

INSPECTION REPORT

BEATRICE TATE

Tower Hamlets

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100989

Headteacher: Mr Alan Black

Reporting inspector: Mary Last
(OFSTED No: 17171)

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 November 2000

Inspection number: 196726

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Judes Road London
Postcode:	E2 9RW
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bill Jones
Date of previous inspection:	April, 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs M Last (OFSTED No: 17171)	Registered inspector	Art	What sort of school is it?
		Music	How well are pupils taught?
		Equal opportunities	Post-16
		Special educational needs	
Ms C Stormonth (OFSTED No: 16472)	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr T Fiddian-Green (OFSTED No: 14596)	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Design and technology	
		Physical education	
		Religious education	
Ms M Hart (OFSTED No: 22577)	Team inspector	Science	How well is the school led and managed?
		Information and communication technology	
		Modern foreign languages	
Ms L Wolstencroft (OFSTED No: 22821)	Team inspector	English	The school's results and achievements
		Geography	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		History	
		English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beatrice Tate is an inner city special school for pupils aged eleven to nineteen with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. At the time of inspection there were 27 boys and 23 girls on roll, with 70 per cent of Bangladeshi ethnic origin. Thirty-five pupils have English as an additional language and 12 of these are supported by special teaching and funding. Forty-one pupils are eligible for free school meals. As a result of their severe learning difficulties, pupils' attainments are well below national expectations and judgements are therefore made in relation to the gains they make in relation to their previous achievements and towards targets set for them in their individual educational plans. Pupils are taught in age related classes for part of each day and in ability groups for the remainder. The average class size is 6.3. Pupils follow a timetable which offers a wide range of activities well matched to their needs. It is based upon a commercially developed scheme and interprets the requirements of the National Curriculum satisfactorily. Almost all pupils travel to school by local authority transport.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Beatrice Tate is a steadily improving school where, under the clear direction of the headteacher and senior management team, the staff are developing their strategies for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are gradually raising standards of teaching and learning by developing the learning opportunities provided for pupils. They do this by keeping themselves up to date with national developments and considering whether they would be of benefit to the school. The school has improved the range of curricular opportunities by introducing a new framework which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, many of the initiatives designed to raise standards are comparatively new and the school has yet to identify the ways in which they benefit the pupils in the long-term. As a result of well-planned teaching and stimulating activities pupils make good progress particularly toward targets set for them in their individual educational plans. The wide-ranging needs of all the pupils are carefully identified and met but there are some inconsistencies in the way lesson time is used and on a very few occasions pupils' learning opportunities are sometimes limited. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good teaching which enables pupils to make good gains in learning particularly in relation to targets in individual educational plans.
- Provides good support for learning through the work of learning support assistants who guide pupils with their work and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Provides a good curriculum within the school for students over sixteen with high standards of teaching which challenge and maintain the students' interest in education until they leave school.
- Has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and very good relationships between staff and pupils within a secure and supportive learning environment.
- Provides very good role models, ensuring that pupils make very good progress in speaking, listening and alternative communication skills, particularly in signing where all teachers are very skilled.

What could be improved

- The way in which lesson time is used so that all pupils receive maximum teaching.
- The teaching of computer skills so that pupils become more competent and confident in using them in all relevant areas of learning.
- The consistency with which the governors and senior management team gather information with which to judge all aspect of the school's effectiveness.
- The use of information gathered from assessment and monitoring to improve standards of teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1997 and, after being identified as having serious weaknesses, was subsequently monitored by HMI in 1998. The school has made good progress in all the key issues identified in the 1997 inspection report. The most striking feature is the improvement in the accommodation, which, while still not complete, is vastly superior to that provided in 1997. The governors and school staff have worked hard to realise their commitment of providing a good environment in which pupils enjoy learning and where facilities are comfortable, classrooms are well maintained and specialist rooms are provided for practical subjects. Whilst the accommodation is still limited, the continuation of the next phase is planned to reduce congestion and provide extra facilities such as hydrotherapy. The funding for this third phase has already been agreed and is due for completion in April 2002. The headteacher and senior staff have successfully led the staff through relevant changes to the curriculum content and planning. Although the curriculum remains under development, the commercial scheme adopted, and being adapted, by the school, effectively links the school's work with national curriculum levels. The school has schemes of work for all subjects except French. Assessment procedures vary in quality and remain under review and development. However, the information gathered from assessment procedures is still not fully used to identify pupils' gains in learning and linked to future work in lessons. There are now leaders for each subject who are increasingly fulfilling effective monitoring roles but are not all yet observing teaching in their subjects. The curriculum now meets all statutory requirements and provides a good range of activities which interest the pupils. In some classes, however, teachers do not always find the right balance between allowing pupils to undertake planned tasks around the school whilst ensuring that they do not miss any significant work within the lesson. The school is well placed to improve upon its current high standards.

