

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PENS MEADOW SCHOOL**

Stourbridge

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103883

Acting headteacher: Mrs K Grew

Reporting inspector: Mr M G Whitehead  
20161

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 196647

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special school for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ridge Hill Brierley Hill Road Wordsley Stourbridge West Midlands
Postcode:	DY8 5ST
Telephone number:	01384 818945
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Buxton
Date of previous inspection:	19 <sup>th</sup> May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21061	M Whitehead	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9708	S Daintrey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3055	C Tombs	Team inspector	Science Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
17171	M Last	Team inspector	Mathematics History Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
32055	W Davies	Team inspector	English Art and design Special educational needs	
4989	L Lewis	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20745	D Williams	Team inspector	Design and technology Religious education The Foundation Stage	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Pens Meadow School is a day school for pupils and students whose ages range from three to 19 years. All pupils and students have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and almost a quarter of the pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. There are 67 pupils on roll comprising 50 boys and 17 girls. Twenty-seven of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school's catchment area covers the whole of that of the Dudley Local Education Authority, and there is one pupil from outside of the borough. There are seven pupils in the school from ethnic minority groups and two of these have English as an additional language. The special educational needs of the pupils admitted to the school are becoming increasingly complex each year.

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

Pens Meadow is a good school which provides a good quality of teaching overall, with some excellent teaching for pupils who are aged 14 to 16 years and the students in the Further Education Unit. As a result of this, pupils develop good attitudes to work and achieve well. The acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and the senior management team provide strong leadership and management for the school. The school continues to provide good value for money.

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

- Staff teach and manage pupils well. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the special educational needs of the pupils are good.
- The school engenders very positive attitudes and values amongst the pupils and students. The provision for pupils' and students' personal development is very good.
- The work of the nursery nurses in supporting the pupils', students and the teachers is very good.
- There are excellent relationships between staff, pupils and students.
- The quality and levels of integration with mainstream primary and secondary schools and local colleges of further education, including social education centres, are very good.
- The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils and students is very good and the cultural development of pupils and students is excellent.
- The school takes good care of the pupils and students; it has very effective links with parents and provides parents with very good information about the progress of their children.

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

- The appointment of a substantive headteacher as soon as possible in order to secure the leadership of the school.
- Accommodation for the teaching of food technology and science is in need of improvement. The school does not have a separate multi-sensory area for the teaching of pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school needs to provide additional resources to meet the increasingly complex additional special needs of the pupils and students, and to ensure that there is relevant in-service training for staff, concerning the teaching of autistic pupils.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement has been good since the last inspection which took place in 1997. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development has improved and the provision for pupils' cultural development is now excellent. There are now accredited courses available for pupils and students and this is a significant improvement. There has been improvement in the provision for English, art and design and technology.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	<b>Key</b>  very good      A  good              B  satisfactory      C  unsatisfactory   D  poor                E
speaking and listening	B	B	A	A	
reading	B	B	A	A	
writing	B	B	A	A	
mathematics	B	B	A	A	
personal, social and health education	B	B	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	A	A	

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

Pupils achieve very well in art, information and communication technology and music. Senior pupils are very successful as they complete the units in the accredited courses. The achievement of all pupils up to the age of 14 years is good. Pupils who are aged 14 years and over achieve very well. Pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, and pupils with autism achieve equally well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are happy to be in lessons. They are usually very interested in the activities offered and respond very well to encouragement by the staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave well in lessons, at lunchtime and around the school. Their behaviour when on community visits is exemplary. Those pupils with challenging behaviour are managed very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. As they move up the school, pupils and students make very good progress in developing social and independence skills. They have excellent relationships with staff and show very high levels of respect for each other.
Attendance	Good. Pupils and students like coming to school. Some younger pupils are not able to attend regularly because of their medical conditions.



The excellent relationships which pupils have with their teachers and nursery nurses are a true reflection of the commitment of the staff and the willingness of the pupils. All members of the school, staff and pupils alike, treat each other with the greatest respect.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good	Very good

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

The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education throughout the school is good. The quality of teaching for pupils and students aged 14 to 19 years is very good. The management of pupils, the use of support staff and resources and the use of homework throughout the school are very good. The school meets the needs of pupils well. During the inspection, 97 per cent of the teaching that was observed was satisfactory or better, 47 per cent was very good or better and three per cent was unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is good and provides pupils and students with many rich and varied experiences to prepare them for the transition from school to the next stage in their lives. The school has disapplied all pupils from the need to learn a modern foreign language. The school's curriculum meets all statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good arrangements for the pupils have been agreed with the parents. One pupil is very new to the school and is being supported well with relevant agencies providing additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are very good opportunities throughout the school day for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils. The school provides a safe and orderly environment for pupils. All staff have a close and caring knowledge of individual pupil's needs. Effective assessment arrangements monitor accurately pupils' progress and personal development.

The school has a very good partnership with parents which helps pupils to make good progress in their learning and development. The quality and range of educational inclusion into mainstream primary and secondary schools, and colleges of further education, are major strengths of the school. Since the last inspection, there has been a very significant improvement in the provision for students at age 16 plus. The accredited courses offered to pupils and students aged 16 or over are now rich, varied and appropriate.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and other key staff is good. They lead by example and their good management procedures have a positive impact on the achievement of the pupils. There is continued commitment to high standards and continuous improvement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors take good care to monitor the school improvement plan, the curriculum and finances. They ensure that the school meets statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	All aspects of the school are monitored and evaluated. Data is carefully analysed to inform practice and help the setting of realistic targets.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its existing resources well to further its carefully planned developmental targets and to enhance the achievement of the pupils and students.

There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the school curriculum. The school provides satisfactory accommodation for the pupils and there is also a satisfactory amount of appropriate resources available to teachers and pupils. The school provides good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approachability of the school. The open door policy.</li> <li>• The school's high expectations.</li> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The dedication of the staff.</li> <li>• The information that they receive concerning their children's progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work their children do at home.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• Communications with parents.</li> <li>• Provision for autistic pupils.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The school works hard to involve parents in preparation for learning that can be done at home; in this way, the pupils do receive sufficient, appropriate homework. Parents' concerns about extra-curricular activities are unfounded as the school provides a very good range of activities outside lessons. Communications with parents are very good. Inspectors agree that the school needs to improve its provision for the changing population of pupils with increasingly complex needs. The school is aware, through its own consultation, of parents' concerns about communications and provision for autistic pupils. Parents' concerns are not justified as the school has already begun a programme of staff training to meet the changing needs of the pupils and students, and the special requirements of autistic pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils and students have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and all have been disapplied from the national assessment programmes. A modern foreign language is not taught within the school as all pupils have been disapplied. The severity of pupils' learning difficulties results in all pupils working towards Level 1. However, all students follow accredited courses when they are working in the Further Education Unit.
2. Pupils' achievement overall is good. It is very good for 14 to 19-year-olds. The achievement of all pupils and students in mathematics, history and geography is satisfactory. Achievement in English, design and technology, physical education and religious education is good. Achievement in science is good but is inhibited by the lack of specialist teaching facilities for the senior pupils. Consequently, pupils are unable to carry out sufficient experimental and investigative work. Achievement in information and communication technology, art and music is very good. The school acknowledges and rewards the achievements of all pupils and students at all levels. This is done through a series of internally produced certificates, which are highly valued by all.
3. By the time pupils reach the age of 16 years, many have gained certificates that are awarded for courses in the Accreditation of Life and Living Skills (ALL) programme. As students complete their time in the Further Education Unit, they are successful in following accredited courses in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network modules entitled 'Starting Out', 'Making Pictures' and 'Money'.
4. In order to achieve these levels of success, many pupils and students need the support and signed help of the adults in the school. This is taken into account when certificates are awarded and recognised as an essential way in enabling pupils and students to access these opportunities. This is a valuable experience for pupils and students and exemplifies the inclusiveness of the school.

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

5. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. Pupils are very happy and pleased to be at school. Their response in lessons is always at least satisfactory, and was very good or excellent in nearly half of the lessons seen. Attitudes are best in the two classes for the older age groups in the school. Pupils and students aged from 14 to 19 years are very interested in the rich range of learning opportunities offered to them and are able to participate fully because the activities are made accessible to them. Attitudes are also very good in the youngest class for children aged three to seven. These pupils are keen to learn, enjoy their lessons and make very good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils aged from eight to 14 years have good attitudes to learning, especially when the tasks are lively and varied and pitched to their level of understanding. When occasionally this is not the case, a few pupils lose interest and concentration. Pupils with more complex and profound special needs respond well to the efforts made by staff to motivate and encourage them to participate in activities. They take pride in their achievements and show pleasure when praised.
6. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors. They behave well in lessons. At lunchtimes, pupils of all ages and abilities eat very sensibly and show respect for the social occasion. Younger pupils play outside with due consideration

for each other. Older pupils and students behave with considerable maturity in their lunchtime club activities. Pupils' behaviour on visits out into the community is often excellent. For example, primary-aged pupils with autistic spectrum disorder behaved exceptionally well when using a cafe in a local leisure centre following their swimming lesson. Those pupils who, because of their disability, have difficulty in maintaining good behaviour at all times are very well managed and supported by staff. Very occasionally, due to particular personal circumstances, a few of these pupils lose self-control and carry out acts of sudden violence, often against staff or pupils. One of these led to a short exclusion earlier this year. The school's very good arrangements for dealing with pupils' behaviour ensure that these incidents remain isolated.

7. Relationships are excellent. Pupils have a very high respect for all the adults in the school and are very eager to please them by learning and behaving as well as they can. For example, a pupil with profound difficulties, and frustrated by his regressive condition, nevertheless showed great affection for the staff who have a deep and caring knowledge of his needs. The youngest pupils listen carefully to adults, are very good at taking turns and are very co-operative when working in small groups. Pupils in all classes show a high level of appreciation for each other's achievements. For example, in a history lesson for 14- to 16-year-olds, pupils of all abilities watched with pleasure as they took it in turns to present and video-record items showing what they had learnt about the life of Mozart. Ambulant pupils often help those in wheelchairs, for example by 'dancing' with them in the lunchtime disco. There is no evidence of bullying or any other form of harassment in the school.
8. Pupils' personal development is very good. Most of the youngest pupils can fetch and put on their coat independently at the end of the school day. They volunteer to take some cakes they made earlier in the day to the school secretary and help push the non-ambulant child to the hall. Primary-aged pupils help with tasks in classrooms, but occasionally opportunities are missed to develop their independence further. Secondary-aged pupils make very good progress in developing their social and independence skills. Students aged 16 to 19 are able, with support, to work together in a house in the local community, to serve afternoon tea to a visitor and clean up afterwards.
9. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development have all improved since the last inspection. Where these were generally positive four years ago, they are now a significant feature of the outcomes achieved by the school and have a strong and positive effect on the progress that pupils are able to make throughout their time at school.
10. The attendance of most pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their parents ensure that they attend whenever possible. There is no unauthorised absence. Attendance is good in the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and for students aged 16 to 19. The school's attendance rate is below that for similar schools and has declined since the last inspection, when it was over 91 per cent. This is because the school admits an increasing number of pupils, mainly in the younger age groups, who have significant health and medical problems which prevent their regular attendance.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good, with very good teaching for pupils aged 14 to 16 years and for students in the Further Education Unit. The high quality of teaching and the skilful management of the pupils by all staff are clear strengths of the school and ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teachers and nursery nurses have good knowledge and understanding of the individual special educational needs of the pupils and levels of understanding are very good. During the inspection, approximately half the teaching observed was very good or better. Two lessons were observed that were less than satisfactory due to lack of pace and unclear objectives.
12. The high quality of teaching in the school enables pupils to make good progress at all ages. The dedication of the staff is greatly valued by the pupils and their parents. Pupils are highly motivated by the actions of the staff all of whom have high expectations of the pupils and students. Pupils learn well throughout the school and very well between the ages of 14 and 19. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well to all pupils and students, and teachers take care to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils. There is no difference in the learning experiences enjoyed by boys and girls within the school, nor is there any difference according to age or ethnicity. Pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn well throughout the school.
13. Teaching in English is good throughout the school. Throughout the school, lessons are carefully planned and proceed at a brisk pace. Teaching in mathematics is good. Pupils gain well in their understanding of basic number patterns. They learn to count with confidence. Many pupils and students succeed in counting to five with accuracy. There is a very small minority of teaching that is less than satisfactory and this is where the tasks are not matched closely enough to pupils' individual attainment levels. Teaching in science is consistently good and is very good for pupils aged eleven to 14 years. Pupils achieve well and make good and very good progress. Lessons are well planned and prepared with a good range of activities and as a consequence, pupils participate with interest and enjoyment.
14. The school's strategies for teaching both literacy and numeracy skills are good. These strategies are used throughout the school and permeate other subjects, and teachers strive constantly to raise levels for the benefit of the pupils and students. The use of signing is also used as a part of the strategy and is very effective with the youngest pupils in the school. Further up the school, the use of signing to augment communication is inconsistent.
15. Throughout the school, teachers display good subject knowledge and competence in all areas. Lessons are well planned, except for the use of signing in some senior lessons, to meet the individual special needs of the pupils and to take account of their individual education plans. Every week, teachers meet to review pupils' individual education plans and to modify their lesson planning in the light of new knowledge and experience that they have concerning the pupils and their achievements. Teachers expect the pupils and students to work hard and present them with tasks that are demanding and motivating. In the very best lessons, teachers make the learning fun. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and really enjoy their learning.
16. The manner in which the teachers and nursery nurses manage the pupils is always very good and often excellent. They have a very clear understanding of the needs and difficulties being experienced by the pupils and work in close harmony with them. All staff make very good use of information and communication technology to help pupils to learn. Computers, tape recorders, electronic keyboards and electronic communication aids are in constant use throughout the school in all lessons where they are appropriate. Staff are highly skilled and

