest three-digit numbers. Pupils use their knowledge of days, weeks and months to work out how many weeks there are in a year. Less able pupils know there are seven days in the week and can work out what day tomorrow is and yesterday. They can recognise and order numbers to 10 and name regular shapes, for example a triangle or square. Pupils recognise numbers to 100 or more and understand addition as counting on and subtraction as counting back along a number line. One more able pupil was able to place numbers in order including positive and negative numbers, whole numbers and decimals. Less able pupils can add two single digit numbers with counters. They show confidence using money. They can measure accurately.

106. By the end of Year 11, pupils following the National Skills Profile course can measure accurately using standard measures. More able pupils know that 1.75 is half way between 1.7 and 1.8. They are able to use the calendar effectively and can work out the passage of time between different dates. They can tell the time accurately using different clock faces

and write the time both as a 24-hour time and as a.m. or p.m. Average attaining pupils work effectively with computers demonstrating their understanding of the properties of simple two dimensional shapes when drawing these shapes on the screen. Lower attaining pupils recognise coins to two pounds and are able to place them in order of size.

107. Overall, the quality of the teaching and the pupils' learning is satisfactory and has good features. The National Numeracy Strategy's three part lesson structure is used well by the co-ordinator. The oral starter enables all pupils to develop their mental calculation skills as well as developing their subject-specific language. Most planning caters for the range of pupils' attainment so some will work with numbers ranging between 1 and 5 while other use three digit numbers. Lessons meet the needs of most pupils, though in almost half of the lessons observed, planning lacks detail and there are no clear objectives and learning outcomes for both individuals and groups of pupils. In spite of this, almost all lessons cater for the range of attainment in a group. Sometimes, the objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and, in understanding them, they are able to see the purpose of their work, which ensures better learning. Pupils are reminded of personal behaviour targets and praised and encouraged by all staff and each other. Behaviour, as a result, is very good. Most activities planned are interesting and pupils are motivated to join in, for example, a large scale map of the area, drawn on a carpet was used effectively with different groups of pupils.

108. Some effective use is made of resources, for example 100 squares and number lines to help pupils develop an understanding of place value, some computer programmes designed to develop money skills and very large maps drawn on a carpet to convey the idea of scale. Real coins are used in money work to ensure recognition of coins and their values. A measure of the honesty of pupils is the trust the teacher places in pupils working with significant amounts of real money. Very effective use is made of support staff to support pupils, for example, by working with smaller groups of pupils. However, different support staff are used each day with the same groups which hampers effective support. Some support staff have limited mathematics skills and have to be given additional guidance from the co-ordinator during the lesson. Good use is made of carefully selected and targeted questions to challenge individual pupils, for example, when working with shapes lower-attaining pupils were asked simpler questions and higher attaining pupils asked more difficult questions. Very good relationships between pupils and adults creates a happy friendly atmosphere where pupils are confident and keen to do their best. Pupils concentrate well and behaviour is very good. In almost all lessons, pupils very obviously enjoy the work and strive to do their best. They have very positive attitudes to the work and have very good and often excellent relationships with both adults and other pupils in the class. Pupils work well together. No incidents were observed of any friction or arguments between pupils. As a result, classrooms have an air of calm and concentration, where pupils contribute effectively to the lessons. The teacher ensures pupils' enjoyment by carefully selecting a variety of activities which will appeal to pupils. Homework supports pupils' learning well.

109. The teaching of pupils with SCLD was unsatisfactory in the lesson observed. Lesson objectives were not achieved and some activities did not develop mathematical skills. For example, one pupil was pushing a ball into a tube by sliding rather than looking at the texture and shape of the ball and one pupil did nothing for over ten minutes.

110. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. The co-ordinator has been in post for only 18 months and has not had sufficient time in the school to develop some areas fully. As a result, progress since the last report is satisfactory. However, since her appointment she has written a policy and detailed schemes of work linked to the National Numeracy Strategy. From the work seen in the lessons, and in the pupils' books, pupils follow a broad mathematics curriculum. Storage in the mathematics room has been



improved, though still inadequate. Pupils in wheelchairs find it hard to move around the rooms easily because of lack of space. Computers are now being used more frequently to enhance the teaching and learning in mathematics but those in the mathematics room are old and have limited use. Although the headteacher monitors the teaching of mathematics through classroom observation as part of the performance management system, there is no opportunity for the co-ordinator to do this where mathematics is taught by other staff. Issues identified are used as targets for improvement and are linked to in-service and support. The National Numeracy Strategy is developing reasonably, particularly with younger pupils, though this is still in the early stages. Work in pupils' books is regularly and consistently marked. However, in some books there was insufficient comment by the teacher to indicate areas for further improvement by the pupil, particularly on ways to improve presentation. Most lessons are planned to link to the guidelines in the National Numeracy Strategy. Yearly programmes and group targets are set for the class. These are reviewed each term and, at the end of the year, progress is recorded against National Curriculum Levels. Target setting and assessment needs to be shorter-term and at a more individual level to meet the wide range of learning needs of pupils effectively.

111. Opportunities for using numeracy skills in other subjects have been identified to a limited extent in documentation and some subject co-ordinators discuss the mathematical needs of their subject with the mathematics co-ordinator. However, more needs to be done to develop teachers understanding of the implications of numeracy for their subject. The best examples of use of numeracy in other subjects include the use of stop watches to compare times in physical education, measuring in science and design and technology and simple calculations in information and communication technology (ICT).

## SCIENCE

Overall the provision for science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- Good teaching and learning and particularly specialist teachers' good attention to practical work and her good demonstrations which aids pupils' learning well.
- A sense of 'fun' in learning and pupils' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm.
- Key vocabulary is very well taught and emphasised.
- Thorough planning to help pupils learn.

### Areas for improvement:

- The regularity with which topics are taught and the need for planning to take account of the learning needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Practical equipment and the accommodation in general to ensure pupils with physical and sensory needs can take a full part in practical lessons.
- Support staff's knowledge of scientific ideas so that they can be more effective in helping pupils.
- The limited demand made on higher attaining pupils and the need for higher level award courses for these pupils.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- The teaching and progress of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties.

112. The subject is taught to pupils in Years 7 to 11; Post 16 pupils are not taught science but undertake a horticulture module, taught by a visiting lecture from a college of agriculture. The quality of the teaching of science is good and the subject is well resourced, with pupils taught in, what first appears to be, a well-laid-out laboratory. However, not all equipment is

suitable for the pupils with physical and sensory disabilities; it is very often difficult for them to hold and manipulate the ordinary science equipment which is provided, such as small crocodile clips. The room presents many problems for pupils in wheelchairs, limiting their opportunity to manoeuvre themselves around. There is not enough space in the room and the benching does not take the design of wheelchairs into account, so some pupils find it difficult to get close to their work. A significant strength is the opportunity pupils have to undertake practical work and the way the teacher makes this relevant and interesting for the wide range of needs of the pupils taught. The curriculum has been planned thoroughly, but some topics are only taught again after a period of two or three years, which for pupils with learning difficulties is far too long. This affects their ability to retain information and a lot of time has to be spent revisiting work already covered. The effect of the good teaching, therefore, is reduced by this and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. The way the long-term plan is organised means that, during the inspection, all pupils were learning about aspects of electricity, and this was appropriately planned according to their differing levels of ability.