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 14	by age 16	by age 19	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	A	very good	A
reading	B	B	B	Good	B
writing	B	B	B	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	B	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	A	A	Poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B		

Given the severe nature of the pupils' learning difficulties and the complexity of some pupils' needs, they make good progress towards targets set for them in their individual educational plans. In lessons pupils try hard and generally make good progress especially when challenged by the determination of teachers that they will do their very best. In English pupils make good gains in learning particularly in communication whether by sign or speech. In mathematics the pupils are learning to count and calculate and, as they get older, to make good use of their skills to purchase items in the local shops. In personal and social development pupils achieve well. Over time pupils increasingly understand the need to behave sensibly and responsibly when in the community and students Post-16 gain great benefit from their attendance at the local college where they are becoming accustomed to mixing with large groups of students. There is no significant difference in the achievements of any particular groups of pupils or between boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They try hard in lessons to do their best and join in with activities with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in and around the school. They are helpful and considerate to one another and staff help pupils understand how their behaviour affects others.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils take responsibility for tasks around the school such as laying the lunch tables. There is an atmosphere of friendliness throughout the school.
Attendance	Attendance is low but is affected by the many medical conditions that prevent some pupils coming to school. Those who can, attend regularly.

The school is a friendly and happy community where pupils and students study in a supportive and positive learning environment. Although attendance figures are low, absences are usually caused by medical difficulties or by pupils visiting their families on extended holidays abroad.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14	Aged 11-16	Aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	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.

Teaching is good. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge but in some classes their expertise in music and French is no more than barely satisfactory. Teachers do not teach enough information and communications technology skills to enable pupils to use computers as a tool across all areas of learning. Only three unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection and five lessons were outstanding. Teaching is good or better in over five out of every ten lessons. Staff know their pupils well and plan work which interests them and helps them to make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual educational plans. In English and mathematics, teachers successfully use strategies from the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies to improve their planning and teaching; this results in a good, strong focus on pupils' learning and their effective use of these basic skills in lessons and when in the community. The teaching for students Post-16 is very good; teachers here have extremely high expectations of the students and challenge them at every opportunity to think about what they have learnt and how to improve. All staff provide very good support to pupils in order to improve their personal and social skills. They plan lessons that specifically inform pupils about, for example, health education and community services but they also reinforce and develop the pupils' personal and social skills at other less formal times such as during lunch and play times. In some classes teachers do not always make good use of lesson time. Some teachers end lessons early or use teaching time for informal breaks or to undertake tasks that should be completed during lunch or playtimes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall with many good features. It meets the needs of the very diverse groups of pupils through a good range of interesting activities. The commercial scheme adopted by the school satisfactorily interprets the requirements of the National Curriculum but there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' information and communication technology skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for the high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is very good. Specialist teaching support is of high quality and helps pupils and staff to recognise cultural differences and to ensure understanding. Several other staff speak community languages and use their skills to good effect when communicating with the pupils and parents. Many teachers warmly greet pupils in their own community languages at the start of the day.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual development is good and reinforced in lively and enjoyable assemblies. Moral development is good and pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong. The school provides well for pupils' social development and regularly celebrates the many cultures in the school. Good use is made of the local community to deepen pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils providing a safe and positive environment in which they learn with, confidence and security. All staff take a genuine interest in the pupils' well-being.

The school provides a good range of activities for the pupils which enables them to work with interest and to make good gains in learning. The curriculum is based upon a commercial scheme and is currently being adapted to meet the specific needs of the pupils. This is a continuing task and the curriculum has not been in place long enough for long-term advantages to be identified. The school has recognised the need to improve arrangements for the use of computers in its current development planning. All staff show a high level of commitment to the pupils and a genuine interest in them and their families.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team is good overall; They are a highly visible presence in the school and motivate staff by their own enthusiasm and by providing very good models of teaching. Whilst the senior management team has good procedures for monitoring its work, these are not consistently implemented so that, on a minority of occasions, they do not know of weaknesses. The underdeveloped role of the subject leaders contributes to this difficulty. The school has reconsidered this difficulty and already put procedures in place to remedy the problem. The school consistently applies the principles of best value to ensure that money is spent wisely.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. It has been particularly effective in obtaining new facilities for the school. However, the role of governors in monitoring the work of the school and identifying its strengths and weakness remains an area for development.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has firm targets for raising pupil performance and a monitoring and evaluation policy that offers a good basis for further development.
The strategic use of resources	The school is well resourced and the first two phases of the building project have resulted in much improved accommodation. Nevertheless, the accommodation remains in need of further refurbishment and expansion – some facilities will remain unsatisfactory until the completion of the improvement programme..