confident in the use of computers to help with both teaching and learning in the classrooms. They are well supported by the two information and communication technology co-ordinators who offer expert advice to all who ask, and give encouragement to everyone, staff and pupils alike.

17. The activities and progress of all pupils and students are carefully monitored and used effectively to guide planning for lessons and for individual programmes for pupils and students. Teachers and nursery nurses work closely with parents to help reinforce at home the learning that has taken place in school. This is the form that much of the 'homework' takes and often concerns individual programmes or activities to help with communication or personal and social development.
18. All pupils and students respond very well to the high quality of teaching that is provided for them. They are interested in and excited by the lessons. There are high levels of inclusion throughout the school. Teachers and nursery nurses ensure that all lessons can be clearly understood by all pupils and students, each at his or her own level. They help the pupils and students to reflect on what they have seen or heard or done. In this way, all pupils gain the maximum from the lessons. They enjoy learning and have a sense of achievement when they have completed a task. Teachers and nursery nurses are quick to praise pupils for their achievements both in and out of lessons. One young girl received genuine warm congratulations when she managed to ask permission, and walk from the classroom to the toilet, without support, despite her physical difficulties.
19. Teaching is not confined to the classroom or to lesson times, but takes place in every part of the school during every minute of the day. The school provides a complete learning experience for all pupils and students. This is a major strength of the school.

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

20. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall and are very good for 16- to 19-year-olds. Subjects are taught through a modular approach and meet statutory requirements. However, breadth and balance are an issue where, for example, geography, in the current term, has lower focus. Despite this, some topics which required pupils to visit local supermarkets, missed opportunities for consolidating the understanding of settlements and the various economic activities needed to support them. All pupils are disapplied from National Curriculum tests and all 11- to 16-year-olds are disapplied from modern foreign languages. This is replaced by a full and varied curriculum that includes personal, social and health education and work experience.
21. The school has clear educational priorities for its pupils and students and these are supported by a very good curriculum policy and schemes of work. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and their effectiveness in developing both of these key skills is good. There is good evidence from subject areas to support the increased use of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Teachers feel that the numeracy hour has 're-invigorated teaching'.
22. Teachers, well supported by the nursery nurses, make strenuous efforts to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is, for example, a lunchtime Gym Club (Monday), which attracts 14- to 19-year-olds and a Wednesday Club which, during the inspection, held a disco. For those who wanted a less noisy activity an alternative was provided where they could watch a video, play a table game or simply relax. During this quiet time, the school nurse was present to tend those with medical and physical needs. There is also a Saturday Club which meets once each half-term and it often lasts the day. In the recent past, there have been visits to The Mac

Centre, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and in February, the focus was on leisure with trampolining and water activities. Homework is not set in the way that it is in mainstream schools but the joint working between school and home is very good and covers feeding and toileting arrangements, and the home/school books are used well in this regard.

23. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a strong feature of the school and is very good. There is a very effective liaison between staff and other professionals from further education, social education centres, social services and in particular, the careers service, who work as a team to ensure that the transition from school at post-19 is the most appropriate for each individual. This process is closely linked to an impressive range of educational inclusion, both internally, and with mainstream primary and secondary schools, colleges of further education and social education centres. All pupils and students have the opportunity for a residential experience every other year which ranges from a children's farm, outdoor education residential centres and youth hostels. The governing body has agreed the content and organisation of its programme of sex education and has informed parents of their right to withdraw their children. Appropriate attention is given to drug awareness as and when this is deemed necessary.
24. 'Preparation for the future' is how the school describes its careers education. This programme is very good and is supported by a wide range of accredited courses. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is the main source of certification and has a range of interesting modules planned up to and including the summer term 2002. The Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) accreditation is also available to a few of the most able students. For pupils aged 14 to 16 years there is available a range of Accreditation of Life and Living Skills (ALL) modules. The school has established an enterprise team called 'Pots for all Seasons' as a part of the Dudley Training and Enterprise Council. The products are sold at various school events and a Saturday stall at the Merry Hill Centre. Profits from this venture are used to fund educational visits and individual experiences on educational courses. The school is very well supported by members of the local careers service who get to know the pupils and students well over time. Pupils and students benefit greatly from the very good links with the community.
25. Since the last inspection, the quality of the curriculum has been enhanced by the development of a range of age-appropriate learning opportunities, many of which are accredited for both 14- to 16-year-olds and those at post-16.

#### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.**

26. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
27. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. All classes incorporate times for reflection on the school day. Staff use these sessions to encourage pupils to celebrate their daily achievements, show consideration for others and talk about any difficulties. They often include a moment of collective worship, using means such as a prayer, a candle, a poem or music. The whole school meets weekly on a Friday afternoon for assembly when Christian and other religious festivals are celebrated, certificates are awarded and classes present some of their work. A wider range of subjects than at the last inspection now makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual development, notably religious education, art and design and design and technology. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils aged 11 to 13 were encouraged to link the making of hot cross buns to Easter.
28. Provision for pupils' moral development is also very good. It is based on the excellent role models provided by all staff, the excellent relationships they have with pupils and the very

effective behaviour policy and procedures. From the youngest age, pupils are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong and to treat others with respect. At events such as the Red Nose Day just before the inspection, pupils were encouraged to think about world poverty issues. Pupils are also taught to look after the environment; one of the older classes won a Princess of Wales Memorial Award for their work on recycling and for repainting two areas of the school.

29. Provision for pupils' social development is again very good. Parents are very pleased with the way in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible and to develop social skills in activities such as outings to shops. Many opportunities are provided in the youngest class for pupils to work together co-operatively. Eating and drinking at breaks and lunch-times are strongly promoted as social activities where pupils of all ages and abilities learn the importance of good manners and of communicating positively with adults and each other. The programme of personal, social and health education, the opportunities for integration both within and outside the school, the extra-curricular and residential activities and the many visits into the community all make a powerful contribution to pupils' social development as they move up the school. Provision is very strong for students aged 16 to 19 who spend approximately half their time in off-site learning activities and have opportunities to take part in projects such as the team enterprise 'Pots for All Seasons' in which they sell their products at a local shopping centre.
30. Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent. The school has responded with great vigour to the key issue in the last inspection to extend the opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. Pupils are now offered a wealth of experiences from all around the world which enrich the curriculum and their understanding of the diversity of the cultures around them. Cultural development is promoted through a wide range of workshops, assemblies, focus days, curriculum visits, visiting artists and musicians. For example, last term, ladies from a local Hindu centre helped the school run a Diwali Day when pupils, parents and governors were able to experience some of the religious and social customs associated with Indian culture. There is also a Saturday arts club which includes half-termly visits to art galleries, theatres, dance performances and museums. During the year, there have been numerous visitors to school supporting a range of cultural activities. There have been other visitors to the school, including a Columbian duo of musicians giving a flavour of South American music, local jazz musicians and a French juggler, who also opened his French cafe to pupils. There have been visits to the Barber Institute of Fine Art, The Birmingham Conservatoire as guests of a percussion teacher, a local synagogue and to other places of worship.

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

31. The school provides good care for pupils of all ages and abilities. There are many strengths in its provision. The school is a safe and orderly environment in which pupils can learn and develop. Teachers, nursery nurses, lunch-time supervisors, transport drivers and escorts all work together as a team to ensure that pupils are very well looked after and supervised throughout the school day. Staff have a close and caring knowledge of individual pupil's needs. A good feature is the recent introduction of pupil profiles which have been drawn up with the involvement of parents and sometimes the pupils themselves. These clearly show, for all adults in the school, the physical and learning characteristics for each pupil and what to do if an incident arises, such as an epileptic seizure.
32. The school has good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, protection, health and safety. Arrangements for child protection are good. The acting headteacher has had appropriate training and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. The school nurse works in very close partnership with the school to provide first aid and medical support to pupils, including



advising staff, administering medicines and accompanying pupils with complex medical needs on trips. Procedures for health and safety are well established and are continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are up-to-date and effective. For example, the arrangements for supervision at play times have been improved. The transport of pupils continues to be organised in a safe and efficient manner. The school has achieved a 'health promoting school' award but its work in this area is currently in abeyance because of the long-term absence of a member of staff.

33. Attendance procedures have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Despite these improved procedures, the attendance levels are not as high as they were at the time of the previous inspection. This is because the pupils who are now being admitted to the school have much more serious illnesses which result in their taking more time away from school. Staff are very aware of pupils' medical conditions which may prevent their regular attendance. Registers are computerised and are marked separately for the afternoon session, in accordance with requirements. The school secretary makes a very effective contribution to the monitoring and analysis of pupils' attendance.
34. The school's measures to promote good behaviour are very effective. All staff work together to provide consistent strategies to help pupils to improve their behaviour, where required. There is also very good involvement of parents and the educational psychologist. A wide range of rewards is offered to pupils to aid their motivation, including individual, class and whole-school systems. The behaviour and discipline policy is reviewed regularly and staff have appropriately identified the need for further training on physical intervention. The school has been very successful in creating a secure, caring and happy atmosphere based on excellent relationships which ensures that there is no oppressive behaviour, bullying or harassment.
35. The educational and personal support for pupils is good and contributes to their good progress and achievements. It maintains the standards noted in the previous inspection. The school has good knowledge of pupils' special needs, and support for pupils is well organised and targeted to meet their individual needs. For example, pupils are organised into appropriate groups with different teaching approaches and resources. Teachers of these groups assume a pastoral role and monitor pupils' progress and behaviour carefully through targets in individual education plans, which are regularly reviewed. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' communication and self-help skills, and to keeping parents involved and informed. Additional support is given to individuals and groups through the provision of nursery nurses and the services of speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, physiotherapists and teachers of the visually impaired and hearing impaired. There is a full-time nurse to meet and monitor the needs of those pupils with high medical dependency needs. The needs of pupils in the Further Education (FE) Unit are met through a range of vocational experiences and accredited courses, which take them

out into the community and develop their social and life skills. Record of achievement files are built up over their time in school and reflect pupils' progress, achievements and personal development.

36. Assessment information is used well to guide teaching and planning and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. All pupils have individual education plans which set clear targets linked to those identified in the annual review. This is used to inform learning objectives in teachers' subject lesson plans and ensures that teachers build on prior learning. Targets in individual education plans are regularly reviewed and evaluated and all information is shared with parents. Pupils' work is stored, dated, annotated and levelled. Photographs and videos are also used as evidence of pupils' progress. All statements of special educational needs are up-to-date and the provision outlined in the statements are fully implemented by the school and health authority. The acting headteacher organises all reviews and ensures that parents and all key staff and external specialists are either present or contribute to the meetings. The provision is re-examined in the light of any progress made.