113. Practical work is a feature of virtually every lesson and this aids the pupils' progress. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about the subject because of this and they routinely anticipate that they will be investigating, observing, making predictions or carrying out a fair test. Their understanding of scientific enquiry progresses well throughout the school. They are well versed in the practical routines, although only a few have the skills to design their own investigation and not all are able to say what makes a test 'fair'. From their practical work, older Year 11 pupils can test to see if a gas is hydrogen, can find the pH of three solutions using universal indicators, and can test a water sample for pollution. By the end of their time in Year 11, they have a reasonable knowledge of the human body and can show the position of organs such as the liver on a model of the human body. They can also test for carbon dioxide in air exhaled when breathing. Their knowledge of physical processes has progressed; they can make a simple magnet out of steel, but also use their knowledge of electricity to produce an electromagnet. Their skills in handling scientific equipment have improved well and those without physical difficulties can handle acid safely to test, for instance, the content of rocks.

114. The teaching is good and the pupils generally learn well in lessons. The co-ordinator for the subject teaches nearly all the science in the school. The exception is the class for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD), who are taught by their own base teacher and the teaching of science to this group is unsatisfactory. The work fails to challenge the pupils and there is limited understanding of how science can be taught to pupils with a wide range of complex needs. In the rest of the school, lessons are thoroughly prepared. The teacher's explanations and demonstrations in the introductions are lively and very carefully planned to ensure pupils fully understand what they are required to do and learn. Lower attaining pupils gained a good idea about the flow of electricity around a circuit when the teacher got them to be a human 'circuit' by holding hands (as connectors) and one playing the role of a light bulb. They were then challenged to say what would happen to the 'light bulb' if they were not holding hands. Nearly all could say it would not light. The teacher is very skilful at interesting and involving the pupils; there are very good relationships between staff and pupils, often built on good humour, but also trust. Key vocabulary is very well taught and emphasised. Support staff to science lessons often make a significant contribution, especially providing 'moral' support, encouraging pupils, or physically supporting them. However, some are unable to help fully as they do not have the scientific knowledge to do so. In one lesson, some staff were unsure how to help a pupil wire a simple circuit, for example, and in another, a pupil mistakenly wired a parallel circuit instead of a series one; this was not noticed and the pupil produced completely different results to those expected.

115. Pupils are generally challenged well, and careful thought is given to how pupils of differing abilities will tackle their work, with activities usually being well matched. Lessons are particularly well organised to take this into account and often three or four groups work on slightly different or modified work. Occasionally, not enough is demanded of higher-attaining pupils and, although outcomes for different groups at the end of a unit of work are specified, these are not recorded on lesson plans. The method of support or the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) target is focussed upon well in lesson plans, such as 'ensure turn taking'. However, activities or support in relation to the subject itself are not specified. In specialist science lessons, pupils' additional educational needs are generally catered for appropriately. However, sometimes, materials for visually impaired pupils are not sufficiently adapted; in one lesson, a pupil with perceptual difficulties struggled with a worksheet because the battery terminals shown were not sufficiently distinct from the battery itself. There is sometimes not enough time for a review and assessment of what pupils have learned at the end of the lesson. Lessons are only single periods of 50 minutes and are sometimes too short to undertake thorough investigations. The pupils work very productively during the practical part of the lesson and they concentrate very well; the teacher capitalises on this well, but this often leaves little time for a plenary session and opportunities for reinforcing the key elements of the lesson and for reviewing pupils' understanding are thus lost. Homework supports pupils' learning well but it could be more consistently provided.

116. The science co-ordinator has been relatively recently appointed. She leads and manages the subject well and has suitable plans for its development. The co-ordinator does not have a monitoring role in relation to what is taught and learned in the class for pupils with complex learning difficulties, although she does provide advice when asked. She has a wealth of science knowledge which she brings from teaching in a mainstream school, but her knowledge of how to adapt or modify materials for pupils with physical or sensory difficulties is currently limited. She has adopted the school's scheme of work for the first year of her work and, by working systematically through it, has recognised many of its shortcomings and the need to review it carefully. Good provision is made for most pupils to undertake the Certificate of Achievement in Year 11 and in 2001 pupils gained Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) entry level awards at bronze (the majority), silver and gold level. A major weakness is the lack of frequency with which work is revisited and also the lack of provision for very high-attaining pupils. For instance, the school recognises that the few pupils who gain Level 4 or 5 in the National Curriculum tests do not have their needs sufficiently met by the curriculum, which teaches mainly to Level 3. The school has suitable future plans to call upon the mainstream school to provide a course but, at present, some pupils are taking award bearing courses not fully suitable to their aptitude or ability.

117. Literacy and numeracy skills are supported well in science, and there is a good emphasis on subject vocabulary. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently used. The school has some relevant software, which is used occasionally, but no equipment for measuring and recording results, such as changes in temperature.

## ART AND DESIGN

The provision in art is a significant strength of the school and is **very good**.

### **Strengths:**

- Very good teaching and learning and particularly knowledge of how to provide relevant art activities for the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' achievements, which are very good.
- The quality of displays of pupils' artwork.
- The contribution art makes to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.
- The quality of the curriculum which is well thought out and relevant to pupils' needs and interests.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Space in the classroom for practical work and for physically disabled pupils to manoeuvre themselves around.
- The use of information and communication technology to fully support learning.

118. Pupil's achievements in art and design are very good. A good curriculum and very good teaching ensures the very good progress made by the pupils.

119. By the end of Year 9, pupils can use their research skills to produce pictures and construct African figures using books and images from the Internet. They improve their construction and painting skills over the lessons, as they observe the colour and pattern of ethnic materials to produce a colourful display of pictures and papi r mach  figures reflecting the colour and warmth of the country and its people. Good progress is evident in the skills that they display in their colour mixing, painting and creating patterns. Pupils experiment with pattern and texture using sponges, paper and paint and cut and stick different materials to form small and large collages and murals. Pupils study the work of the great artists, such as Kandinski and Picasso and identify key features of their style. For example, pupils in Year 7 looked at the figures painted by Picasso and talked about the techniques he used. They then created their own figures using watercolour or wax crayon. Year 9 pupils look at the work of African artists and design and make African shields as part of their topic, using clay and paint to recreate the shapes and colours they now associate with that country.

120. By the end of Year 11, the standards in art are near the national expectation. This is an expectation which they are able to reach through the implementation of the new Certificate of Educational Achievement course available in Years 10 and 11, and a GCSE examination in art and design which can be taken by high-attaining pupils at the local high school. Pupils with complex special educational needs (SEN) including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) make good progress because of the very good support they receive.

121. During the period of the inspection it was possible to see only two lessons in art and design, therefore judgements about teaching and learning are based on these lessons and the scrutiny of work in classrooms, around the school and in pupils' work folders. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are well managed and a good supply of resources is made available to pupils, who show interest and are enthusiastic about their work. Pupils enjoy what they are doing and work hard to produce good standards of work because teachers and support staff know their pupils well and plan activities to give a range of appropriate experiences to enhance pupils' sense of colour, form and texture. Teachers use all opportunities to ensure that art and design is used to promote communication skills

and to support work in other subjects. Examples of topic work enhanced with sketches, painting and collage were seen in several classrooms and corridors in association with English, history, religious education and science work. Such activities increase pupils' interest and make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. Teachers' planning is developing to include end of lesson evaluations of pupils' achievements. Some good examples of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) were seen, for example, pupils using a simple painting programme to create and print pictures and teachers use a digital camera and a scanner to make copies of pupils' work. However, the school has yet to make the best use of technology to enhance the teaching and learning of art and design.

122. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for art and design since the last inspection. The art and design co-ordinator has maintained the good standards reported at the last inspection, and with the headteacher has addressed the concerns expressed about the accommodation used for art teaching, improving the art room furniture and the available storage. Assessment of pupils' progress against the learning objectives set is now an integral part of the art teacher's record of pupils' achievements.

123. The co-ordinator is well established; her experience of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) and her very good subject knowledge enables her to plan well to help all pupils to make progress. She has produced a stimulating scheme of work, including visits into the community and visiting artists. Resources are adequate and regularly replenished. Displays around the school, including a large three-dimensional figure and abstract constructions produced with visiting artists, are effective in celebrating pupils' achievements. Chinese dragons, lotus flowers and lanterns produced by a class as part of their religious education programme make a colourful display along the school corridor. All contribute to creating a stimulating learning environment.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the provision for design and technology is **unsatisfactory**, at present.

### Strengths:

- Very good teaching in textiles, particularly the planning and the assessment of pupils' skills.
- The high degree of skill and knowledge of the teacher in textiles.

### Areas for improvement:

- Pupils' achievements.
- The teaching of a full programme of study for design and technology and the assessment and recording of pupils' progress in all elements of the subject.
- Resources for textiles.
- The consistency and use of external providers to ensure pupils receive regular teaching.
- The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.

124. The provision for design and technology is currently being improved following the departure of a specialist teacher at the end of the last academic year, and the restricted curriculum that could be offered in the interim. The current curriculum is narrower than at the time of the previous inspection, and work in textiles, then, generally received little attention. The new co-ordinator, who teaches most classes was appointed permanently at the beginning of 2002. She is a highly competent specialist in textile design and has worked

hard to improve her own skills in order to teach all aspects of design and technology. She intends to teach a full programme of design and technology next school year and has now gained a resistant materials workshop health and safety award in order to extend work to all areas of design and technology. Although some work in food technology and relating to mechanisms has been undertaken this year, the main area taught to pupils has been textiles. The school's very good link with the Laird Engineering Foundation, where higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught to metal working and light engineering skills such as computer aided design and machining (CAD-CAM) and lathe use, has not been able to be fully taken up this year due to illness of staff. This has resulted in the pupils undertaking an award bearing course, as they have done in previous years (in 2001 seven pupils gained passes at grade 3 in the Associated Examining Board and Qualification Authority (AQA) Certificate of Educational Achievement).

125. Across the school, the pupils make very good progress from their very limited starting points in their textiles skills, because they receive very good teaching by a highly skilled textiles designer. They learn to join materials using a variety of stitching and other techniques relating to managing materials when using the sewing machine. Pupils quickly develop skills in watching the needle and moving the cloth at the required speed. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been involved in producing a number of high quality projects, such as cushion design using screen printing and fashion garments such as a waistcoat or bag with batik design. Younger pupils have produced moving toys, using a simple cam mechanism, a wheeled axle to produce different wheeled movements, and an appliqué blanket. The quality of the finished products is always high and pupils, even with those with limited ideas, extend their imagination through the careful guidance from staff and clear and high expectations identified in the design briefs. For instance, Year 7 pupils, using batik work from a previous project, designed and made a T shaped pattern for a waist coat or top. They made rough prototypes and experimented, sewing on the sewing machine before using their pattern onto their main fabrics. The finished designs were cut accurately, shaped and sewn with interesting and clear patterns or pictures using the wax-resist process. However, pupils make limited progress in other areas of design and technology, because they have not been taught all elements systematically over the past year.

126. Although only a small number of lessons were able to be observed, the evaluation of the teaching, together with the teacher's planning and pupils' records, shows that the pupils are taught very well and learn very effectively. Her expert knowledge and insistence on the highest standards means that pupils do their best and extend their skills and imagination. Very well planned modules of work, with a high degree of attention to what pupils are expected to learn, mean that the lessons always have well organised and planned focused practical tasks which contribute to the design-and-make activity and result from the product analysis. Careful observation of pupils working and subsequent intervention by the teacher means that pupils learn effectively in small steps and gain a great sense of pride in their achievements. Disability is not seen as a barrier but a challenge to help pupils participate as fully as possible. The teacher is insistent on pupils doing as much as possible for themselves and is vigilant in ensuring that the support staff do not help the pupils 'too much'. Her management of the support staff is excellent and has led to all staff having higher expectations of what pupils 'can do' as opposed to 'can't do'. Good teacher-adapted materials or teacher-made simple tools enable pupils to work independently or with less support, for instance, to wind dyed paper onto a 'bobbin' as in a Year 7 lesson. The use of these 'low-tech' aids really helps and supports pupils, but occasionally more 'high-tech' solutions, such as the use of switches and a computer to move a motor could be considered. However, the teacher is very aware of pupils' needs and finds herself regularly thinking of how to adapt materials and tools, as no such devices already exist in the school. Evaluation is always an essential part of pupils' product review, but more attention could be given to how they could improve on their design.

127. The teacher's assessments of pupils' skills are very good in the areas taught and help her to plan the next steps in their programme. However, assessment for all aspects of design and technology is not yet in place and assessment is, therefore, unsatisfactory overall. Nevertheless, the records completed are well laid out and clearly identify what pupils' know, understand and can do. The pupil- and teacher-evaluation sheets are very clear. As each unit of work is completed, the end product is discussed with pupils who make a written contribution. The assessments now need to be extended so that a pupil's level is identified and an overall view of progress can be easily monitored.

128. The workshop has a reasonable range of equipment which is supplemented for older pupils by the well equipped workshop environment of the Laird Foundation. However, the layout is unsuitable for pupils in wheelchairs, as the size and layout limits their ability to move around. This was a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection. The food technology room has similar deficiencies, although there are work surfaces of different heights. In practice, pupils are taught around one workstation, which does not meet the requirements for all pupils' physical needs. The one sewing machine used during the inspection, and for the textile work previously carried out by pupils during the year, has been loaned to the school by a member of staff. The teacher has radically modified her teaching arrangements to cope with this. Although resources for textiles are improving, they are generally inadequate.

129. The co-ordinator has managed the subject well in the current circumstances and has a clear plan for her own professional development and for improvement in the subject. A significant strength is her personal skill, high standards and desire for all pupils to be as fully included in lessons as possible. She has a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision and has personally undertaken to improve resources where they were limited, such as in the making of screen print frames and adapted tools.

130. Pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) are taught design and technology separately from the rest of the school by their base teacher. The co-ordinator has no overview of work undertaken by pupils with SCLD and there is no plan, as yet, for her to do this. There is generally a lack of understanding of how pupils with these needs can contribute during design and technology, and what they are expected to learn is very unclear. The food technology lesson observed during the inspection (of three hours duration) resulted in pupils contributing little. Overall, the progress of pupils with SCLD in design and technology is very limited and the teaching is poor.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall the provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Good teaching and learning and particularly teachers' planning of relevant activities which helps pupils with learning difficulties understand abstract ideas relating to geography.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Schemes of work.
- Assessment of pupils' skills and monitoring systems for progress.
- Space in the classroom for practical work and for physically disabled pupils to manoeuvre themselves around.

131. The subject is taught as part of a combined Years 7 to 9 humanities programme and is no longer offered to older pupils in the school.

132. Pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 9 in relation to their attainment on entry. The good teaching means that pupils' learn well in lessons but, because the planning is not fully in place, achievement over time is only satisfactory. Pupils can draw maps, plans and graphs and collect, record and present evidence both manually, and using information and communication technology (ICT). The more able pupils can understand that some countries are more developed than others and give reasons why some countries are wealthy in comparison to others. They can use an atlas independently. Less able pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) can locate some countries on a world map relating to sport success and can make some supported use of ICT in exploring websites dealing with world cities. Generally, their map and orientation skills both in world and local geography are more limited.

133. The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and build appropriately on previous work and on the experience of pupils. For example, the World Cup was used as the starting point for a lesson dealing with the location of countries. There is a good variety of individual and well-considered group work which draws on the relative strengths and weaknesses of pupils with different learning disabilities, for example in a Year 9 lesson dealing with geographical research skills using the Internet. As a result, pupils are experienced in working both as individuals and collaboratively, for example when undertaking the collation of desk top published information on Japan and South Korea. Pupils learn well, because of the strong teaching; their attitudes to their work and their behaviour are very good. Pupils concentrate well and are prepared to persist, for example, in a Year 8 class exploring a website dealing with South Korea and Japan. Older pupils are prepared to draft and redraft work, for example, in work on global fashions.

134. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A vision for the future development of the subject is emerging and the co-ordinator is supported in this by the local education authority (LEA) advisory service. Resources are well organised and support learning well, for example, the availability of good quality photographs and video material. There is good capacity for provision in the subject to improve further. Planning is done on a three year rolling cycle. Units of work are clearly defined but a whole school scheme of work is not fully in place; the recently appointed co-ordinator is still monitoring the periods of time needed for pupils to complete each module. This planning needs to be completed and moderated as a priority in order for the subject to develop further.



135. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A new subject co-ordinator has been appointed and a subject policy statement is being prepared. Schemes of work are being revised to make the most of links with other subjects of the curriculum, whilst maintaining an appropriate focus on the geography National Curriculum. Resources remain satisfactory and an increased number of globes and atlases is now available. The range of computer software is growing containing mainly reference materials. Pupils have access to a growing range of geography software which is improving their opportunities for individual study and research. Geography is now taught in a multi-purpose humanities room which is also used for music teaching. Space for both display and practical activities are limited. Pupils in wheelchairs find it very difficult to move around the room because of the lack of space. In order to bring about further improvement, the schemes of work should be completed promptly to include detail of both learning and teaching strategies and guidance on support materials. Similarly, clarification and implementation of an appropriate scheme of assessment is an urgent priority so that pupils' progress can be more consistently monitored and specific targets set. The appropriateness of not offering geography as an externally accredited option for pupils in Years 10 and 11 should be kept under review given the broad academic ability range catered for by the school.

## HISTORY

Overall the provision for history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- Good teaching and learning, especially the teacher's good knowledge of the subject and the opportunities for role-play to help pupils understand historical ideas.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm.

### Areas for improvement:

- Schemes of work.
- Adequacy of resources and funding for the subject - outstanding from the last inspection.
- Opportunities to develop wider historical understanding from activities outside lessons.

136. The subject is taught to pupils up to the end of Year 9 as part of a humanities programme and is taught in half-termly cycles, alternating with geography. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

137. There was no history teaching to observe at the time of the inspection and judgements have been based on discussion with the co-ordinator, analysis of the pupils' work and an examination of display materials and school records for the subject.

138. The pupils make satisfactory progress in history. Although the teaching is good, and pupils learn well, the schemes of work for the subject are not yet in place and consequently, pupils' achievements over time are only satisfactory. Between Year 7 and 9, pupils begin to refine their sense of time and chronology. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) can securely distinguish between old and new and have an awareness of old and new in relation to historical artefacts and local topography. They can produce increasingly sophisticated time lines of events in British and European history. More able pupils can establish basic relationships concerning the dynastic politics leading to the Norman Conquest of 1066. By the end of Year 9, pupils have increased their reasoning and deductive skills and are able to produce reasoned arguments in relation to who was responsible for the murder of Archbishop Beckett.

139. Teaching and learning are good. Individual units of work contain very well considered sequences of activities; for example, dealing with the background to the Norman invasion where individual research skills are emphasised. Later, pupils discussed the claim of Matilda to the throne after the disaster of the White Ship and the death of her brother and the main points were listed. Good use of empathy and drama is made to reinforce knowledge and understanding of the complexities of relationships between church and state in medieval Britain. This variety of approach enables all pupils to enjoy their historical study and speak positively of it. A greater emphasis should be given to developing activities outside lessons to widen the access of pupils to the subject. Pupils' attitudes to history and their behaviour are very good, because of the good quality of teaching, and contribute to the depth and pace of learning. Pupils show particular interest in both role-play and recorded work, for example dealing with the extent to which medieval monarchs were in control of their land and people. Pupils are prepared to use initiative and persist when looking for information, for example in relation to how and why the Bayeux Tapestry was made. In this, and other topics, pupils use appropriate CD-ROMs and Internet websites to add to their historical knowledge and understanding.

140. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has audited the department's resources. Topics have been updated and there is a good balance in the developing schemes of work between appropriate historical content and the skills necessary for investigation and analysis. The co-ordinator has established networks with other professional sources to assist in the development of history and there is good capacity for the provision in history to improve further.

141. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Schemes of work are currently being revised by the newly appointed co-ordinator and a carefully considered framework has been produced. This sequences historical topics for each year group well and relates relevant geographical work to historical topics such as those dealing with medieval realms where appropriate European map work is undertaken. This strengthens opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning in both curriculum areas. Resources are not adequate for all the topics of study and the low level of funding identified in the last inspection has not yet been fully addressed. Schemes of work need to be more detailed as to the expectations of achievements for pupils with different educational needs.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall the provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Good development in the provision, especial regarding equipment and specialist accommodation.
- The quality of the teaching and especially the well planned lessons.
- The computer club which supplements learning well for the pupils who attend.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The reliability of the intranet.
- The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning and communication.
- The amount of time for learning information and communication technology.
- The progress of pupils with severe and complex needs.
- The access to equipment for pupils in wheelchairs and with sensory disabilities.

142. Good progress has been made in developing the ICT provision since the last inspection. The provision for ICT is good and the school now has a dedicated ICT room with 10 networked computers. The room is used well for ICT lessons by the specialist teacher and is just beginning to be booked by other teachers, to enhance learning in other subjects, such as in mathematics. The inconsistency in the functioning of the intranet, and the difficulties in logging onto the Internet, has resulted in a loss of confidence by some staff. Severe problems have occurred over the past six months and it has been difficult for the school to resolve these with the network provider. However, overall ICT is used insufficiently to support pupils' learning or to enhance the communication of those pupils who find it difficult to speak. The teaching of ICT in the specialist lessons is good, but with only one lesson of 50 minutes per week per group, pupils' progress is only satisfactory. There is not enough time for pupils to learn all that they need, especially for higher-level award-bearing courses. The school's strong commitment to the well organised and successful computer club enhances the provision and many pupils volunteer for this at lunchtime and after school.

143. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve soundly. Pupils in Year 7 recognise and label parts of a computer and most competently log on to the school's network. Some need help because of their physical difficulties. Pupils are often rewarded with certificates for their efforts, and one of the first they receive is recognition for being able to log on. Pupils can load and save their work but some need to help to ensure that they have saved to the correct location on the hard drive. Most are able to print their work and recognise that it could be sent to one of two printers in the ICT suite. They are pleased with their results and get a great sense of achievement when they successfully produce a piece of work, such as in a lesson on data handling when they typed in data and produced a block graph which they were able to interpret.