There are a good number of teachers and classroom assistants to meet the needs of the pupils. The school is well resourced and teachers use the resources well with the exception of the computers that are not consistently used by all staff to promote pupils' skills. The accommodation has been extensively upgraded and refurbished since the last inspection and now provides good sized classrooms with some specialist rooms for food technology, design and technology and science. Nevertheless, issues concerning accommodation remain in terms of storage, and facilities for hydrotherapy; these difficulties are due to be resolved when the third phase of building is completed in 2002.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children like school • the children's good behaviour and the good teaching • being well informed about progress • being able to approach the school with concerns • the good working relationships between staff and parents • the good leadership and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the inconsistency over homework • the short notice for some meetings •

The parents are unanimously supportive of the work of the school. They like the approachability of staff, particularly the headteacher, and they feel that their children are improving both in their work and behaviour. A small minority of parents felt that their children were not making sufficient progress in school. Inspectors agreed that homework is given inconsistently but that teachers provide it according to individual pupils' ability and interest. Parents may request more if they wish. The school organises its communication with parents well but has recognised the need to provide longer notice for meetings and to review its arrangements for homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. All pupils at the school have been assessed as having severe learning difficulties and many have additional learning needs such as profound and multiple learning difficulties. As a result the pupils' attainments are well below national expectations. The inspection report therefore judges the pupils' achievements in relation to their needs, their previous achievements and the progress they make towards targets in their individual educational plans with examples of what pupils know, understand and can do.
2. Overall pupils achieve well. Pupils make at least satisfactory and often good or very good gains in learning in over five out of every ten lessons. This represents a substantial improvement when compared to the findings in the last inspection when in over one out of every ten lessons progress was unsatisfactory. As a result of very good teaching, Post-16 students make very good progress particularly in developing their social skills by using community facilities. Pupils' achievements at Key Stages 3 and 4 within lessons is good overall, and very slightly better at Key Stage 4 where pupils are growing in maturity and are therefore able to concentrate well in lessons. The focus on numeracy and literacy skills is having a positive impact on the pupils' work throughout the school and they make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual educational plans.
3. Pupils make good gains in English. Within lessons their levels of achievement relate very closely to the quality of teaching they receive. They are particularly good where lessons are well planned with stimulating activities matched to the pupils' individual needs. The school has developed its approach to teaching the elements of English in a positive way. It has identified the development of communication skills as a central focus to its work and pupils now make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills across all key stages. The use of signing and symbols is also very good. As pupils progress through the school the number of signs and symbols they know and use increases. They learn to listen to each other and to respond confidently using signing, speech and communication aids. Reading is being taught systematically and the school has developed the use of materials of particular interest to the pupils to ensure that they continue to learn. Pupils make good progress in writing and by the time they reach the Post-16 unit are beginning to write words independently. The improved library facilities enable pupils to access books easily and this has added to the enjoyment of literature which is encouraged by all teachers.
4. Pupils achieve well in mathematics throughout the school as a direct result of the focus that teachers and classroom assistants place upon the use of numeracy throughout the curriculum. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop their understanding of number using number lines and matching. Some pupils can count to six with some support from an adult. Other pupils distinguish between big and small, heavy and light. Older pupils at Key Stage 4 learn to apply their Numeracy skills to other areas of work such as a collaborative project to build a domed structure. At Post-16 some students can count to ten and use what they know to count how many students are present and how many drinks are needed.
5. Pupils' achievements in science are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 some pupils learn about sound. They are encouraged to respond to different sounds such as the telephone ringing. Other pupils learn about the changes to materials when they are heated. They look at what happens to popcorn when it is heated and make and taste pancakes. At Key Stage 4 pupils are developing observational skills and beginning to predict what will happen in experiments. They study changes. Pupils know that water is a liquid and that it becomes ice when it is frozen.
6. Pupils achieve well in personal and social development (PSD) and enjoy the emphasis placed upon developing their skills. From the time they enter the school, teachers place an appropriate focus upon pupils' understanding of themselves and others, their ability to take turns and to respect the views of other people. Teachers help pupils to learn to take responsibility for their own

actions both in school and elsewhere. As a result pupils develop their skills very effectively; they carry out tasks around the school and speak politely to visitors. Students at Post-16 are sufficiently mature to use their social skills effectively in other places such as at college or shopping the local supermarkets. The school places a clear focus upon this area of its work both in lessons and at other times of the school day and as a result pupils achieve well, by the time they reach Key Stage 4 and Post-16 demonstrating very good social skills and confidence.