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

37. Parents feel that the school is good and are satisfied. They are particularly pleased with its 'open door' policy, which means that they feel comfortable in approaching staff at any time. They are also pleased with the school's expectations for their children and the dedication of the staff. The school carried out its own survey of parents' views last term, as part of its self-review process, and most responses were very positive. The two main issues for improvement raised by parents were better communication with home and greater provision for autistic children within and across the school.
38. The school's links with parents, including communications, are very effective and valued. All staff see parents as very much a partner in the education and development of the child. A key element is the home-school diary which is used fully and frequently in all classes to share information about progress and events. The telephone is also frequently used to exchange information between school and home, for example, when pupils return from a residential trip. Parents are invited to assemblies, school events and their child's medicals. They are included in curriculum focus days, and workshops have been held in literacy and numeracy. Individual classes run coffee mornings where parents can find out what is happening in their child's class. The home-school association also runs a coffee morning as a support group for parents who, because of the wide catchment area and use of school transport, may often feel isolated from each other. Staff provide information and advice to parents on how they can manage their child's particular difficulty, and help them get in touch with specialist agencies where required. The school responds well to parents' concerns. For example, it appointed an additional teacher to aid the transition of autistic pupils from the primary class to integration at secondary level. Unfortunately that teacher is currently on long-term sick leave.
39. The vast majority of parents, when responding to the inspection questionnaire, indicate that they are pleased with the information they receive about how their children are progressing. Parents are fully involved in the annual review process and the reports show very close knowledge of pupils' progress against the targets in their individual education plans. Parents also receive an annual report in the summer term which provides very clear information on pupils' progress in National Curriculum subjects. Teacher assessment of pupils, at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16 years, is fully reported in line with statutory requirements. The school also provides parents with very good information about day-to-day routines, events and developments through frequent letters from the headteacher and key staff.

40. Parents play a very valuable role in contributing to pupils' learning and development at school and at home. The school works hard to involve them in implementing behaviour and communication strategies at home that will improve the progress their children are able to make. Parents help with swimming sessions and accompany pupils on trips and residential. Five parents were involved in the working party which drew up the home-school agreements for the primary and secondary departments. Parents have a strong voice on the governing body. The home-school association raises significant amounts of money for the school and, because it also comprises parents of former pupils, is able to advise parents of current pupils about how to manage their child's transition to adulthood. Only a third of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire say they are satisfied with homework arrangements. However, those at the meeting with the registered inspector gave very good examples of ways in which staff and parents work together to ensure that experiences at home can be used in school and vice-versa. This very good practice was confirmed during the inspection. For example, a teacher took care to inform parents that their teenage daughter had proved capable of simple housework in a school-run activity and so should be able to contribute to similar tasks at home!

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

41. The school is led and managed by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. The leadership of the acting headteacher is good and is having a positive impact on the work of the school. This maintains the good leadership noted in the previous inspection. The acting headteacher's leadership is characterised by a committed, calm, collegiate approach in which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, and all pupils are valued. The acting deputy supports the acting headteacher very well, and between them they have maintained a concern for high standards and a culture of self-evaluation. The school has set realistic targets for further improvement.
42. The day-to-day management of the school is effective and there is clear direction for the work of the school. Good documentation is supported by regular meetings and training. This ensures good communication and a shared sense of purpose. All staff have detailed job descriptions and are clear about their roles in promoting the aims and values of the school. This they do consistently and successfully and a feature of the school is the impressive teamwork of all staff, which enhances the quality of learning. There is effective delegation and an emerging strength of the school is the quality and competence of a range of staff and nursery nurses.
43. A clear and appropriate set of aims is in place which helps the continuing development of the school. These are rightly concerned with the provision of, and access to, a broad and balanced curriculum, working closely with parents and providing the staff, premises and finance to run the school efficiently. Relationships are excellent at all levels and equal opportunities are positively addressed in all aspects of school life. It is indeed a most prominent feature of the school that all pupils are included in all curriculum and extra-curricular activities. In their meeting with the registered inspector, parents expressed their satisfaction at the progress their children were making but also expressed concern over the secondary provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
44. There is a very good, positive ethos in the school with all members of the school community committed to promoting an attractive learning environment in which pupils are well cared for but are expected to behave and work hard. Pupils respond in a positive way to these high expectations and make progress which is always at least good and sometimes very good. The acting headteacher and deputy provide clear educational direction and successfully maintain morale amongst staff. This is particularly important at a time when governors are seeking to appoint a new head to the school and when the needs of pupils are becoming more complex and

challenging. The school has established an effective relationship with a range of support agencies to help them with their work and very good working relationships with the community.

45. The governing body is very supportive and many governors are regular visitors, which helps them to acquire first-hand knowledge of the school. Governors have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They take full advantage of training opportunities, are aware of their statutory responsibilities and are conscientious in fulfilling them. They operate through a number of sub-committees, including curriculum, policy, personnel and health and safety. Governors play an effective strategic role, they monitor carefully the school development plan, curriculum planning and finances. In their annual appraisal of the acting headteacher, governors have set appropriate targets for her performance.
46. The governing body has an active role in guiding and monitoring the school's financial affairs. This is done prudently and well. Governors ensure that educational priorities are supported through careful financial planning. A recent local education authority audit found effective financial procedures in place and all minor recommendations have been acted upon. Governors take very good care to apply the principles of best value. For example, they compare their school costs and performance data with that of similar schools nationally, and they always consult widely on major spending decisions or when changes are made to the curriculum. All funds, including specific grants, are carefully matched and used effectively for their designated purpose. These include the Standards Fund and National Grid for Learning. The provision of information and communication technology has improved markedly with a general upgrading of resources. This reinforces the positive attitudes to learning in the school.
47. Teaching and curriculum planning are effectively monitored and many opportunities for staff development are provided. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection and as a consequence, the quality of teaching has improved. The school has been well supported in this work by visits from the local education authority inspectors, the literacy and numeracy inspectors and by the inspector for special educational needs. Performance management procedures are now well embedded and are appropriately linked to in-service training and the school development plan.
48. Overall the adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory.
49. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. Teachers have sufficient knowledge and experience to teach the subjects for which they are responsible. Some teachers have specialist training in the subjects they teach, for example physical education and science, and this has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. All teachers have sufficient skills and knowledge to teach information and communication technology effectively. All nursery nurses employed at the school have appropriate qualifications. They are sufficient in number to provide good complementary support to teachers and pupils. Nursery nurses make a very valuable contribution to the good quality of the teaching, the good achievement of pupils in lessons and the good progress pupils make in personal and social education. Working very closely with teachers, they sometimes lead whole-class lessons, small groups of pupils or teach pupils on a one-to-one basis. They have a very good understanding of the individual special educational needs of the pupils. This enables them to support teachers very effectively when dealing with specific

behavioural problems. They deal sensitively with the care needs of pupils being aware at all times of the need for privacy and maintaining the personal dignity of pupils. Teachers and nursery nurses attend training courses provided by the school, for example on improving lifting skills. The school nurse is responsible for the day-to-day medical needs of pupils, including the administration of prescribed medicines and drugs. All staff employed at the school show a strong commitment to the school and to its pupils. They work very well together to the benefit of the pupils. Relationships within school are excellent. The work of the school is well supported by visiting specialists, for example, a school medical officer and an educational psychologist make regular visits to the school. Careers officers support pupils and students as they prepare to leave school, as does the business advisor from the local Training and Enterprise Council.

50. The accommodation is overall satisfactory and is well maintained. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection. However, whilst it is generally adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils, the quality overall ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Classrooms are generally of a good size and sufficiently large to accommodate the numbers of pupils using them. However, the classroom for those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is small for the purpose. Access can only be gained by going through an office or a changing room. This unsatisfactory situation has been recognised by the school and action to improve matters is included in the school development plan. There is no sensory area within the school. The purpose-built art room provides accommodation of excellent quality and makes a valuable contribution to the teaching of art and design and technology to pupils of all ages and to the quality of their learning. The cluster area used for the teaching of information and communication technology is small for the purpose but is only used by small groups of pupils. It is used well and is well equipped. Library facilities are satisfactory. There is a satisfactory range of books for pupils to use for reference and to read. The food technology room, although of a good size, is now wholly unsuitable to meet the needs of the changing school population. Access to many areas including sinks, cupboards and cookers is not possible to those pupils who use wheelchairs. This has a negative effect on the standard that they achieve. Working surfaces are too high for many pupils. Because of these limitations, during the period of the inspection, a class of eleven-year-old pupils had to mix their cake ingredients on tables in the main hall. Pupils are unable to access sinks to wash up and reach cupboards to put equipment away at the end of lessons. Opportunities to learn, practise and develop self-help skills are denied. This is unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator and senior management team are aware of these difficulties and have completed draft plans to redesign the room. There is no specialist room for the teaching of science to pupils of secondary age. This limits opportunities for experimental and investigative work. This deficit was noted at the time of the last inspection. Facilities for teaching physical education are very good. Younger pupils have the opportunity to use very good quality play equipment in the school grounds and also an excellent soft play area in accommodation adjacent to the school. This is used very well to develop skills of climbing and jumping. Senior pupils and students in the Further Education Unit make very good use of local leisure centres and swimming pools to enhance their fitness and improve their skill levels. At the time of the last inspection, the accommodation for the post-16 students was judged to be unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory as much use is made of the facilities of local colleges. Throughout the school, attractive displays of pupils' work support learning and celebrate achievement. The range of aids to assist lifting in school is satisfactory. There is a manual hoist and an electrical hoist is currently being commissioned. It will be important to keep these facilities under review as the school continues to admit pupils with additional physical difficulties and the need for staff to lift pupils becomes more frequent and demanding.

51. Overall, resources to support the curriculum and pupils' learning are satisfactory. Resources for teaching the National Literacy Strategy are good. There is a very good range of large, age-appropriate books for the teaching of reading. They have a positive effect. A small but adequately resourced library is available for pupils to look at books and to borrow those of interest to them. The resources for the teaching of mathematics and the National Numeracy Strategy are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The range of computers is very good and they are used well to enhance pupils' skills in using keyboards and literacy skills. In history and religious education, the resources of the school are much improved through the use of the local community. Visits are made to museums and places of worship, for example mosques and synagogues. This positive feature has been maintained since the last inspection. The teaching of religious education has been improved through the good range of artefacts now available. This is an improvement since the last inspection when resources for the teaching of religious education were judged to be unsatisfactory. Resources for the teaching of art are very good and those for music are good. Resources for the teaching of geography are weak as are those for the teaching of visually impaired pupils. Most resources are well organised. However, there is a shortage of space within school for the storage of some resources, for example, in religious education where some artefacts have to be stored in the nurse's office. This is unsatisfactory. The number of pupils with physical disabilities is increasing. They need a wide range of aids to assist sitting, standing and walking. These large aids are frequently stored in corridors and teaching areas. This is unsatisfactory. The storage of resources should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
52. Taking account of the good quality of the teaching provided by the school, the good progress that all pupils and students make and the strong leadership and management, the school continues to provide good value for money.

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

53. In order to improve further the quality of education provided for the pupils, the governors and senior staff should:
- (1) Appoint a substantive headteacher as soon as possible in order to make secure the present good work and lead the school forward into an even higher quality of educational provision. (Paragraphs 44, 50)
  - (2) Improve the accommodation for teaching food technology in order to allow all pupils to access the sinks, cupboards and cookers. Ensure that there is a suitable area and facilities for the teaching of design and technology and science to all pupils, enabling them to carry out scientific experiments and research at age appropriate levels. (Paragraphs 99, 118)
  - (3) Improve the level, quality and accessibility of resources to meet the increasingly complex special needs of the pupils and ensure that there is relevant in-service training for all staff, particularly concerning the teaching of autistic pupils. (Paragraphs 43, 50, 51, 138)

The following minor issues also need to be addressed in order to raise the quality of the education that pupils and students receive.

- (i) Improve the consistency in the use of signing throughout the school by staff training and lesson planning to include signing as an aid to communication. (Paragraph 14)
- (ii) Improve the quality of learning opportunities in geography for all pupils.