144. By Year 9, they have built upon their skills of undertaking basic searches of the Internet to refining their 'safe' searches to gain information more accurately and efficiently. They are able to use shortcuts such as selecting a previously used web address from a drop down menu. In one lesson on refining information, they successfully researched Commonwealth Games flags and emblems from the past and, in pairs, recorded their findings on a worksheet.

145. Pupils in Year 11 are competent users of ICT and can clearly identify reasons for using ICT in general and the Internet, in particular in their research work. They use a publishing program to create designs for their coursework for moderation. They are well versed in the idea of how to lay work out and to respond to the needs of the audience. They set their work in a frame and make good use of known web sites to choose photographs of objects which they import into their designs. They cut and paste easily and use techniques to create interesting shaped text. The pupils undertake Oxford and Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) modules of work in Year 10 and 11 which gain them awards, such as inputting and displaying text in word processing to create letter or poetry layouts or a curriculum vitae (CV). They are very motivated to achieve these and in 2001 pupils gained up to three of these units, mostly at grades 1 or 2 and occasionally at grade 3. Post 16 pupils build on their skills to create linked pages in a multimedia presentation, 'all about me'. They import pictures, consider the size and style of the fonts and begin to learn how pages can be linked.

146. Although work in other subjects enhances pupils' understanding and skills in ICT, such as the use for data handling in mathematics and the use of software to compose in music, this is carried out inconsistently, at present, and staff do not have a clear overview of the skills being developed in ICT lessons term-by-term, so they can plan their use of ICT. Some elements of the curriculum are not taught sufficiently, such as control, modelling and monitoring and this serves to narrow pupils' experiences and limits their progress.

147. Pupils with the most complex needs are now taught individually by the ICT specialist and have intensive support for developing, for instance, their use of switches and their access to software. However, their everyday use of ICT is limited and ICT does not play enough of a part in their life in school in their specialist base. There is insufficient use of software to enable pupils to learn and communicate at the level at which they are capable. This means that, overall, their progress in ICT is unsatisfactory.

148. The quality of teaching is good and lessons are well prepared, although the network resources do not always work, even when they have been previously tested; this is a source of frustration for the teacher and the pupils. The use of visual support materials helps pupils remember the sequence of menus they need to go through to get where they want and support staff are often readily at hand to guide pupils. They do this well for basic functions but some lack the knowledge to guide pupils for more advanced work such as using the Internet or to identify when the software is not working properly. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher explains clearly what the pupils are to learn. The teacher makes the lessons interesting by providing suitable challenges for the pupils and by praising their efforts, and often identifies teaching points from what the pupils have done or found. As a result, pupils listen well and are really keen learners in lessons. Good use is made of the school's new interactive white board to demonstrate procedures and for getting pupils to use it as a touch screen. However, some teachers are not fully familiar with it and do not use its full capabilities. Activities are frequently organised so that pupils work in pairs and share information with each other; this enhances their social development and is a strong feature of the teaching. The pace of lessons is brisk, but they are often too short and there is little time for plenary sessions, to explore pupils' knowledge or assess and reinforce what they have learned. Homework, supports pupils' learning well.

149. The leadership and management of the subject is good and the co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of the subject. She is aware of the weaknesses in the use of computers throughout the school but works hard to support staff and enhance pupils' skills through the activities provided outside lessons. She has little time to monitor the use of ICT across the school or the quality of the teaching of the ICT by other staff. Assessment is good. It is well tied in to what is intended for pupils to learn and used to modify and adapt subsequent lessons and programmes. The support for individual pupils' learning by the co-

ordinator in very strong and she has a very good personal knowledge of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses in ICT. The room is well laid out for the ambulant pupils, but for those with physical disability there are access issues. They do not have enough space and some find it very difficult to manoeuvre around the room or get close to a computer because of the height of the benching. The co-ordinator is aware of these issues and does her best to ensure that their disability is not a barrier to their learning. There are suitable aids and adaptations, such as keyguards and small keyboards for some pupils. However, if pupils are not at their usual computer they may well not have the equipment they need. In one lesson, during the inspection, a visually impaired pupil could not use his regular computer as it was not working, so used one without a large flashing pointer. The result was that he was unable to see the normal pointer and needed a great deal of help from an adult, in order to achieve what he was more than capable of achieving independently.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

### French

The provision for French is **good**.

#### **Strengths:**

- The leadership of the subject and the co-ordinator's strong commitment for improvement.
- The detailed assessments made on pupils' skills.
- The good teaching and interesting activities and resources used.
- The strong contribution that French makes to pupils' self-esteem, listening skills and cultural skills.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- The opportunities pupils have to write in French.
- The detail in day-to-day planning.

150. Only a small number of lessons were observed in French during the inspections. Judgements reflect these, the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils. There has been a good improvement in the school's provision for French since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has further defined the French programmes of study, has begun a detailed assessment profile, linked to National Curriculum Levels, and has extended her teaching style so that there is more emphasis on interaction and use of phrases and sentences. This means that higher-attaining pupils are stretched more and pupils gain more practice in hearing and using the language.

151. Pupils' achievements and progress in French are now good overall in relation to their special educational needs. During Year 7, pupils acquire vocabulary steadily, including a range of social phrases and sayings. They greet each other in French using greetings such as *Bonjour!* and *Comment ça va?* and say who they are, using correct French. They learn simple French vocabulary such as numbers and days of the week. By Year 9, pupils are able to use everyday French vocabulary to identify and buy simple foodstuffs and can express preferences for a variety of French foods, such as various kinds of drinks, fruit and cheese, labelling their favourites by copying vocabulary. They know a range of vocabulary linked to the classroom and home and take great pleasure in trying to pronounce appropriately the French they know. Pupils in Year 10 discuss a typical school day and attempt to use key constructions such as *j'arrive, je vais, je préfère*. Higher attainers do this confidently; lower attainers listen attentively to their classmates and use their answers to

help their own. Pupils' response in French is very good. They listen carefully and are keen to try out new words and phrases; they complete simple worksheets carefully and quickly. Pupils encourage each other and some spontaneously comment on how good another's answer and accent was.

152. Teaching in French is good overall. It is best when the teacher uses French as a main source of communication in the lesson and has identified a clear role for support staff. In these lessons support staff are used well as models for children and to encourage them. The pace of the lessons is very good and the teacher encourages the children to be ambitious and try out new phrases and vocabulary. In lessons where there are weaknesses the emphasis is on vocabulary, rather than more extended communication through French. Relationships are very good and humour and role-play are used very well in French to support learning. A range of good teacher-made materials and games and good use of display engages pupils' interest and supports their understanding well. The teacher's informal assessment and planning on a day-to-day basis is good. However, written short-term planning is limited and there is a need to improve this to protect pupils' progress and ensure that any other staff teaching the subject can carry on using the set planning.

153. Provision for French is strengthened by contacts with local schools and colleges. Individual pupils achieve very well in French by the end of Year 11 - at the time of the inspection one pupil was completing a GCSE course at Woodchurch High School and talked with pride of his achievements in this area. A visit to France further motivates pupils and extends their learning. Long-term and medium-term planning is good overall and well tied into National Curriculum Programmes of Study. However, links are not always specified in these plans. Emphasis in the subject is on listening and responding, although the other attainment targets in the subject are addressed. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to look carefully at the range of written and reading experiences provided to ensure pupils have even more opportunity to see written French and to practice its use. A good assessment profile is being developed for individual pupils which documents their understanding and use of French well and will be linked carefully into National Curriculum and 'P' Levels.