7. Across the school, pupils make good progress in design technology, religious education and physical education. Pupils make satisfactory gains in learning in art, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Progress in music is barely satisfactory due to a lack of a clearly defined focus on what they should learn. In information and communications technology pupils make satisfactory gains in some lessons but lack opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects.
8. The school has set targets for language and literacy, mathematics and attendance and is beginning the process of reviewing these targets. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in achieving the targets set out in the individual education plans. Termly targets are set for pupils in language and literacy, mathematics and personal and social development.
9. There are no significant variations in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. Pupils with additional special needs also make good progress in their learning often because of the good support they receive from classroom assistants who help them understand what they have to do. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good gains in learning across the school. Their ability to take part in all aspects of the school's curriculum and to have their own cultures and customs recognised and, included in their work is due to the very high quality support they receive from the specialist teacher and the appropriateness of the language targets set for them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and behaviour is very good throughout the school. These findings represent an improvement since the last inspection when some pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory. Students Post-16, display very good or excellent attitudes in at least half of their lessons. In the remainder of lessons observed their attitudes and behaviour were good. Pupils' good attitudes, values and personal development reflect the ethos of the school and the determination by staff that pupils will concentrate well and behave as well as they can.
11. In five lessons the pupils' behaviour was outstanding as a direct result of the captivating and motivating teaching and support provided by the staff. For example, in an outstanding drama lesson pupils at Key Stage 4 were continually challenged by the teacher's questions and by the expectations placed upon them in terms of contributing to the drama but also to the feel and smell of real herbs. The pupils' attention was total throughout the lesson, with those who needed help receiving excellent guidance and explanations from support staff to ensure their understanding. Similarly, in a trip to the local supermarket, Post-16 students were persistently challenged by a continuing range of questions and tasks. The work they undertook in identifying, naming and comparing vegetables and fruit was so lively and demanding, that they were totally absorbed throughout, but nevertheless remembered that they were expected to behave very well within this large and busy shop.
12. Behaviour in and around the school is very good and makes a substantial contribution to pupils' achievements and progress. As pupils move through the school, they begin to develop an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others. They know when they have to sit and listen quietly and when it is the time for them to contribute to the lessons. In religious education and in other areas of the schools activities pupils make good progress in developing respect for the values and beliefs of other people. Students Post-16 are encouraged to write individual action plans that focus on their strengths and areas for development. Students attending college show considerable maturity in the way that they use the facilities and participate in activities. The few pupils with challenging behaviour respond well to the consistent handling identified in their behaviour management plans. These are used effectively by staff with the result that very few examples of challenging behaviour occurred during the inspection.
13. Behaviour at lunchtime is very good. Expectations of pupils are high and the school has

developed individual targets for pupils to work towards at this time. Pupils wait patiently to be served and make choices about their lunch.

14. Relationships are very good. Staff provide good role models especially so in the support pupils receive in using signing to communicate with one another and with staff. Pupils greet each other and staff cheerfully and applaud and praise the work of one another. Pupils and students work well alongside one another and many are able to work together. Several instances were seen during the inspection of pupils spontaneously picking up equipment, passing toys or helping others to walk or push their wheelchairs. On several occasions older students were sufficiently confident to hold doors open for visitors or offer to carry things.
15. As pupils move up the school they become more independent and take on appropriate responsibilities. Younger pupils are responsible for taking the register to the office, older pupils and students help set and clear tables at lunch times. Pupils help one another by ensuring that less mobile pupils can reach equipment. Post-sixteen students attend college and use local shops. They buy what they need with varying levels of support. They participate in visits to places such as the bus garage, know how to greet people and know how to behave in this environment.
16. During the week of the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or of any oppressive behaviour. Pupils and students worked and spent their leisure time either alongside one another or joining and co-operating in activities and games. All pupils with English as an additional language respond well to school. Multicultural displays and activities are well used to provide pupils with appropriate links to a range of cultures. Attendance is low but reflects the pupils' medical difficulties which frequently prevent them from coming to school. Some pupils also take extended holidays with their parents to visit their extended families abroad.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is good overall and is a strength of the school. Teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all lessons and in over five out of every ten lessons it is good, very good or outstanding. Of the fifty-seven lessons observed teaching was unsatisfactory in only three - in English, food technology and music. Five outstanding lessons were observed, one in Key Stage 3, and two in Key Stages 4 and Post-16 – these were in design and technology (2) and English (3). This high quality teaching represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when almost two out of every ten lessons were unsatisfactory and less than three out of every ten good or better. The very good work of the classroom assistants is a major factor contributing to the high standards of teaching, the good organisation of lessons and the subsequent good attention to work and the progress made by pupils.
18. At Key Stage 3 teaching is good in over four out of every ten lessons and very good in over two out of every ten. At Key Stage 4 teaching is good in almost six out of every ten lessons and very good or excellent on over three out of every ten. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory teachers do not always sustain pupils' interest until the ends of lessons because the pupils undertake other tasks or the lesson stops early for pupils to get ready for lunch. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher used a video to exemplify work on the changing state of water into ice, but two pupils had gone to lay the lunch tables at this point and one was occupied with a workbook. Similarly in an English lesson, teaching stopped fifteen minutes early so that pupils who needed help with toileting could be ready for lunchtime – rather than making better use of the generous time available during the lunch break for these tasks.
19. Teachers are broadening their expectations of pupils and setting higher challenges so that pupils have to work very hard and demonstrate their understanding. For example, in a drama lesson at Key Stage 3 about the Christmas Carol, the teacher ensured the pupils understood what the character of Scrooge looked like by dressing in nightcap and gown. When she introduced herself by saying "Scrooge is my name", the pupils, all of whom have some difficulty with spoken language, repeated and signed "Scrooge is your name". To participate and achieve this task response represents a major achievement for these particular pupils.
20. The teaching is of high quality for students over sixteen where over almost two out of every ten lessons are good, over four out of every ten are very good and over one out of every ten