(Paragraphs 20, 120, 123)

## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) UNIT**

54. The quality of education provided for the 16 to 19 age group is a strength of the school. There are currently 11 students, aged 16 to 19, at the FE Unit. This provides a very good curriculum, and an environment that prepares students with a diverse range of learning needs very well for adulthood and for their lives beyond school. Transitional arrangements are excellent, preparing and supporting students in making the move from school to a college or social education centre environment. The FE Unit has developed its own curriculum as a base for learning. The timetable is designed to deliver curricular areas in modular form to meet the specific needs of individual students. The majority of the timetable involves students participating in learning activities which are delivered off-site. Student targets are established by staff at the FE Unit through individual education plans that are agreed at the annual review meetings. The quality of these targets is very good and staff are vigilant in monitoring them.
55. All students make very good progress. They study a range of modules which are accredited through, for example, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). In addition, where it is felt appropriate, students have access to the Oxford, Cambridge, Royal Society of Arts (OCR) via their National Skills Profile (NSP) modules. Students' work is presented for external moderation and national accreditation at the end of each of the three years they spend in the FE Unit. The timetable is structured to enable students to have the opportunity to access at least three ASDAN modules for each of their three years in the FE Unit.
56. Teaching is very good with the nursery nurses providing very high quality support which focuses on making students as independent as possible. The FE Unit provides a relaxed and supportive environment in which staff encourage students to take responsibility and make decisions. Students are interested in their work and motivated by it. They show a great deal of pride in their achievements and, where they are able, enjoy showing their work to visitors. Students show consideration for each other, and their relationships with staff are excellent. During their many visits to colleges, they make use of facilities such as the refectory where they can enjoy a late breakfast. All behave in an orderly manner as they drink their tea and coffee.
57. The transition programme is of the highest quality and concentrates on finding appropriate placements for each student based on their needs and capabilities. The school encourages other professionals to meet and discuss the transitional needs of each individual. The careers service is particularly active in this process and is a frequent visitor to colleges and social education centres where it monitors the suitability of the provision. Early identification is central to meeting the transitional aims of the students and this ensures that there is a period of weekly integration to prepare them for a smooth transition from school to adult life. Parents are involved at all stages of the planning for transition and are supportive of the school and what it has provided for their children during their time in the FE Unit.
58. The educational inclusion programme at colleges of further education is of very good quality and ensures equality of opportunity for all. There are currently four colleges involved: Dudley College of Technology, where students are currently integrated into a carpentry module and were making a pencil case, and a media studies option where they were completing the editing of a video they had filmed in previous weeks. In both modules, students showed their work to visitors with evident pride and satisfaction. This college also offers modular courses in a wide range of subject areas. Stourbridge College offers communication skills, drama and keep fit, whilst Halesowen and Rodbaston colleges offer courses in animal care and farming studies. There is also very good quality supported integration at four local social education centres (SECs). During visits to SECs, students integrate where possible into a wide variety of areas which include many social and

recreational activities. During the inspection, students visited Audnam SEC which proved a strong social experience for them all. In each of the integrations observed at colleges and SECs, it is obvious that students enjoy their socialising and in each, participated fully in the activities. This was very evident in carpentry where students showed their ability to listen and respond to instructions when hammering in tacks to secure the base of their pencil cases.

59. The development of personal skills is a particular strength and is enhanced by opportunities for choice and decision making. Independent living skills through food preparation and routine household chores are further supported by regular visits to Midway House, a three-bedroomed semi-detached house in Brockmoor. A food preparation lesson observed at the school gave clear indication that students could identify and name a wide range of vegetables and had a very good understanding of how and why they need to be prepared for cooking. They were very pleased with the stew they had made and the pleasure they derived from their efforts when they sat down together to an enjoyable meal in an orderly family atmosphere.
60. All FE Unit students meet the careers advisor during the academic year who is able to advise on the suitability of post-19 placements. This is an impressive service of which the school takes full advantage. Work experience involves students taking responsibility for routine jobs around the base. These varied from organising mid-session refreshments to washing up afterwards. The FE Unit is committed to working alongside Dudley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in promoting the aims and values of Team Enterprise. Practical business experience is achieved through the Team Enterprise Company 'Pots for all Seasons'. This gives students a very good understanding of commercial production through practical business experience. Additional funding for the 'company' has been won through the Barclays Bank Award scheme. Finished articles are sold to the public at termly coffee mornings at school, an annual exhibition at the Merry Hill Centre and Villa Park football stadium. The FE Unit has established links with Coseley Employment Preparation Unit (EPU) for adults with special needs. Students have the opportunity to gain experience in work shadowing and working alongside adults with special needs performing a variety of work related tasks.
61. The curriculum for physical education and leisure gives students the opportunity to participate in weekly timetabled swimming and trampolining sessions. Regular swimming lessons take place at Brierley Hill Baths taken by a qualified swimming instructor. Progress can be seen as the students work through the local authority swimming certificate scheme and gain Amateur Swimming Association awards. Students with more profound learning difficulties use venues with smaller, well-heated hydrotherapy pools to develop water confidence and skills. The weekly trampoline sessions are structured to assist each student's developmental needs and are taken by a qualified instructor and can lead to gaining British Trampoline Association certificates. The FE Unit residential experience in 1998 was at Plas Gwynant Outdoor Education Centre in North Wales and in 2000 was sited at Astley Burf Residential Centre in Stourport-on-Severn.

### **Educational inclusion**

62. The educational inclusion programme is a rich and varied one giving opportunities for most pupils and students to work with another class within school or at local primary schools, secondary schools and colleges of further education. Students aged 16 to 19, where appropriate, integrate into a social education centre. There is very good forward planning between institutions but it is not always of the same standard with internal integrations.
63. Internal integration works well and is now being monitored by subject co-ordinators. At the curriculum monitoring meeting there was reference made to some class teachers not indicating in their lesson planning how they are going to include a pupil to ensure they have access to the learning. One of the integrations observed criticised this aspect.



64. Primary age pupils join their peers at two local mainstream primary schools and a local special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The planning for these visits is thorough and the experience and learning are of very good quality.
65. Integration arrangements at secondary levels are established with a local school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and a local authority school. They are very good and at times excellent. At one school, art was the focus for two of the youngsters who were clear about the enjoyment they got from working at a mainstream school. There was an excellent example of sixth-form students at a local authority school taking a games lesson with a class from Pens Meadow. Everyone enjoyed the hockey, some showing good stick skills. The sixth formers often come back to Pens Meadow school for community and work experience tasks. However, there are times when the liaison between the schools is not as good as it should be.

### **Colleges of Further Education**

66. Four colleges are used and the planning for each one of the opportunities for social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The quality of the integration at Dudley College of Technology, where, during the inspection, students joined carpentry and media studies groups was excellent. Photographic evidence suggests that similar standards are achieved at the other colleges.

### **Social Education Centres**

67. The students involved in inclusion programmes at these establishments find them rewarding, social experiences and are content to join a range of groups for leisure and classroom activities. During the inspection, students were accompanied by a teacher, a nursery nurse and a member of the careers service who was appraising the suitability of the provision for those during their transition from school to adult life.

## 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	36

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	40	36	15	3	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number and are therefore a close approximation. It is for this reason that they total 101 and not 100 as would be expected.*

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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	67
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	13.8

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0

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

## **Results and achievements of pupils and students.**

All pupils have been disapplied for the National Tests that are carried out in most schools. The learning difficulties of these pupils are so great that they all have been assessed by their teachers as working towards Level 1.

Senior pupils and students follow some accredited courses for the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' programme. Two students in the Further Education Unit were awarded certificates to say that they had completed the modules 'Starting Out', 'Making Pictures' and 'Money'.

Four pupils aged 16 years gained a total of 36 certificates to show that they have completed courses in the Accreditation of Life and Living Skills programme.

Thirteen students in the Further Education Unit gained a total of 72 certificates.

Many of the pupils and students are able to receive these awards because of the spoken and signed help that they are entitled to. This gives them access to the accredited modules.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	60
Any other minority ethnic group	5

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	9.5

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	569

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***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.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	652,742
Total expenditure	651,478
Expenditure per pupil	9,307
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,815
Balance carried forward to next year	23,079

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	68
Number of questionnaires returned	29

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	41	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	55	14	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	48	7	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	28	17	14	31
The teaching is good.	55	34	3	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	41	3	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	28	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	31	0	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	59	31	7	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	41	48	0	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	59	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	34	14	3	7

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Parents showed some concern about the increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and whether or not the teachers are appropriately trained to work with their children. The school has appointed an additional member of staff in order to release a member of staff with specialist knowledge specially trained member of staff and is also implementing a longer term plan for the development of teachers' skills in this area of special needs. Parents were also concerned about the transition of autistic pupils to the secondary stage.

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

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

68. In the previous report, judgements about the provision for children in the Foundation Stage, together with their progress, were included in those for pupils up to the age of seven. No reference was made to the areas of learning for young children and so it is not possible to comment on improvement since the last inspection.
69. The three children in the Foundation Stage are taught in one class with six other pupils up to the age of seven. Children are admitted to the school to meet the requirements of their statement of special educational need. All attend full-time. On entry to school, children's language, mathematical and social skills are well below those normally expected for children of their age. This is confirmed by initial assessment tests. Children frequently have additional learning difficulties, for example physical disabilities, and need individual one to one support. The children's achievements are good. They make good progress in relation to their prior attainment at the time of admission to the school. By the age of five, despite their special needs, children are making good progress towards their Early Learning Goals.
70. The curriculum provided for the three children is good. It reflects their diversity of needs and meets them fully. It is well planned and is designed to meet the full entitlement to an early years education whilst at the same time meeting the individual needs of the children included in their personal education plans. The school aims to provide a secure learning environment where the children feel happy and confident in a caring and supportive atmosphere. This aim is fully achieved.
71. The quality of teaching and learning for the three young children is good. In just under half of the lessons observed, teaching was very good or better. Teaching in one music lesson was excellent. The enthusiastic and dedicated teacher is very well supported by skilled and knowledgeable nursery nurses. Teacher and nursery nurses work very well together as a team and all contribute effectively to the children's learning. Because of the very good skills of the staff, the well-matched activities and the small steps for learning, the children respond in a very positive way to the learning activities which are offered to them. In a third of lessons, the behaviour and attitudes of the children were excellent. They are an enthusiastic and happy group of children who work very well alongside older pupils. They like coming to school. The teacher and nursery nurses have a clear commitment to enhancing the children's personal development and they work hard to make them independent learners, for example, when working in different areas of the classroom, children are encouraged to carry their own chairs, with nursery nurses giving those children with additional physical disabilities one-to-one support and time to allow the child to be included in the activity as fully as possible. In a religious education lesson, children chose to dress up as policemen, doctors and firemen. Each child put on the appropriate uniform as independently as possible with the nursery nurses only giving assistance when needed. The staff praise children appropriately for good effort and they respond with pleasure. This contributes to the very good relationships and the positive learning of the children. There are good working relationships with other members of staff, including the school nurse, who is responsible for administering drugs and medicines. The school doctor, speech and language therapist and educational psychologist come into school from time to time to advise and give support as necessary. The staff have very good working relationships with the parents and carers. Soon after admission, parents are invited into school to discuss and agree the learning targets for their child. Home-school books are completed at the end of each school day to keep parents informed. In the same way, parents keep the staff informed of events relating to the children which have happened at home. Parents are fully involved in the

annual review of the statement of special educational need. Parents are very appreciative of these opportunities to get to know the staff and to be kept informed of the progress of their children. Annual reports of good quality give an analysis of children's progress and achievements over the year. Children's progress is carefully tracked and systems for recording achievement are effective.