154. French is well led by a non-specialist teacher, who is ambitious for the subject and recognises the strong contribution that French makes to pupils' self-esteem, listening skills and cultural skills. The subject development plan aims to draw on local and regional resources such as a nearby language college - and plans to make appropriate links with a French school. She has worked hard to improve her skills, is a reflective practitioner and has made good use of in-service training and advisory support. Ideas from courses attended have been well integrated into her teaching and the French programme of study. Resources for French are adequate and well supported by teacher made materials. Computers are being increasingly used to support pupils' learning and give pupils the opportunity to practice what they have learned in lessons.

## MUSIC

The provision in music is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- The extended educational activities music programme and workshops.
- The way the subject support pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.
- Good teaching with well adapted activities relevant to the needs of the pupils.
- A rich and relevant curriculum.
- The enthusiasm and good leadership of the co-ordinator.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Singing throughout the school.
- The use of music standard and non-standard musical notation.
- The need for a broader range of instruments.
- The tracking of pupils' progress.
- Limited space in the music room, especially for pupils in wheelchairs, and the acoustics in the hall.

155. Although only a small number of lessons were seen in music during the inspection, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' records, and discussions with teachers and pupils indicates there has been a good improvement in the provision for music since the last inspection. There have been improvements in the detail and emphases within the programmes of study offered. These are now well planned to incorporate all aspects of the National Curriculum. The modular approach ensures that pupils have access to a broad curriculum and that there are high expectations of their involvement and understanding. Some very good workshops, including those during the Wednesday afternoon extended activities, and visits to local performances enhance provision and pupils' skills further.

156. Throughout the school, pupils make sound and sometimes good progress in music over time. In their performance skills, they learn to start and stop on cue, to copy simple rhythms and beat time to a song that they are learning for an assembly. They take turns in demonstrating the sound patterns they produce. They listen carefully to their teacher and are keen to try out new instruments and melodies, joining in well, for example, with a song they are practising for assembly. During Years 7 to 9, they learn to record the notes they play and the tunes they compose using simple notation and comment on the feelings that music evokes in them. They listen to and consider the impact of music in films. Pupils with more severe and complex needs learn to take their turn and keep simple rhythms; they are helped to play simple notes and rhythm patterns on key boards in time with taped music and join in very well with this. Individual pupils in this group beat a perfect rhythm as they do this and show huge enjoyment of the lesson. During Years 10 and 11, pupils think carefully about how music is used in the world around them, for example in advertisements and how this contributes to the message. They have a growing musical vocabulary and use words such as 'mood', 'pitch' and rhythm, can identify the main instruments that are playing within a piece. They understand that music must convey the right effect. Pupils make up simple accompaniments to a range of sea shanties and perform readily in front of each other, although their singing is underdeveloped. Higher-attaining pupils know the names of a number of classical singers and composers and talk about the 'dynamics' of the pieces they hear. One higher-attaining pupil is on his way to becoming an accomplished pianist and has a natural talent for the instrument.

157. Teaching is uniformly good and pupils' enthusiasm strong; lessons are well planned and the recently appointed specialist teacher adapts well to the specific needs of individual

groups of pupils including those with more complex needs. No time is lost in lessons and pupils receive clear feedback as to what it is that they are doing that is good. This enables all to improve on and celebrate their ideas and performance and supports pupils' progress very well. Pupils' learning in lessons is good, but some aspects of music such as composition and appreciation were not taught systematically previously and so progress over time is satisfactory. Pupils' response to their music lessons is carefully evaluated week by week and at the end of units of work, but there is a need to extend these assessments further to monitor pupils' progress in all elements of music. Music and singing is used in a number of classrooms to settle and involve pupils, but could be used more to support listening and involvement and to signal routines, particularly with those pupils with more complex needs. Its use is surprisingly limited in assemblies, although the co-ordinator is trying to introduce singing and musical appreciation more into these and the school's everyday life.

158. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy music. Individual pupils who have some instrumental skills are encouraged to pursue them, although there is no formal instrumental tuition at the school. Pupils collaborate well in lessons, which are well organised to ensure that they learn from each other and that their individual education plans (IEPs) targets are met. They join in all musical activities enthusiastically. Their attitudes and behaviour in music are good and often very good. Support staff generally make a strong contribution to music lessons and work well with the teacher. This was particularly so in a lesson for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD), where support staff constantly reinforced pupils' musical attempts and helped them to join in and celebrated their music making. This meant that despite the very complex difficulties of many of the group almost all were on task throughout and all made small but significant gains in their awareness, musical contribution, listening and co-operation.

159. The curriculum for music is now good and contributes very strongly to pupils' self-confidence, speaking and listening skills and personal development. Pupils are proud of their achievements in music and want to show them to others. There is a carefully thought out curriculum that draws on themes which are relevant to the pupils' experiences and links into other aspects of their learning. Music makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural understanding, through the programme taught and the conscious provision of opportunities for musical appreciation, composition and performance, which allow staff pupils to celebrate and experience each others and visitors' music making. End-of-unit assessments evaluate pupils' responses to what has been taught and allow new learning targets to be identified. These targets need to be related more formally to National Curriculum and 'P' Levels in order that pupils' progress can be monitored systematically in all elements of the music curriculum. In addition, not enough use is made of simple musical notation and recording of musical terms by both teacher and pupils.

160. Resources for music are good and include a range of music technology, multicultural percussion, small keyboards and some computer software. There is, however, a need for wider access to a broader range of musical instruments. Although good use is made of the hall for workshops and larger group teaching, the acoustics in the hall are difficult and the music room itself is too small for pupils to experiment with sound and melodies without disturbing others. This is particularly so when pupils with complex needs and wheelchair users are within the group and constrains the ways in which the lessons can be organised, although the co-ordinator manages this very well. In addition, because the room is also the humanities base, storage is limited for both subjects.

161. Music is well led by the enthusiastic co-ordinator who, though new to the school, is an experienced music co-ordinator and is applying her mainstream skills and experience well in this context. She is ambitious for the subject and all aspects of her planning and evaluation



are strong. An appropriate development plan is in place, including plans to introduce accreditation. She has been well supported by other staff and the senior management team in adapting lessons to meet the pupils' needs and has high but realistic expectations of pupils. She works hard to provide a rich and stimulating curriculum to pupils, including a range of workshops led by musical groups and professional musicians and various visits that further enrich pupils' musical experiences.

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

Overall the provision for PSHE is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- The teacher's subject knowledge and the good quality of teaching and learning
- The way topics are developed and scenarios produced for pupils to consider moral, social and ethical issues.
- The contribution to pupils' personal development, especial the moral and social aspects.
- The work of the co-ordinator.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The provision of artefacts.
- The recording of pupils' progress in the subject.

162. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught as a discrete subject and includes an appropriate emphasis on citizenship. The school's ethos of care and concern for pupils and the promotion of their personal skills, support make a strong contribution to pupils' learning in PSHE. Role play has an important part in PSHE lessons dealing with difficult life choices dealing not only with sex and drugs, but the wider issue of personal relationships including bullying. Productive links with external agencies including voluntary groups and the police to reinforce and enrich learning in aspects of drug abuse. Similarly, the sex education policy is regularly updated and complies with local and national requirements. Sex education learning is very well matched to the particular circumstances of pupils in the school. Pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, particularly in reasoning and problem-solving skills.