outstanding. Outstanding teaching is characterised by teachers who maximise every opportunity for learning. They ask questions to test the pupils' knowledge but then follow these by asking 'why' and 'how' questions, setting high levels of challenge for the pupils and expecting them to think about their answers carefully. For example, during a visit to the local bus garage the teacher arranged for a wide range of activities to be available that stimulated the students' thinking about the world of work. He maximised their attention by providing a checklist as an aide memoir, for them to tick off things they saw so that they could recall them on return to school. As they visited the workshop, and helped to wash a bus the teacher continually stressed the focus of the lesson – learning about the world of work – so that the students did not merely perceive it as a fun activity. He also provided very good opportunities for students to enjoy practising their speaking and listening skills by using the two-way radio on the bus. As a result of this relentless challenge and very high expectations the students were highly motivated and eager to try everything. The teacher very successfully related the visit to their own experiences at school as he asked them to compare the tasks of managing the garage to that of managing the school!

21. Teachers have at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and use their skills well to promote pupils' learning and to help them make good progress. In music and French, however, the teachers' knowledge and skills are barely satisfactory. In French there is too little use of the target language and, when used, it is not always correct. In music lessons, teachers are enthusiastic, good-natured and provide stimulating activities but they are not well linked to the scheme of work and although enjoyable do not help pupils develop their musical skills. All staff have received training in information and communication technology but they do not use the computers consistently to support learning and appear to lack confidence in their own ability – although those few seen using the machines were clearly competent and enabling the pupils to learn well and enjoy their work.
22. The consistently high standards that teachers achieve through detailed planning and good attention to the pupils' specific needs result in pupils making good gains towards targets in their individual educational plans. Scrutiny of records show that pupils achieve well from year to year and at their annual reviews, the school can demonstrate good progress to parents against the targets identified. Such targets are a good focus for learning in most lessons. Teachers are aware of the targets and help pupils to work towards them and it is clear to see how the targets are being addressed. For example, in an English lesson with a group of lower attaining students, one target was to 'show anticipation in response to the words 'hold', 'let go', 'move' and 'stop'. The student was given the opportunity to do this by feeling, lifting, moving and holding several items including a stone which was sufficiently heavy so that her intention to lift it deliberately was clearly conveyed to staff by the physical movement of her hands.
23. Teaching is good in English and mathematics. The introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies has had a positive impact upon the work of both teachers and pupils. Following training for all teachers and classroom assistants, the school now places a strong focus on developing the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy by providing good opportunities for them to practise and reinforce these skills in other lessons. For example, they count ingredients and read food labels in food technology or count together in music. In lessons such as design and technology the staff ensure that pupils understand key vocabulary such as 'arch', 'column', 'dome' and 'roof' when building a dome out of canes. When in classes or visits away from the school pupils and students make good use of these skills, for example at college where they use the automatic vending machines for coffee and tea. Teachers also ensure that pupils use their literacy skills and their understanding of road signs and crossing lights to promote their safety and deepen their understanding of how to cope successfully in the community.
24. The use of signs and symbols is strength throughout the school. Many staff are excellent signers and the use of signs is promoted at all opportunities. The pupils respond well to this emphasis and many are refining their signing and are able to link several signs together to make whole sentences. In a peer-tutoring project with Key Stage 4 and Post-16 students, the teacher was concentrating the pupils' attention on signing both nouns and verbs and increasing their skills in the use of the verb 'to be'. He is gradually developing their understanding and use of syntax by ensuring that they now sign 'My name is John' rather than just 'name John'. At the same time, as a result of very high expectations of precision, the pupils are learning to refine their actions by signing very clearly and accurately, so that for example, they all understand and sign the words 'drink' and 'tea' accurately, acknowledging the differences in the two signs. Higher attaining pupils