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

72. Teaching in this area is good and children make good progress. The school places great emphasis on the provision and planning of this area of learning. The children enter the class with poor personal and social skills. The teacher completes a baseline record sheet to supplement the information gained from the statement of special educational needs. Through structured observation, the attention skills of children are analysed to note whether the child can, for example, concentrate on an activity for a set period of time without adult support. The staff note also whether a child can express likes or dislikes and can make choices. These assessments form an important element in the individual education plans of children and pupils. These targets are then built into lesson planning and the daily routines of the school day as required. The teacher is very conscious of the importance of making children feel secure and confident in the class. At the start of the day, children are welcomed and they are informed of the activities of the day; what is going to happen and when. At the end of each morning and afternoon, children discuss with the staff the activities they have experienced and what they liked and disliked. At drinks and meal times, children are encouraged to make choices. Staff are very keen that children complete tasks as independently as possible and they respond to this challenge well. This is a positive feature of the work within this part of the school. During lunch and breaktimes, the children are very well behaved and they are able to wait their turn and try hard to communicate their needs. The importance of good relationships with other children is constantly emphasised. Children in the class learn to take turns, for example, when making chocolate krispies, children wait their turn to put the mixture into cake papers. They are also taught that it is unhygienic to lick fingers and spoons! Self-control and good behaviour is implicit in all activities and children are constantly reminded of what is right and what is wrong. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is overall very good, sometimes excellent and at no time unsatisfactory. These very high standards have a very good impact on the good progress made by children. Many lessons emphasise the importance of the school community and those people who help us, for example the cook in the kitchen. In religious education, the importance of the caring professions is highlighted. For example, in one lesson the teacher told a story about a circus clown who had an accident and had to be helped by the nurses and doctors at the hospital. Having chosen their roles, the children acted as doctors and nurses and helped the patients get better. Those children with additional special needs require much support with the activities of daily living, for example being trained to use a potty. Those who are unable to eat or drink independently are given one-to-one adult support.

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

73. Children's achievements, including those with English as an additional language, are good and directly reflect the good skills of the teacher and nursery nurses. All three children enter the school with immature communication and language skills and each child is carefully assessed soon after admission. Children are encouraged to develop their communication skills through structured play, taught lessons and individual sessions. Maketon symbols are used appropriately to supplement the understanding of language, particularly those who have limited speech. Signing is used consistently to support the spoken language and aid communication. Higher attaining children are able to communicate basic needs and wants and can respond appropriately to questions about familiar events or experiences. They normally use one word or short phrases. They can anticipate missing words in a well-known rhyme. Lower attaining

children and those with additional special needs will sit and listen for a short time. They are beginning to use words like 'doggy' and 'hello' and are learning to rely less on gesture or facial expression. These children are constantly encouraged to respond to their name, for example when the register is being taken at the start of the day. The teacher and support staff are sensitive to the needs of the children and allow them to respond in their own time. The staff make good use of books to tell stories and pupils enjoy listening to those which are familiar. The teacher ensures that significant elements of the story are reinforced by having 'objects of reference' available, for example toy animals and a wheelbarrow. Higher attaining children explore books, hold them the right way up, turn pages one at a time and recognise specific detail on a page. They are beginning to use paint brushes and pencils to make marks as an introduction to writing. The teacher and the nursery nurses make good use of practical objects, pictures and symbols to reinforce the teaching of language and to enable children with the more severe learning difficulties to understand the world around them. Higher attaining children are introduced to the literacy hour when the teacher uses a big book as a central focus for the story. Through this activity, children learn to associate text, words and pictures. Objects of reference are also matched to the text. Insufficient thought is currently given to the difficulties of one child with visual impairment as no additional aids to learning are made available. Another child who speaks English as an additional language is given much support and is fully involved in all lessons. The speech and language therapist gives advice and support to the school as and when required.

### **Mathematical development**

74. The teaching and knowledge of the Early Learning Goals in mathematics is good and as a consequence, children make good progress in relation to their individual targets. Children's knowledge of number and shape on entry is poor. They make good progress through games and action songs, for example, children are asked to use photographs of the class to say who was on the bus today. They then, with staff support, count how many children and pupils are present. Games are used to encourage one-to-one correspondence, for example, 'give each teddy a cup'. Children use colours to make patterns and to learn sequences. In food technology lessons, the number of cakes made are counted to see if there are enough for all the class and the staff. Teachers and nursery nurses use all available opportunities to use mathematical vocabulary to progress the achievements of the children. Higher attaining children recognise the numbers '1' and '2'. Lower attaining pupils are still unable to understand that an object which cannot be seen still exists. However, these children can build towers of bricks and enjoy knocking them down. Counting songs increase children's awareness of the sequence of numbers one to ten. Lessons in the soft play area are used to develop mathematical language, for example, children climb to the top of the climbing frame whilst others go under it. Some children know the difference between push and pull.

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

75. The children achieve well in developing a knowledge and understanding of their world. Lessons are appropriately planned to ensure good progress. Initially, children learn about their classroom, for example where they sit in whole-class lessons. As they become more confident, they learn more about the school as a whole, for example the location of the hall and the main office. Children are beginning to establish an understanding of time through daily routines. At the beginning of the day, the teacher rehearses the day's activities with the children and at the end of each teaching session, children come together to recall the activities in which they have taken part. Many opportunities are provided for children to learn how they can effect changes, for example, by touching the computer screen and noting the result. The teacher and the nursery nurses make very good use of incidental elements in lessons to teach children about life outside school, for example, when walking to the soft play room in another building away from the



school, children are taught about the dangers of cars. They are taught to stop at the crossing and to look carefully before moving on. The teacher asks the children, 'Is there a car coming?' 'Can we cross safely?' In other lessons, children learn about their own bodies. Higher attaining children can identify the mouth and know that teeth are used to chew food. Lower attaining children use mirrors to look at their face and eyes, then reinforce their learning through making up a face on a paper plate.

### **Physical development**

76. The opportunities to teach physical development are good and learning is good. In the one specific physical education lesson observed, teaching and learning were very good. In this lesson, the very large soft play area was used for a period of free play. The higher attaining children used the very good facilities very well to develop their abilities to climb and jump with confidence. Teachers and nursery nurses supervised closely and gave encouragement appropriately. Lower attaining children were given assistance to crawl through tunnels and to enjoy the ball pool. In other physical education lessons, children practise standing on tiptoe and making large and small shapes. Children make good progress in the development of their fine motor skills through the use of construction kits and through colouring, painting and cutting, for example, in an art lesson, pupils place buttons on a plate to replicate their eyes and stick on wool for their hair. Children with additional learning difficulties have specific targets set through their individual education plans, for example, to roll a small ball across the floor and to move in a given direction. They are constantly encouraged to demonstrate 'good looking'. Opportunities to use and develop physical skills and co-ordination are used well throughout the school day, for example, high attaining pupils are encouraged to take off their own coats when arriving at school and to take off and put on their shoes in physical education lessons. The school has good facilities for children to exercise and develop their skills in the playground and through the use of large play equipment.

### **Creative development**

77. Teaching is good and supports children in making good progress in exploring colour, texture, shape and investigating musical sounds and learning songs. Children achieve well through art, music and the sensory experiences which are made available to them. Music and songs are used well to support learning. In the one music lesson observed, teaching and learning were excellent. The excellent behaviour reflected the quality of the teaching. The very good pace of the lesson with appropriate changes of activity ensured that the children never lost interest but were excited, interested and involved throughout the lesson. Higher attaining children are confident enough to sing alone using a microphone. They know some of the words to songs like 'Bob the Builder'. Some use percussion instruments to beat in time to the music. Lower attaining children use percussion instruments enthusiastically but have no sense of rhythm. In a food technology lesson, higher attaining children are able to use a wooden spoon to stir the mixture carefully and are able, with some assistance, to put the mixture into cake papers. Lower attaining children need much adult support to help to stir. Technology lessons offer planned opportunities for pupils to weave paper, wool and string using contrasting colours. Large coloured beads are threaded to make bracelets. In religious education, children confidently act out the roles of a doctor and a nurse and care for the patient appropriately.

### **ENGLISH**

78. In relation to their abilities, pupils make good progress in English overall throughout the school. These good gains in learning are a direct result of good teaching and all teachers take full advantage of other opportunities in the whole-school curriculum to reinforce pupils' command of language. This is especially noticeable in the skills of speaking and learning when pupils

talk, sign or use symbols to their teachers and friends during lunch and play times as well as to visitors to the school. They communicate with confidence and obviously enjoy and value these experiences as they arise.

79. All pupils admitted to school have limited communication skills and a restricted vocabulary. Pupils aged five to seven learn to listen carefully to adults and are beginning to develop their speaking and listening skills, and to associate words to pictures. They respond to simple tales, such as 'Fred - his Lunch'. Pupils are able to give some responses to the teacher's questions from pictures, for example, 'They eat caterpillars' and 'The tiger is drinking milk'. Pupils' levels of understanding vary, and improve when the story is carefully explained to them and they are helped to touch and feel objects of reference. Some pupils match characters' names to the pictures, others are helped to do this by pointing. Some pupils understand simple statements and respond by vocalising, signing or by using symbols.
80. From seven to eleven years of age, pupils make good progress and the teachers ensure that all respond positively in lessons. In one good lesson, which demonstrated the story of the 'Cat in the Tree', they participated fluently and with great interest. Pupils were asked how do they think they could reach the cat, for example, 'Do you use a ladder or is there another way of climbing the tree?' Pupils volunteered to take part in acting the parts using the substituted tree with the toy cat on top of the tree. Some pupils imitated the cat's reaction and others joined in the actions stimulating interest and language development. The lesson planning involved a wide range of activities and pupils were keen to learn and respond to tasks. Pupils with less severe difficulties showed anticipation in response to people's actions. Pupils with more profound learning difficulties focused their eyes on key words in the story, such as 'cat' and 'tree'. All responded positively to the familiar objects in the story which helped their understanding of the theme of the story. The tasks that are set covered the whole range of pupils' needs; certain pupils are able to copy while others overwrite on letters. The most successful pupils labelled objects correctly using symbols. These individualised tasks ensure that all pupils work at levels appropriate to their abilities and in line with their individual education plans.
81. Lessons for pupils between 11 and 14 years of age result in good progress because they feature a good variety of teaching methods and pupil activities. Using the poem the 'Shopping Basket', which was practically demonstrated, the lesson promoted pupils' learning with positive responses. They know most of the items in the basket, but not all were able to read the written words. However, they listened and repeated them after the teacher. They recited the poem and enjoyed the exercise working as a group. This gave them confidence to vocalise the words and improve their phonic skills. They listen carefully and work enthusiastically on the different tasks prepared for each of the three groups. The higher attaining pupils were able to associate pictures to different items and were able to match words to the items. The other two groups needed more support to associate all the items to the written words. Certain pupils are able to write the words, others overwrite words.
82. Pupils aged 14 to 16 years make very good progress. By the end of this phase, they have developed confidence in communication, have learnt to listen carefully and follow a range of instructions in different settings easily. They express ideas and feelings well and are sensitive to the contributions of others. An example of this was the lesson regarding the 'Story of the Corrs'. This is a true story about a family band. The main objectives of the lesson were understood which was to show the difference between a real as opposed to a fictional story. Staff have relevant expectations of pupils, and, for example, constantly persuade them to make eye contact. Higher attaining pupils understand simple instructions and can respond to the teacher's dramatic reading by echoing the vocabulary of simple poetry. They listen quietly to

ensure they focus upon its pictures, thereby ensuring that their understanding of books and text is reinforced.