163. By the end of Year 11, and sometimes before it, many pupils have a good grasp of some of the dilemmas which may face them during later adolescence and adult life for example in managing conflict and how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse. Their understanding of the health implications of sexual activity and the impact of drugs is less specific and accurate, but nevertheless, provides a framework for rational views and decisions. In the lessons observed, pupils develop self-respect and consideration for others, and exhibit tolerance for the views of other people.

164. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The knowledge staff have of the subject and of individual pupils is good and well supported by materials provided by the co-ordinator. Planning is good and work builds on what pupils have learned before. Learning support assistants are well briefed and work confidently with pupils on an individual and small-group basis, for example in a lesson observed on smoking. Teachers provide interesting and imaginative ways of illustrating issues and providing scenarios which promote pupils' moral and social development. The well chosen topics, which are relevant to pupils' age and stage of development, prepare them well for adult life. For instance, as they move through the school, pupils become increasingly aware of the importance of marriage for family life, of the need for stable and loving relationships, and particularly, respect, love and care. More able

pupils make particularly good progress in developing their knowledge, communication skills and understanding which enhance their ability to make independent decisions, for example about the appropriateness of using drugs such as tobacco and alcohol. The recording of the pupils' progress could be given greater emphasis in the school's range of record keeping.

165. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has good links with staff who provide both careers guidance and those dealing with a targeted group of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD). Links with external agencies are strong, particularly with regard to drugs and sex education. Staff are aware of what needs to be done in continuing to develop the subject, for example in the acquisition of more artefacts and visual stimuli to support the learning of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Monitoring is effective and ensures an appropriate entitlement for pupils across the school. The co-ordinator is well trained in a wide range of aspects in the subject and provides clear, appropriate and well documented advice to other teaching staff and learning support assistants.

166. There has been good progress in this subject area since the last inspection. The quality of planning and documentation has improved and assessment reflects whole school policies. The co-ordinator has disseminated sound advice and support regarding both the content of the subject and appropriate teaching strategies. Written and audio visual resources are improving and are often both contemporary and of good quality. Additional artefacts, and objects of reference need to be secured in order to meet the educational needs of a steadily changing school population.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is a significant strength of the school and is **very good**.

### Strengths:

- Very good teaching by a knowledgeable specialist who is very adept at choosing and adapting activities to match the wide range of needs of the pupils.
- The very good achievements of pupils.
- The strength of swimming.
- The strong emphasis on subject vocabulary which helps pupils' learning and contributes to the development of their literacy skills.
- There is a good range of activities outside lessons and outdoor, adventurous activities, which includes all pupils.
- Good liaison with physiotherapists.

### Areas for improvement:

- The use of information and communication technology.

167. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils in all year groups now make very good progress in physical education. Other aspects of the subject's strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and the concerns raised about the involvement of physiotherapists and the shortcomings in the changing areas have been successfully addressed.

168. The achievement of pupils is very good and by the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils in swimming enter the school pool confidently and move around unaided. They use buoyancy aids to practice floating and for leg-kicking exercises. One pupil, in particular, has made remarkable progress in his swimming and was selected for the Wirral team in the

Merseyside Youth games. Pupils build their skills towards achieving swimming awards for basic floatation. Lower-attaining pupils learn to relax in the water and to float with adult support. Pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) achieve their targets in the water and work alongside one another and co-operate with staff. In athletics, higher-attaining pupils run to complete a circuit and understand the importance of trying to beat their previous time. They remember the correct route and run well. In the throwing activities, they perform tasks such as shot put well after watching the teacher's demonstration. Most pupils achieve the learning goals set for them by staff. They understand key words such as, *forwards/backwards, fast /slow*, and increase their awareness of how their bodies move.

169. By Year 11, lower attaining students show awareness of names for parts of the body during exercises in the swimming pool. They float on their fronts and on their backs with floatation aids and adult support, stretch their limbs and kick their legs. Pupils in the pool respond well to music, recognising different musical rhythms and tempos and move their arms to follow the beat. The progress made by pupils in all lessons is often very good due to the very good teaching. They understand the routines in physical education and swimming, such as the need to help with undressing and dressing themselves, showering, and entering the pool safely. They follow instructions well, work hard and enjoy the sessions. The behaviour and attitude of pupils is always very good and they co-operate fully with staff, wait patiently and take turns with one another. One higher-attaining pupil, having made very good progress in swimming and games now enjoys regular lessons with mainstream peers at the local high school. A strong feature of many lessons was the way more able pupils regularly and spontaneously helped those who were less able.

170. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good because of the very clear planning of what pupils will learn. In addition, the careful selection of activities and an extensive knowledge of pupil's individual learning, physical and other special educational needs, makes lessons relevant and challenging. Very good teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants and physiotherapists ensures a consistent approach. There is good attention to health and safety; for example, using hoists correctly to position pupils in the water, or to help when dressing. Teachers are also aware of, and are beginning to use, information and communication technology (ICT) to plan lessons and use digital cameras to record pupils' progress. Teaching contributes to the development of literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening. It also enables pupils to grow in confidence by developing social skills and self-awareness and contributes successfully to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

171. The subject is very well managed by a well qualified and experienced co-ordinator. Planning is efficient and carefully matched to pupils' needs, abilities and age. There are procedures in place to ensure that a consistent approach is kept between all involved in the teaching of physical education. Day-to-day assessment and evaluation of performance is good. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of adventurous and physical activities, such as cross country runs which include wheelchair users and tennis at venues off the school site, and residential opportunities at activity centres in Wales or the Lake District. Activities outside lessons include dance, weight training and additional swimming. There is very good liaison with physiotherapists who work well with staff to ensure that the physical needs of pupils are met. There is limited use of ICT, particularly for health related aspects of the subject such as fitness.

## POST 16

Overall the provision for Post 16 students is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- Good broad, balanced, relevant curriculum.
- A Post 16 curriculum which is now separate from the rest of the school.
- Students' attitudes and determination to succeed.
- Well-established transition arrangements for leaving school.
- Good quality teaching.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Some Post 16 students taught separately in the severe and complex learning difficulties base, do not have access to the same good quality of teaching or range of opportunities as other students.
- The focus of individual education plans targets in relation to Post 16 students' needs and preparation for adult life, especially in the community.

172. Students in the Post 16 department generally have a similar range of needs as the rest of the school, although this year there are fewer pupils with severe learning difficulties than usual. Post 16 students still do not have separate accommodation, although they are taught in some off-site locations during the week. Some severe and complex learning difficulties (SCLD) students are not wholly taught in the Post 16 department and do not have the same full range of opportunities as the rest of the students. For the most part, they are taught in the base with pupils, aged 11 to 19 years, who have SCLD, although they do have some lessons with their Post 16 peers.

173. The provision for students in further education is good overall. The curriculum is made particularly relevant for students and has a good range of subjects; it is broad and well balanced and includes the preferences expressed for further study by students when they enter this phase of their education. Each student receives a 'core' curriculum which includes communication, 'mathematics for life' and problem solving and decision making. The remaining curriculum is well considered and students study aspects of environmental science, music, careers, personal, social and health education, along with a mini-enterprise activities and a leisure option. Within this framework is a satisfactory opportunity for choice. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning adequately, though this provision is partly dependent on providers outside the school, such as the college of further education.

174. The department fulfil its aim to include students in social activities and this is a strong feature of the provision. Students mix well with pupils and students of other abilities within and beyond the school setting. Students of all abilities, including those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), participate in residential education, provided locally and in the Lake District on an annual basis.