are regularly used to help others and to demonstrate their skills in these sessions. This very high quality teaching is successful in promoting the pupils' self esteem and boost their confidence as they take the lead in signing before a very large group of their peers. The school is increasingly using symbols to support pupils' literacy and frequently link signing to written symbols. This work is developing well and much display work is made easier to understand by this use of symbols in labelling. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of computers in the classroom for pupils to gain maximum benefit from the programs available and for them to gain independence in routinely using the symbols when writing.

25. The large proportion of pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported. A specialist teacher works regularly with selected pupils and is very skilled in first language support, and general learning support and in ensuring that the pupils' home cultures and traditions are recognised and acknowledged during lessons. He works well with other staff, frequently teaching in partnership. In a music lesson staff worked together to reinforce pupils understanding of 'high', 'low', 'higher than' and 'lower than' and the support teacher was rigorous in emphasising this use of language. His good relationships with teacher and pupils was evident when they all got into a muddle with the order of the chime bars and the staff and pupils all laughed together as they tried to correct their mistake. Similarly the teacher successfully supported a pupil with English as an additional language in an art lesson when he demonstrated and explained the task both in English and Arabic and, when the pupil became somewhat distressed, spoke to him discreetly in his own language to reassure and calm him down. Several other members of the support staff speak community languages and the school makes good use of their expertise in communication with parents, through telephone calls and home/school books and for ensuring that pupils understand and are understood. Many teachers and support staff also know and speak phrases and greetings in community languages and these are frequently used when warmly greeting pupils at the beginning of the day.
26. Pupils with additional special needs are also well taught. Teachers ensure that pupils wearing hearing aids are positioned correctly and that pupils' glasses are clean! Where some pupils have difficulties with their behaviour the teachers are skilled in managing it so that there is minimum disruption to the classes. There were only one or two instances of challenging behaviour observed by inspectors and these were handled sensitively and effectively.
27. Teaching is satisfactory in science but teachers do not always exploit pupils' involvement in their learning by expecting them to make their own judgements about materials. For example, in one science lesson the teacher did not encourage pupils to identify the differences between the appearance of dried and fresh herbs. In another science lesson, the emphasis, when making pancakes, was placed upon the cooking activity rather than how the materials changed when heated.
28. Teaching is very good in personal and social development. All staff understand their pupils well and share a determination that they will grow in maturity as they move through the school. Teachers therefore place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills, including an awareness of health, sex and drugs education at a level appropriate for the pupils. The staff address these issues both in taught lessons and also very effectively in other less formal times of the day. For example, at lunchtimes, pupils have targets for improving their eating and social behaviour and staff help them to achieve these by providing very good role models and talking to pupils as they sit together for their meal. The school nurse and the therapy team also contribute to the pupils' well being and development by working with teachers to plan activities or by working more directly with the pupils when this is appropriate.
29. The school has good arrangements with the local careers service and provides careers education to pupils from Year 9. Teachers and careers staff work together and also interview students in preparation for identifying future placements when they leave school. Currently two students receive very good teaching at college where they attend one day a week in preparation for admission when they leave school. Other off-site teaching, of food technology linked to social skills development, was less successful in extending pupils' skills as the time involved in travelling was out of proportion to the benefit received. Whilst this particular issue has been resolved, the use of time is one of concern throughout the school. The school provides broadly sufficient time to cover the curriculum but teachers do not consistently use lesson time to best advantage. Because the school transport is sometimes delayed, lessons may start late if the

teachers wait for everyone to arrive. In these cases the time of those present is not always well used. Teachers often build informal breaks into their lessons, which further erode teaching time, and as a result lessons are shorter than planned and, in these instances, pupils do not always get sufficient opportunities to complete their work. For example, halfway through the afternoon, classes often stop for a 'short drinks break' but during inspection week this frequently took up twenty minutes or so of the two hours designated teaching time. Although teachers use the time effectively to promote choices and turn taking and in this way it is beneficial to the pupils, the time allocated for subject coverage is eroded. The school has acknowledged these weaknesses and, before the end of inspection week, had already begun to address them.