83. They continue this progress in the Further Education Unit where they have the opportunity to use their language and develop it further in a much wider world. At this level, the aim is to develop the language towards independent living. One lesson observed emphasised the importance for the students to understand gender words and symbols like 'Gentlemen' and 'Ladies'. Students in the department work towards accreditation through ASDAN.
84. Overall the quality of teaching is good. The quality of teaching of pupils between 14 and 16 and for the post-16 students is very good. Throughout the school, lessons are carefully planned and are usually conducted at a brisk pace that makes the best use of the time available. Most lessons are characterised by the wide range of activities undertaken and by the very good relationships between the pupils, the teachers and the nursery nurses. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is good overall and mirrors the quality of the teaching. In the lessons where teaching is very good, as in five lessons observed, pupils and students contributed positively and all showed their interest in the main theme of the story.
85. Pupils' learning is also generally good in all lessons at each phase of their education, as a result of the constructive planning of lessons. In five lessons out of the 17 observed, learning was exceptionally good. Only one was unsatisfactory. Pupils learn very well in the best lessons because the teachers have a particularly high level of knowledge of what is required to enable them to make progress. Pupils' interest and imagination are caught in these lessons and they happily stay on task. Books are bright and stimulating and the pupils enjoy using them. When teaching and learning are less successful, behaviour problems are not properly addressed and teaching is interrupted when the teacher feels obliged to deal with it. The contribution of the nursery nurses is good as they support individuals or groups of pupils on their tasks and in many cases interpret through signs and symbols during the plenary sessions.
86. Teachers are skilled at developing pupils' understanding and use of literacy and as a result, the standard of achievement is good in relation to their ability levels. In 'circle time', all pupils can indicate that they are present by vocalising, pointing, showing photographs of themselves or signing as well as using symbols. Pupils understand very simple statements and instructions in a range of subjects, whether they are vocalised, signed or produced using symbols. Some pupils interpret the symbols of their class timetable and can come to an understanding of what the day has in store for them. Some higher attaining pupils are able to read simple words and phrases. Pupils copy and overwrite letters over meaningful words in their tasks. Pupils vocalise, sign or use symbols when they need something. Pupils are interested in books and the pictures in them. Pupils listen to stories and information in class carefully and on occasions, are totally absorbed.
87. The school has introduced its own literacy strategy in line with the National Literacy Strategy and this has had a significant positive effect upon the provision for the teaching of English for all boys and girls in the school. Resources at the last inspection were barely satisfactory but are now good. Lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy have been introduced. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The use of symbols is good. The school is developing successfully a whole-school policy and implementing it to promote good communication skills amongst its pupils and students.

## **MATHEMATICS**

88. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard and successfully extended its provision for mathematics through the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). The emphasis on methods included in this national initiative has led the school to review its teaching methods,

the content of its curriculum and the way in which mathematical skills are promoted and taught. This has resulted in a stronger emphasis on the subject which has raised pupils' achievements, particularly for pupils over eleven.

89. Pupils of all ages make at least satisfactory and often good gains in their learning, use and understanding of mathematics. However, as they get older, the good gains the pupils make nevertheless result in many still working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. This is because many of the pupils have extremely low levels of attainment. For example there are several pupils over ten years of age in the school who, for several years, have been trying to recognise the numbers '1' to '3' and other pupils who still strive to order and understand them. Providing such pupils with challenging activities that maintain their motivation is a major challenge for the staff. Most meet it well by changing activities often and using resources that are attractive and meaningful such as pictures of teenage interests. Teaching in mathematics is good overall for pupils of all ages. For a small minority of pupils within the age range of seven to eleven however, some aspects of teaching are unsatisfactory. Such teaching is characterised by tasks which are not matched to each pupil's individual education plan targets. Because the activities are either too easy or too hard, the pupils do not make best use of their time. For example, a higher attaining pupil completed his task of completing clock faces with numbers and hands swiftly; the teacher had no further work for the pupils and he was unoccupied for the remainder of the time. Similarly, two lower attaining pupils were only able to work when receiving direct teacher support. Working alone they did little because they were not able to count or group the objects provided without help.
90. In the best lessons, teachers provide a wide range of activities which are well supported by the nursery nurses. Staff make very good use of time and ensure that all pupils are challenged and working towards their targets. As a result, pupils understand the necessity to work briskly but with care. Turn-taking by the whole class forms only a small part of the lesson and therefore each pupil gets maximum attention and support from staff. Pupils show good levels of behaviour in mathematics lessons and enjoy the activities provided.

91. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The teachers make good use of strategies derived from the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and concentrate on making many aspects of mathematics fun for the pupils. For example, when pupils are identifying numbers that are 'higher' or 'lower' than the teacher's, they thoroughly enjoy using playing cards. Pupils make effective use of their numeracy skills in other aspects of their lives. The youngest pupils in the school are learning to take turns, use their emerging numeracy skills in counting songs and when repeating rhymes. The oldest students over 16 years of age use their skills with money to buy items for cooking drinks from a cafeteria or vending machine. This growing use of practical mathematics demonstrates the relevance of what the pupils are learning. The school is continuing to increase its focus on promoting the pupils' use of mathematical skills in all other curriculum subjects in order that pupils will realise the significance of the work they are doing.
92. The school has improved provision for mathematics since the last inspection through the introduction of the NNS. It also continues to emphasise the importance of making its curriculum more responsive to the needs of the pupils whilst meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are now good and consistently used through the school. Long-term recording identifies pupils' National Curriculum levels so that pupils' progress is regularly plotted. These assessments are planned to respond to the targets set in the pupils' individual education plans and the school is mostly successful in this regard. In a minority of cases however, the link between annual review targets and what is taught and recorded could, with benefit, be clearer. The co-ordinator regularly monitors the planning and recording of the subject and is well placed to raise standards of teaching and learning.

## SCIENCE

93. Pupils achieve well in science and make good progress. This is because the quality of teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well planned and prepared with a good range of activities and as a consequence, pupils participate with interest and enjoyment.
94. A significant feature of science in the school is the teachers' determination that all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders, should have the opportunity to experience the curiosity and excitement associated with finding out about themselves and the beauty of living things in the world about them. Pupils are able to do this because teachers and nursery nurses are creative in arranging for them a range of sensory activities and experiences. This is a very good example of how educational inclusion is working well within the school.
95. By the age of seven, pupils have experienced simple scientific investigation. On a topic about 'Myself' they can point to parts of the body and know that we need teeth to bite and chew our food. They know the difference between hard and soft foods. Thorough preparation beforehand means learning is not interrupted as the activity changes. Effective support from nursery nurses ensures that pupils stay on task and learning opportunities are maximised. Individual or group learning objectives give a clear focus for teaching. Relationships are excellent and pupils are confident and at ease in the learning situation. The use of a variety of foods truly motivates pupils. They are attentive and co-operative. The teacher reinforces the concepts of hard and soft food and chewing and swallowing with direct questions and exaggerated demonstrations. For example, 'Are you chewing?' and 'Is your mouth going up and down like mine to make the toffee soft?' He encourages pupils to try hard with positive comments like, 'That's lovely chewing'. Others take note and do the same.

96. By the age of eleven, a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress in understanding and developing their sensory and self awareness and preferences. They explore by touch, sound, smell and feel a variety of objects that are hot and cold, rough and smooth. The teacher's very good knowledge of pupils' special needs assists her in challenging them at the appropriate level. Very good support from nursery nurses, often in one-to-one situations, ensures pupils attend carefully, track and interact appropriately with objects. They know what they like and don't like. They show their enjoyment of cold objects like ice cream and hot sensations like warm air, with smiles and good eye contact. Staff involve them in the learning process by carefully explaining and signing what is about to happen. For example, 'I'm going to take your shoes and socks off'. Pupils are generally co-operative. Consistent, predictable routines help pupils to remain calm, focus on the lesson and make good progress.
97. By the age of 14, pupils make very good progress in naming parts of the body and heart and locating them on a model. They are beginning to record what they have seen and done. They measure and record pulse rates on a chart. They use an exercise bike and jog on the spot to increase their pulse rate. They use a stethoscope to note and measure the difference. Those not able to take part in the exercises watch with interest. The teacher has good subject expertise and organises the activities with confidence and pace. She receives very good support from nursery nurses in maintaining pupils' attention. She pitches the work well to pupils' level of understanding. Resources are good and varied and raise pupils' curiosity. Key words, like 'pump blood', 'heart beat', are continually reinforced and confirmed in the concluding part of the lesson. The behaviour of autistic pupils is managed in a positive way so that their learning and that of others is not disrupted. Pupils enjoy the activities and wait patiently for their turn. Their positive attitude to the subject contributes to their very good progress.
98. No science was seen for older pupils up to the age of 16, but this is developing appropriately as part of the accreditation for ALL. No science was observed in the Further Education Unit. The scheme of work shows that pupils address some aspects of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study on a two-year cycle. Topics include space, recycling material, improving the local environment and materials and food. Pupils have already visited Jodrell Bank Observatory Centre as part of the unit of work on space.
99. The subject is well led by a specialist who effectively monitors the science planning. There is a good scheme of work in place which relates well to the National Curriculum. This is supported by efficient assessment procedures. There have been significant improvements in many areas of the subject since the previous inspection. The teaching of science and pupils' progress is now consistently good; pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive; appropriate accreditation has been introduced for pupils at 16 and at post-16, and resources are more age appropriate. Computers and appropriate software programs are used throughout the school to help pupils store and retrieve information that they have collected and produce information concerning changes that occur. However, the school still lacks a specialist science room. This inhibits practical investigation and experimentation, particularly by older pupils, and limits their access to all aspects of the science curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

100. The achievements and progress of pupils are very good at all key stages. The teachers' experience and their knowledge and understanding of the subject have a positive impact on pupils' work and the subsequent gains in learning. The youngest pupils are able to choose a tool to make marks on paper and select colours that make a strong visual impact. The most able pupils build a pattern using separate dabs of paint. The majority of the pupils smear and mix the colours on the paper, enjoying the visual and tactile experience offered to them. During the

week, they made, with the support of the staff, greetings cards for Mothers' Day choosing their own patterns and colours.

101. Between the ages of seven and eleven, pupils are able to use glue, plaster of Paris, play dough, plasticine and fabric and enjoy a broad multi-sensory experience through their work. For example, in one lesson observed, the class had five different activities organised. These included painting, use of crayoning, working with textiles and using a brush to spread glue on the paper. Pupils also work together in large group compositions and in this respect, they improve their social and physical skills and learn to appreciate the completed piece of shared work. Records of work show that pupils have experienced an appropriately wide range of media, painting with hands and feet as well as brushes and sponge. Higher attaining pupils are able to use wax crayon and create their own patterns.
102. Pupils between the ages of eleven and 14 demonstrate a clear interest in the subject. Evidence of the pupils' developing skills to analyse and respond to an artist's impression is clear in the class project on 'Klimt' displayed in one area of the school, whereby each pupil shows a different aspects of the work. Pupils with additional and complex needs at this stage can distinguish between primary colours, eye pointing and gesturing to make their choices. They react to colour and light change; this reinforces their awareness of the impact of colour on their world. Higher attaining pupils begin to develop observational skills and represent objects and figures in their sketchbooks.
103. By the age of 16, pupils make very good progress in picture making, extending their skills and controlling a wider range of painting and drawing tools. This exciting range of activities provides pupils with stimulating and very effective ways of developing their skills and a wide understanding of art. This is a major factor in the very good progress made by the pupils. As an example, an excellent lesson was observed with this group making a mosaic pattern with the pupils involved in all the processes, that is, drawing the pattern, breaking up the mosaic using a hammer and glueing the pieces into the pattern. At this stage, they also study the work of famous artists, for example Picasso, and reflect on the ideas behind his painting.
104. Students in the Further Education Unit continue the study of the subject as part of an integrated curriculum, for example, drawing impressions as part of an educational visit. All the post-16 students work towards an accreditation through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network studying the module 'Making Pictures'.
105. At all phases of their education, pupils and students demonstrate a clear interest in the subject and have clearly been inspired by the enthusiasm of their teachers. They are encouraged at an early age to make comparisons between their own work and that of others. Teachers foster opportunities for collaborative work and there is good evidence of sharing in group compositions. Most pupils are aware of each other's work and do not interfere with their contribution. Because staff are vigilant over health and safety issues, pupils handle tools and materials sensibly and enjoy the multi-sensory experience of mark making and modelling.
106. The quality of teaching is good or better in all lessons with two excellent lessons observed for pupils aged 14 to 16. Teachers are experienced and have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject; managing resources effectively and ensuring those pupils know how to work with a range of media. They know the pupils well and have good relationships with them, which helps pupils to concentrate and get the most out of the lessons. There is a very good ethos for working interactively and building social and perceptual skills through lessons of art. Nursery nurses are deployed effectively and are aware of their tasks in the classroom, many of them adding different skills to enhance the teaching of the subject.