175. The opportunities provided include study at a neighbouring Sixth Form and further education college and these are good. However, activities which enable students to specifically mix with the wider community are more limited; for example, when they are undergoing education and training in local further education colleges opportunities are limited to the sessions taught and not to the wider social contexts. A number of students build well on their opportunities in vocational education and, for instance, proceed to horticultural training in two regional agricultural colleges, specialist residential establishments which have opportunities for sheltered employment, and a number of independent adult charitable

organisations which also facilitate entry to employment training. Students speak positively of their curriculum experiences, including the opportunity to learn in non - school contexts. All students have well-established transition arrangements which prepare them well for leaving school and moving onto their next placement. These include a National Record of Achievement together with an individual action plan, a portfolio of evidence and details of nationally recognised and accredited achievements. A well-developed careers programme, which commences in Year 7, underpins this and has received external validation and recognition through the local Connexions service.

176. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall, and are sometimes good. In communication work, more able students express ideas and feelings with increasing clarity and confidence as they progress through the Post 16 phase. However, some students do not have the access to support for communication such as sign, symbols and technological aids that would help them to extend their basic skills further. Students of a wide range of ability have good keyboard skills when using computers, can open and close files and, with minimum support, can access the Internet to research information for their work. Their ICT skills develop well from the good support they get in school and at college. The school's computer club also makes a contribution to their learning. In physical education, some students are proficient swimmers with water skills that are close to those of their peers in mainstream education. Provision for developing numeracy skills is satisfactory. Students achieve increased independence through the emphasis on money transaction skills activities involving estimation. The use of shopping experiences in the local community supports this well and every encouragement is given for students to be involved in the paying for goods and helping them gain the skills to ensure they can identify they have the correct change. The students' progress is considerably enhanced by their extremely positive attitudes and behaviour within and outside lessons. This is a strength of the school reflecting both the care and ethos created by staff working in this department. Progression and integration are improving with more able students securing accreditation beyond, as well as within, the school

177. The achievement of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with challenging behaviour is satisfactory when they are taught with the Post 16 students but is unsatisfactory or sometimes poor when they are taught alongside pupils in the SCLD base. There is a lack of understanding of their personal needs, especially with regard to communication, and of how the planned curriculum should meet their academic needs and age-related needs. With appropriate support from learning assistants, however, this group integrates well with other Post 16 students within and outside lessons.

178. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and in several lessons during the inspection was very good. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning in lessons and their very positive attitudes to the courses they follow. The teaching of art, religious education and personal and social education are particular strengths of Post 16 provision and students make good progress in these subjects. These lessons are very well planned showing a clear understanding of the students' needs and a well chosen variety of activities which both motivate students and serve to deepen learning. However, numeracy needs to be more widely focused on skills for living and independence when students leave in Year 13 or 14. Teaching and support staff know their students well. This assists in developing mutual respect and students have good self-esteem and can relate to other less familiar adults in a confident and assured way. Behaviour, when accounting for the needs of specific students, is generally very good. Despite their disabilities, students concentrate very well for long periods and usually work to the best of their ability even in lessons dealing with more abstract ideas. This is because the work is well matched to their needs and builds well on what they have learned previously.

179. The leadership and management of the Post 16 provision are good and there is a clear and well informed vision for its future development. The comprehensive policy statement is regularly updated and subject to annual evaluation which involves staff, parents and students. Art has recently been added to the curriculum as a result of student feedback and, overall, the content of the learning opportunities offered matches the needs of students well. Staffing has been strengthened to bring in a more adult focused perspective on meeting the needs of students, particularly for those in transition to other education and training beyond Year 14.

180. Individual educational plans are adequately maintained and form the basis for specific student support in lessons. However, the targets, although very relevant, tend just to focus on the learning skills needed by students and lack a perspective on what is particularly relevant for learning in the Post 16 phase. The school should continue to monitor the balance of targets set to ensure that relevant academic and social targets are stated and are being met.

181. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although the department was not specifically reported upon, a major shortcoming was identified and has been adequately addressed. Post 16 education is now a discrete area of school's provision and the school has worked hard to provide learning opportunities which meet the needs of individual students. There is a good broad and balanced curriculum with very good progression to other post-school provision, including horticulture and other vocational training. This is reflected also in the steadily widening range of accreditation which now includes endorsement by the Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) examining board and qualifications such as the Certificate of Achievement as well as national swimming bodies.

182. To improve further, the school should continue to monitor the relevance and extent of preparing students for independent living. This should acknowledge the scope for students to access education, training and other community facilities from their home as well as school setting.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall the provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Good teaching and subject knowledge, in particular.
- The support for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties, to enable them to be fully involved in lessons.
- The local community is used well to support learning.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The use of communication aids to support some pupils' contributions in lessons.
- Assessment - outstanding as an issue from the last inspection.
- Pupils' use of information and communication technology to support their learning.

183. There were only a few opportunities to observe the teaching of religious education during the period of the inspection. However, from observation of these lessons, an analysis of the teachers' planning, sampling of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils, their achievements and progress are satisfactory across the school.

184. By the end of Year 9, pupils discuss, and are beginning to understand, some of the different world religions and the role they play in society. Year 9 pupils talk about stories that Jesus told and discuss the work of the disciples. During the year they study celebrations connected to a number of faiths, for example, Christmas, Divali and the Chinese New Year. They look at pictures, listen to music and handle items associated with faiths carefully as they listen and develop ideas of living in a multi-faith world. The pupils are beginning to have an awareness of the different beliefs and values of faith groups.

185. In Years 10 and 11, the pupils extend their experiences of religion to include an awareness of ways in which followers of Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism celebrate festivals. More able pupils remember key words and facts about different religions. By the end of Year 11, the pupils recall special occasions in the life of Jesus. They visit places of worship such as the local parish church and are shown the key features of the building, including altar and the font. They understand that this is a place of worship for Christians.

186. The quality of the teaching and learning of religious education is good. In the three lessons observed it was never less than good and in one lesson was excellent. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and use a range of appropriate resources, especially artefacts from different religions to interest pupils. The pupils in Year 7 learn the importance of pilgrimages for Christians and the followers of most faiths as part of their work on 'Journeys', the teacher explaining well the significance of pilgrimages to different places. Very good class management, based on very good relationships between teachers and pupils, ensures that pupils are very interested and listen intently to each other. However, in some lessons insufficient use is made of support assistants during the whole-class introduction to the lesson. Pupils with additional special educational needs (SEN) including SCLD pupils are usually fully involved because of the good support they receive, although pupils with communication difficulties are not always able to participate fully because of a lack of suitable communication aids.

187. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and resources has improved. However, the concerns expressed in the previous report about assessment remain. The new co-ordinator is aware of this and has included a review of the assessment of pupils' achievements in the subject in her subject development plan.

188. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator, personally, makes use of the Internet to research the topics taught to supplement the schools resources. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, by giving opportunities for pupils to study other religions and special occasions and special people. Visits to the local community including local churches also contribute to pupils' learning. The religious education policy is linked to the locally Agreed Syllabus; however, the school's arrangements for collective worship make only a limited contribution to the pupil's spiritual and religious education. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop more links with other faiths locally. Resources are improving and the school is aware of the need to ensure the units of work for religious education are well resourced and to make better use of available technology so that pupils can learn more effectively, for example, by using CD-ROM and the Internet themselves.