30. The use of assessment varies between teachers. In the best practice, records of pupils' experiences and what they have learnt or the skills they have acquired are regularly noted and incorporated into their ongoing records. However, in some lessons opportunities to capture the small steps of progress made by the pupils are not acknowledged in any formal way. Subsequently, teachers do not always use the information to plan their future work with the pupils. Despite this weakness, assessment overall is satisfactory and arrangements for defining and meeting the targets in pupils' individual educational plans are good.
31. Teachers make good use of resources ranging from the very simple such as flowers, plants, pebbles, fabrics or pictures to the more ambitious such as the canes for building an arched dome in design and technology. The opportunities for teaching science, design and technology and art have improved significantly since the very recent acquisition of the specialist rooms and teachers are making very good use of the two former rooms. As a result of well-planned teaching pupils are familiarising themselves with the layout of the rooms and learning to use equipment safely. In a food technology lesson a pupil in Key Stage 3 counted the number of people present and made tea for each with the skilled help of a classroom assistant. Staff pay good attention to health and safety in all areas of the school. They watch carefully for any hazards and warn pupils when they should take care, as when they are working in the new rooms and they are not yet fully familiar with them. It is clear that pupils are benefiting for these new environments as teachers help them to prepare pizzas and pancakes. Teachers' use of the new science room is less successful, however, as the timetable had not been clearly defined at the time of the inspection with the result that they were not able to use the room to best advantage.
32. The school has a good number of computers overall, with at least one in each classroom. However, teachers do not make good use of information technology to support their teaching and to help pupils learn independently. However, there were very few occasions when inspectors saw pupils using computers to reinforce their learning. One good example was seen in a mathematics lesson at Key Stage 3 where a pupil worked with a classroom assistant to match numbers to objects on the computer screen. In another lesson, teachers made good use of the computer to help pupils express their thoughts in writing by the use of a simple word-processing facility. In this lesson pupils showed that they could use a mouse and write simple text onto the screen with the help of a classroom assistant. Overall, however, teachers underused computers as a tool for supporting pupils learning in all aspects of the curriculum and many opportunities are lost to encourage pupils to work independently at the computer to reinforce their skills in the core subjects.

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

33. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, with a good quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils. The school meets its legal requirements by providing a broad range of relevant and appropriate learning experiences for them. These include the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal and social development (PSD).
34. Arrangements for PSD are good. The taught lessons and less formal work undertaken by teachers helps pupils to develop their understanding of the world, their place within it and to recognise the differences in people's lives. Personal and social education is particularly effective in boosting pupils' confidence and self esteem. Sex education and drugs awareness training are also effectively incorporated into the PSD programme and the school nurse and therapists contribute to the effectiveness of teachers' planning. They also contribute to some specialist

topics such as sex education, from time to time.