107. The experienced and knowledgeable co-ordinator has developed good links with professional artists that work periodically with the pupils and this enriches the curriculum. The co-ordinator is well placed to monitor the work of the department and has built up an impressive collection of multicultural artefacts to stimulate pupils' interest. The subject makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.
108. The accommodation is very good with suitable storage facilities and display boards. The department has also maintained the good standards of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Record keeping is now good with pupils working towards accreditation at post-16. The progress of pupils is evaluated effectively and this is used to plan pupils' future Programmes of Study.
109. There has therefore been a good improvement since the last inspection and as a result, art and design is a strength of the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

110. The improvement since the last inspection is good. At that time, the co-ordinator was new to the school and to the role. Design and technology was at an early stage of development. Opportunities for pupils to use their making skills and to design products were underdeveloped. The co-ordinator is now well established in the role and the quality and range of learning opportunities are now good for pupils of all ages. The provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is good.
111. All pupils make good progress, building on their prior achievements. By the age of seven, pupils learn about the function and design of clothes worn by people who help us, for example, doctors, nurses and policemen. In food technology, higher attaining pupils know that chocolate melts in warm water. They know that adding Rice Krispies to the mix makes it thicker. They stir with enthusiasm and follow instructions when putting the mixture into cake papers. They are aware of basic hygiene issues, for example the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food. In textile design, pupils weave paper, wool and string using two contrasting colours. They thread large beads to make bracelets.
112. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils can use both hands to paste pictures of flowers on a paper plate to make a tray for Mothering Sunday. Those pupils with additional learning difficulties need much adult support to complete the task. Lower attaining pupils hold objects made out of different materials and help to make books with paper fasteners. The most able pupils use structural materials to make houses. They know that by adding more bricks they strengthen the building they have made. On visits into the community, pupils know that certain shops sell special foods, for example the greengrocer.
113. By the age of 14, pupils have a developing knowledge of how to make hot cross buns. The most able pupils are aware that they contain flour, sugar and margarine. They have some knowledge of how to use scales to measure quantities although they need much adult assistance to measure accurately. Some pupils can use rolling pins to flatten pastry and with assistance can cut strips from which to make the crosses on the buns. By the age of 16, in food technology, higher attaining pupils are able to select the correct ingredients to use in the preparation of a meal. The most able pupils are also aware of the stages involved in preparing and cooking. They are able to select utensils appropriately to lay the table and greet invited guests politely. At the end of the meal they wash up, tidy up and put all the equipment used back into store. They can use a microwave to bake potatoes, observing all the appropriate health and safety procedures. The excellent preparation and teaching ensure that pupils' learning is excellent and fulfils all the



requirements of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) module 'Meal Preparation and Cooking'.

114. At post-16, students learn to use their design and technology skills to assemble a photo frame. They work together to put designs on to terracotta pots. The larger pots are then filled with potting compost and planted with seeds whilst the smaller ones are filled with a chocolate egg or even a toothbrush. Under the team enterprise named 'Pots for all Seasons', they are marketed to friends, family and the general public. Using the facilities of local colleges, students learn to mix cement and with support, build a brick wall. Students continue to practise their skills of independent living, for example, making a simple meal of beans on toast.
115. Pupils with the most profound and multiple learning difficulties handle materials and with much adult support make a spring frieze. Materials are used to represent the sun, clouds, hills and fields. Sheep are made from woolly jumpers and rabbits from cardboard. By the age of 16, these pupils continue to have experiences of touching and responding to texture and colour, for example, they explore touching and squeezing messy materials. Given much support, they can use a glue stick to assist in the making of a picture frame.
116. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff indicate that overall standards of teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In over half of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. The level of achievement and the progress made by pupils are good which reflects the good quality of the teaching. Pupils enjoy the subject and work sensibly and safely together. Lessons proceed at a good pace and time is used well. Where teaching is excellent, lessons are stimulating and challenge pupils to improve their skills of independent living, for example, pupils aged 16 were set the task of making a meal for a friend. They buy the ingredients and prepare them for cooking using graters and knives. Microwave ovens and standard ovens are used sensibly and with care to achieve the task. In lessons where teaching is less successful, there is a lack of pace and insufficient demand is placed on pupils. Standards of behaviour overall are very good and in two lessons observed pupils' attitudes were excellent.
117. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. All necessary curriculum documentation is in place. The co-ordinator meets regularly with other teachers and nursery nurses to plan future work. Teachers' planning is checked by the co-ordinator to ensure that there are clear teaching objectives and that there are clear links with the individual education targets of pupils. Assessment arrangements are good. Each pupil has an individual file in which achievement and progress can be clearly recorded. Entries are initialled and dated appropriately.
118. Overall, the facilities for teaching the subject are satisfactory. There is a satisfactory number of teachers and nursery nurses to teach the subject. Learning resources are good. Accommodation is overall unsatisfactory. There is no specialist accommodation for the teaching of design and technology. However, the excellent facilities of the art room are often used to teach the subject. Otherwise, pupils are taught in their own classrooms. There is a large food technology room. However, it is now inappropriately equipped to meet the needs of the changing school population. Working surfaces are too high for many pupils and pupils with additional physical disabilities cannot access sinks, cupboards or cookers. Because of these difficulties, some lessons have to be taken in the hall using dining tables. This is unsatisfactory and limits the opportunities for some pupils to improve their daily living skills. These difficulties have been recognised by the school and plans to redesign the area are in hand.
119. The school has good links with the community to enhance the teaching of design and technology and linking with the teaching of art. For example, a visiting artist used a day long textile workshop to enable all pupils to produce colourful panels using batik and felt. These are

very well displayed in the entrance hall of the school. Older pupils and students in the post-16 department visit local museums and art galleries to look at the work of famous artists to analyse how certain affects were achieved. The staff makes extensive use of the facilities offered by local colleges to enhance those available within school. These experiences make a very good contribution to the learning of pupils and also to the improvement of their personal and social skills, for example, using the college cafeteria to buy snacks and drinks.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

120. The subject co-ordinator assumed responsibility for maintaining plans, policy and resources late last term and is currently absent from school. At the curriculum meeting in December 2000, it is recorded that the present incumbent has agreed to 'look after' the geography curriculum for the time being. The subject is a key foundation element in many of the modules being delivered across the curriculum and it is unsatisfactory for it not to have more permanent leadership. Consequently, during the inspection, it had a very low profile with few references being made to it in lesson planning. The acting headteacher monitors the time allocated to geography and sees teachers' plans at least every term. She has just started a programme of monitoring pupils' work in the subject.
121. Geography is scheduled for future development to enhance its status within the school curriculum. There is photographic evidence in pupils' records to suggest that there is good coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and it is evident that pupils and students know and understand the function and whereabouts of supermarkets, other educational establishments and places of worship. Pupils are beginning to use the Internet to support their learning in the subject and there are rain gauges and thermometers available for classroom weather centres.
122. The use of the local environment is a strong feature of the geography curriculum. Assessment is based on the Programmes of Study with each pupil having a recording folder. Resources are just about satisfactory and most are kept by class teachers. There is a resources cupboard and other specific collections to support aspects of the curriculum. There are also compasses and video material on the weather and one entitled 'Rainforest Day'. A good range of games such as 'Traffic Jam', 'Which way please?', 'Chance Island', 'Lost in Space' and 'Animals of the World', are available for borrowing from the central resource cupboard. There are three globes in the library and a large tactile puzzle of the British Isles. There are some resources which are designed for four- and five-year-olds. Some of the materials available are in need of replacement. A full stock check is required and set against National Curriculum criteria to ensure that all aspects of the Programmes of Study are available and appropriate to the differing needs of the pupils and students. When the annual stock check is made later in the year, it is necessary to consider the subject access of those with more profound special needs which is a growing population within the school. There is also a need to produce and publish a full list of what is available centrally and within classrooms to ensure there is no duplication of equipment in new orders.
123. Since the last inspection, there has been a marginal improvement in the perceived weaknesses in the subject. It is now time for the school to make an energetic effort to develop and establish the subject in the curriculum and improve the quality of learning opportunities provided for the pupils.

## **HISTORY**

124. Pupils are interested in history as a result of the good quality of the teaching they receive which broadens their experience of times past. They make good progress in understanding how things change over time and how they have changed too. The youngest pupils in the school are developing an understanding of 'then' and 'now'. Through the teacher's good use of photographs, they look at pictures of themselves when younger and some can point and indicate

that the photograph is 'me'. Lower attaining pupils with complex needs benefit from the teacher's skilled sensory approach by which they look at, touch and sometime try on, old clothes. Older, lower attaining pupils show their interest and a deeper understanding by indicating through eye contact and increased body movement or simple vocabulary, that they can tell the difference between shoes they wore as a baby and those they wear now.

125. Teachers are able to plan a good variety of such lessons because they show imagination and ingenuity in the content and methods by which they teach and their commitment to making the subject meaningful. For example, younger pupils are captivated by a bust of Queen Victoria which they can see and feel. Teaching is good for all pupils through the school. Teachers have sufficient knowledge of history to teach it well and provide pupils with exciting experiences to enhance their learning. For example, they visit such places as a nearby World War II museum where the pupils become absorbed by contemporary artefacts. They learned how the reality of war sounded in their ears when they dived for cover under the table as the sound of an enemy fighter flying overhead filled the room with noise. In one outstanding lesson with pupils aged 13 to 16, the teacher presented very exciting activities to the pupils as an aid to discussing famous people. She skilfully linked the work to other areas of the curriculum, for example using Mozart's music to illustrate why he was so well known. The pupils were fully involved in the lesson and deepened their understanding of poets, musicians and North American folklore.
126. These very active lessons which involve the pupils in practical tasks ensure that, even where they may not fully understand, they enjoy a good quality learning experience. A major strength in the teaching of lower attaining pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is the very well focused language work undertaken by the nursery nurse. She encourages the pupils to explore, continually pointing out the qualities of the materials using such words as 'cold', 'plastic' and 'smooth'. This oral reinforcement of the pupils' sensory experience significantly promotes their involvement and understanding.
127. Resources for history are satisfactory and very well enhanced by the teachers' ingenuity in finding specific objects to support the overall lesson. For example, in a lesson on 'older' and 'younger', the teacher acquired a pair of shoes formerly worn by one pupil when she was a toddler. These are effective strategies in involving pupils in their own learning and ensuring that they are motivated to explore their own world. Where photographs are dated and contain sufficient written detail for the reader to understand the context, they provide a very good method of identifying pupils' progress, focusing their attention and helping them to recall earlier events.
128. It was not possible to see any specific history lessons for pupils over 16. Evidence from their Accreditation of Life and Living Skills (ALL), and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) portfolios shows that history forms part of their work from time-to-time and they build successfully upon their previous learning.
129. The history curriculum provides good coverage of interesting topics over a three-year cycle which are derived from National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The history co-ordinator is very effective and enthusiastic about the subject. Whilst monitoring of the subject via planning and lesson content is good, the school recognises the importance of ensuring that pupils receive a good range of topics over time without undue repetition. The school has maintained the standards found at the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

130. All pupils and students achieve very well in information and communication technology. They all make very good progress thanks to the skills of the teachers and nursery nurses. Staff are

very confident and competent in their use of ICT to support their teaching in all subjects. Computer skills are taught separately to small groups of pupils whilst the use of computers and a wide range of software permeate the whole school.

131. By the age of seven, pupils use interactive computer programs. Those who are most able have learned to use the mouse to produce different animal noises by placing the cursor appropriately and clicking the left button of the mouse. When they have finished their work, these pupils follow proper procedures for shutting down the computer having first closed the program. Pupils who have more profound learning difficulties use the touch screens very effectively. They use the same interactive computer programs, each working at his or her appropriate level.
132. By the age of eleven, good progress is evident as pupils have developed their skills in using the mouse. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, especially when they use programs that involve music and song to reinforce counting. One of the favourite songs is 'Five Little Ducks Went Swimming One Day', in which pupils count out loud during each verse. Other programs are used to reinforce pupils' ability to count from one to ten. For pupils who find the work more difficult, there is a great deal of support. Teachers and nursery nurses give 'hand-on-hand' support to the pupils in order to help with mouse control. Pupils then gain a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure as they click the mouse button to generate a response from the computer.
133. By the age of 14, pupils are successful in using the computer and printer in order to write simple sentences. With the help of the teachers and nursery nurses, pupils write about their activities on 'Red Nose Day'. The pupils use a special computer program that writes in symbols as well as in the ordinary written word. For example, one pupil wrote about having his hair sprayed red as part of the activity. Towards the end of the session pupils took part in a discussion about the work that they had done. The session finished with a short time in which pupils were allowed to use a variety of technological toys. These included electronic keyboards and cassette recorders, all of which were used eagerly and sensibly by the pupils.

134. By the age of 16, pupils can follow instructions from a card which enables them to log on, access programs and then carry out some word processing. Pupils who are working at the highest level copy their own name successfully, using the space bar correctly to separate their first name from their surname. This shows clearly that pupils have made very good progress in using computers and peripherals successfully. This is true of all pupils whether their learning difficulties are severe or profound.
135. Students in the Further Education Unit make very good progress as they follow accredited courses. One of these gives them a qualification in communication and information technology through the Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR) examinations board. Students prove their competence in switching on the computer, typing in their name and password and logging on to a word-processing program. They are successful in copy typing and printing hard copies. Students successfully edit the text, format the page to their own choosing, altering the size of the font and the style of typeface.
136. The behaviour of all pupils is very good and for many pupils, their behaviour is exemplary. All pupils are very highly motivated and this is thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff. Teachers and nursery nurses are confident and competent in using computers and other equipment efficiently and effectively. Computers and communication aids are used to help pupils to take a full and active part in all lessons.
137. The subject is very well co-ordinated throughout the school. This co-ordination and management include the excellent deployment of nursery nurses who make an invaluable contribution to the education of all pupils. The quality of teaching throughout the school is very good. Teachers are skilled and confident. They make very good use of ICT to help pupils learn in many different subjects. There are very good systems in place to monitor and record the progress of all pupils and ensure that the work that pupils are expected to do is not only appropriate to the different levels at which pupils can attain, but is also challenging and exciting for them.
138. The school has a small computer suite situated in the 'cluster area', an area adjoining the main hall. This is small but adequate for the number of pupils it serves. ICT resources within the school are good overall. Much of the equipment is very good and some is excellent. However, there is no special sensory area, nor is there special sensory equipment available for the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This is a weakness in the school and is an area for development of which the school is fully aware.
139. There has been good improvement since last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved, the facilities are much better, and good use is being made of them. ICT now enjoys a high profile within the school. There is very good quality curriculum documentation and very clear targets are set for each individual pupil. The subject is now being used well to the benefit of all pupils and all teachers across the whole curriculum. Staff and pupils alike are well motivated and in a very strong position to improve even further.

## **MUSIC**

140. All pupils and students make very good progress, building on their previous learning, and achieve very well at all ages. Music is taught to all classes and is also used as a vehicle through which many other lessons are learned. By the age of seven, pupils have learned several songs including 'Old MacDonald Had A Farm' and 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'. The excellent teaching is planned very well to meet the interests and the attainment levels of the young children. Lessons are pitched clearly in line with the pupils' individual targets and have been carefully written to ensure that the tasks are appropriate and that all pupils make very good

progress. Pupils learn the names of musical instruments and can identify a tambourine correctly. They develop a sense of rhythm as they shake percussion instruments in time to the music. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties take a full and active part in lessons but they are not quite so successful in developing their sense of rhythm. All pupils behave extremely well, they follow the teacher's instructions concerning the proper handling of musical instruments and are very good at sharing with each other. Lessons are planned extremely well and ensure that at the end of the lesson, pupils have a quiet time when they can relax to the sound of peaceful pipe music.

141. By the age of eleven, pupils continue to make very good progress and have learned to sing a selection of songs. The teacher encourages the pupils to make their own choices, which they do with delight. During music lessons, pupils also reinforced their knowledge and understanding of numbers. Many of the songs are based on counting. Pupils also match symbols to musical instruments and learn old traditional songs. This helps to develop their cultural awareness as well as their social understanding. 'Island in the sun', 'Home on the range' and 'Maybe its because I'm a Londoner' are all songs which have many cross-curricular links and which the pupils enjoy so much. The teacher is very competent and confident in the value that music plays in the learning process. The teacher gives very clear instructions to pupils about how they are allowed to behave, telling them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Pupils respond very well and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the singing and actions of the songs, each at his or her own level. The very good teaching is carefully matched to the individual special needs of the pupils. The teacher knows the pupils well and has excellent relationships with them. In turn, the pupils trust the teacher implicitly and respond very well to the activities that she has planned for them.
142. By the age of 14, pupils take part in discussions concerning the difference between pop music and folk music. They recognise different pulse patterns in music and compose their own pieces of percussion music using triangles, drums and a rainmaker. They make a collection of wind chimes and discover how the length of the wind chime determines the note that it produces; the longer the chime, the lower the note. Pupils also have the opportunity to listen to the music of the world's greatest composers, including Rossini and Rogers and Hammerstein. They enjoy singing the song 'Edelweiss' from 'The Sound of Music'.
143. By the ages of 16 and 19, pupils and students make very good progress as they listen to music and are able to indicate their favourite pop stars. This forms part of the ASDAN module entitled 'Popular Culture' and the pupils and students participate fully in all aspects of the lessons. The extremely high quality of teaching, which is often planned by the teacher and delivered by the nursery nurse, creates a very positive atmosphere in which pupils and students feel confident enough to talk about their work with authority and conviction.
144. Their studies in music involve co-operative working and sharing of materials and equipment. This is particularly so when it comes to using the computer in the classroom. Students access the Internet to find information that they require about different pop stars. They then print off the pictures in colour, to support the work in their folders.

145. There are sufficient staff to deliver music throughout the school and they do this well. There is a good supply of resources, which are appropriate to the needs and demands of the pupils and are of good quality. The policies and guidelines are good and show the importance that is placed upon music within the school. The lessons are planned around individual learning targets for the pupils. Each pupil is considered and then targets are set for the individual lessons, which incorporate the pupils' targets. In this way, a record is kept of their gains in knowledge and understanding, hence it is clear that pupils throughout the school are making very good progress.
146. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the progress that pupils and students are making.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

147. The standards achieved and the progress made by pupils in physical education are very good for pupils from eleven to 16 and those in the Further Education Unit. This is as a direct result of specialist teaching that is consistently very good and activities that are appropriately challenging. A significant feature of the subject for this age group is the inclusion of all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with the autistic spectrum disorders, in all activities including trampolining, hockey and swimming. For pupils up to the age of eleven, progress and achievement is always satisfactory and often good. Here the subject is taken by non-specialists and in a very small minority of lessons, there was not enough rigour in the planning and challenge in the tasks set for the pupils. Nevertheless, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
148. For pupils up to the age of seven with autistic spectrum disorders, physical education is used routinely as a means of developing communication. The teacher and nursery nurses are active partners for pupils in a variety of play activities using hoops, balls and beanbags. Pupils make good progress in responding and linking language to action and expressing choice, as well as improving their gross and fine motor control, balance and co-ordination. The nursery nurses make good use of small sweets to reward behaviour, attention and verbal response. Calm, consistent routines and expectations contribute to pupils' progress. Other pupils in this age group develop the basic actions of travelling, using hands and feet, in a nearby soft play area. They make good progress in climbing, jumping, landing and rolling and show a confidence in movement generally and an enjoyment of exercise. Lessons are well planned and appropriate emphasis is given to the personal and social aspects of the subject.
149. Progress in swimming for all pupils is very good. Lessons are well planned and organised. Excellent support from nursery nurses and some parents ensure that the time pupils spend in the water is maximised to promote learning. Trusting relationships mean that pupils relax and are buoyant and this enhances learning. Appropriate use of a range of equipment – arm bands, floats, hoops – gives pupils confidence to try for themselves. Skilled instruction and encouragement from teachers and swimming instructors challenge pupils to think about their strokes. Pupils are eager and listen carefully. They work hard to refine their techniques and build up their stamina. Swimming achievements are accredited by a range of certificates and awards and these motivate pupils. The most able pupils achieve the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) water skills Grade 4. The quality of care taken over pupils in travelling and changing is exemplary. Appropriate concern is taken over all health and safety matters. There is a committed group of adults in the water, spotters on the side and a lifeguard on duty. The school nurse goes too, if a pupil or pupils within a group have high medical dependency needs.
150. For the students in the Further Education Unit, progress in trampolining is very good. The most able trampolinists achieve a British Trampolining Federation Award 4 but everyone takes part

and achieves. Non ambulant pupils are carefully lifted onto the trampoline and experience the thrill of bouncing. They show their pleasure with smiles and gestures. More able pupils proudly demonstrate seat drops and twists. No time is wasted. When they are not using the trampoline, able pupils are busy developing control and co-ordination bouncing on a trampet; non-ambulant pupils are appropriately positioned on a mattress for comfort and maintenance and are massaged or stretch in line with the physiotherapist's recommendations. The teacher, a trampolining coach, gives clear instructions and critical but supportive comment that improves pupils' performance. Good attention is paid to safety with adequate spotters and safety mats. The activity is very well planned and organised so that learning is continuous. Nursery nurses are clear about their roles and improve pupils' learning by their judicious support. Pupils are encouraged to make choices for themselves and to be as independent as possible. They respond to these expectations in a mature and responsible manner.

151. Pupils from fourteen to sixteen have the unique opportunity to be coached in hockey by sixth-formers at a local state boarding school and in that school's wonderfully equipped sports hall. Pupils learn how to hold a hockey stick and control, dribble and shoot a ball. They make good progress in acquiring these skills as a result of sensitive but informed instruction and demonstration. The sixth-formers provide excellent role models in terms of their politeness, dress and expertise. They make the pupils feel welcomed and valued. The pupils listen carefully to their advice and work hard to perfect skills. The arrangements are well organised and a nursery nurse takes overall responsibility for the warm-up activities and recovery period. The teamwork of all the adults and sixth-formers involved is impressive and considerably enhances learning. The ethos of the whole lesson is one of co-operation and purpose.
152. Physical education is a considerable strength of the school. It is extremely well led. There is a good scheme of work with an appropriate balance of activities. Assessment procedures, resources and accommodation are good. The subject has made significant progress since the last inspection in terms of the quality of teaching and learning and in the breadth of the curriculum. The school now uses a range of leisure centres and local schools to widen pupils' knowledge and experience of community facilities. In turn, the community is now more aware of the school, its work and its pupils, and all are held in high regard.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

153. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' records show that the overall standard of teaching and learning is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Across the school, the level of achievement and the progress made by pupils, including those with additional special needs, are good.
154. By the age of seven, pupils are learning about their class and their family. They have some understanding of the importance of those professions who care for them. By the age of eleven, pupils begin to collect information relating to specific religions. They visit different types of places of worship, for example the local church, and follow up their learning in art by making stained glass windows using coloured tissue paper. They learn about celebrations and know that different religions have different special days, for example Christmas Day and Diwali. They learn about people who help them in school for example, the caretaker talks about his job and they help him clean windows. Lower attaining pupils learn about their own daily routines. They can identify objects of reference associated with certain times of day, for example pyjamas are associated with going to bed. By the age of 13, pupils develop the idea of caring, particularly of those who are in need. They act out the parable of the Good Samaritan and with support can draw out some conclusions. Lower attaining pupils and those with profound and multiple difficulties have some understanding of their emotions and can recognise sad and happy masks. They can give some indication of what makes them smile. Higher attaining pupils are aware of



the link between hot cross buns and Easter. Pupils know the word 'God' and have an understanding of the meaning of 'to pray'. They have a good knowledge of special celebrations such as birthdays and marriages. They know that they are given presents at Christmas. By the age of 16, pupils are extending their knowledge of world religions, through visiting, for example, a Buddhist Temple. Whole-school assemblies and reflection times at the end of the school day give pupils an opportunity to celebrate each other's successes and the good things they have enjoyed.

155. The curriculum co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and since the last inspection has raised the profile of the subject throughout the school. The policy statement is good and follows the guidance given in the local authority agreed syllabus. Schemes of work are detailed. Teachers meet regularly to plan their work and the co-ordinator monitors lesson plans to ensure appropriate coverage. The individual education targets of pupils are incorporated into daily lesson plans. There are good procedures for the assessment of progress as each pupil has a personal file with a section for monitoring achievement in religious education. These are regularly updated. At the time of the last inspection, resources were judged to be unsatisfactory. They are now good. There is a good range of artefacts to assist in the teaching of religious education. However, storage facilities are unsatisfactory. Some items are stored in the library whilst others are stored in the office used by the school nurse. This makes their availability to assist teaching and learning difficult.