35. Whilst the planned time for each subject is satisfactory, the inappropriate use of lesson time in a few classes results in a loss of a significant amount of teaching and learning time over the course of each term. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvement to the curriculum, and all subjects now have schemes of work, even though the majority are new this term. These new, commercially produced schemes have not been in use long enough for the school to 'personalise' them for its own use. In addition, several of the subject leaders are new to their job, and, with new schemes of work, there has been no opportunity to evaluate how effectively the subjects are being taught. Religious education is very much improved after a considerable amount of hard work. The school recognises the need to continue its efforts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its curriculum provision.
36. All staff are rigorous in providing suitable opportunities for pupils to reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers remind pupils of colours, or the days of the week, or relate the next event, such as break, to the time of day. All pupils have equal access to the whole curriculum.
37. Pupils experience a good range of learning experiences that reflect the schools aims and values. For example, assemblies give them many opportunities to celebrate the diversity of pupils' backgrounds, with various religious festivals such as Eid or Harvest. The school provides a good range of extra curricular activities', all pupils have good opportunities to extend their experiences outside the school. They have the chance to visit adventure play areas, leisure centres, a farm and the riding stables. There are weekly shopping trips that enable pupils to become familiar with the local area and learn skills for everyday life. Sometimes visitors come to the school to talk or teach, such as the Building Experience visit during the inspection period when pupils helped to make the large dome from long doweling rods and joiners. At lunchtimes there are opportunities to join in activities as pupils wish, such as music or a computer club.
38. The provision for careers education is good and there is a very good 'world of work' scheme which enables pupils to deepen their understanding of a variety of jobs and places. This scheme successfully links classroom teaching to practical tasks during visits to such places as the garage that provides the school buses. The local careers officer visits, and all pupils within Key Stage 3 receive classes about careers education, and look at life and leisure choices. For pupils who are able to benefit, work experience is arranged in places like parks, garden centres or other local projects.
39. Other good links with the community enable pupils to use local leisure and sporting facilities and there are visits to Leyton Orient football ground as well as leisure centres. A local drama and movement group help pupils who find movement difficult to experience a well-planned drama-focussed sensory story session. A few pupils attend local colleges, and some of these visits are very worthwhile. For example, two pupils spent the day on a course making them familiar with the college layout, the canteen, and the general student facilities available. As preparation for independent living this was very valuable.
40. Pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies provide good opportunities for reflection and sometimes prayer. For example, during the inspection time, pupils built a large dome in the hall, as a representation of a mosque. A 'moon' was projected onto the ceiling and a teacher with two pupils, all appropriately dressed, demonstrated Muslim prayer. Everyone was still and quiet and appreciated the special nature of the occasion. In religious education, pupils hear Bible stories, and experience how various world faiths worship, pray and celebrate. Assemblies allow pupils to celebrate many religious festivals such as Eid or Divali, or Easter. There is a very good display about Buddhism in the school hall. In classes, pupils have some quiet time on occasions and teachers often create atmosphere with candles, incense and music.
41. The school very successfully promotes pupils' moral development, and teachers and assistants are constantly reminding pupils about respect for everyone, adults and other pupils alike. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong, and good relationships are promoted by all adults, who offer good role models themselves. Pupils are taught how to get on well with each other and classes work as generally harmonious groups. The school also teaches pupils to celebrate one another's successes, and this also furthers good relationships across the family of the school.

42. Pupils' social development is very good and promoted in many ways. Pupils take some responsibilities, such as returning the register to the office after registration, or some helping to clear up in classrooms. Lunchtime is a social event and all gather together and some social skills are taught. There are many opportunities in work and outings where pupils learn to be part of a group. They learn how to wait for others when getting into the busses, or take their turn in a queue. Pupils, catching the atmosphere set up by the school, often help one another in small ways in their everyday life; perhaps by pushing a switch nearer so that the other can reach it, or passing some piece of the equipment. Relationships across the whole school are very good, and this is a result of the efforts from all adults towards the pupils whom they respect and encourage at every turn.
43. Culturally, pupils' development is also very good. They are given many opportunities to experience the culture, food, clothing, and music of other cultures and faiths. They have celebrated Chinese New Year, Hanukkah, Christmas and many other religious festivals. Assemblies do much in this respect, and during the inspection period pupils heard about the Muslim practice of Ramadan. They have heard stories from other cultures, and they have visits from theatre groups. They go out to museums or other places of interest, and the school celebrates the diversity of cultures and faiths, represented in the community, very well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The level of care and support for pupils reported at the last inspection has been considerably improved and is now very good, creating a climate of security and well being that improves the effectiveness of the curriculum. The procedures and practices employed reflect the high priority afforded by the school to the welfare of pupils as a means of raising standards. Parents and pupils report that they feel well supported by the school and that the school is approachable to deal with any problems or concerns.
45. The school has effective procedures to promote attendance. Registers are consistently and properly maintained. The school follows up absences in tandem with the education welfare services to keep unauthorised absence levels down to the lowest level possible level.
46. The procedures for managing and promoting good behaviour are also good. Staff know pupils very well and have an effective range of strategies in place to manage the very few pupils who present a range of challenging behavioural difficulties. The school takes a consistent approach in line with defined behaviour modification programmes and is proactive in firmly controlling the very few instances of unacceptable behaviour that disrupts learning. The school takes all steps to eliminate any form of harassment and is highly successful in this regard.
47. The arrangements for child protection are very good and meet all the statutory requirements. The headteacher is the designated person and staff are aware of their responsibilities. When pupils are sick or injured they receive a high level of care. Those pupils who have a range of medical conditions are well known and catered for. Staff training on first aid and manual handling is up to date. The school nurse plays an important role in training staff to help and support pupils, give help and advice to parents, providing first aid cover and teaching aspects of PSD such as healthy living, healthy eating, personal hygiene and sex education. During the inspection the lunchtime supervisors received some very useful training on how to deal with epilepsy. The refurbished toilets provide good changing facilities with appropriate hoists. The health and safety risk assessments are thorough. Issues are prioritised and are subject to swift remedial action should action be required.
48. The monitoring of personal development is good and is evident in well focused sections in individual education plans and behavioural monitoring programmes. When pupils start at Beatrice Tate they are instilled with good values of respect and consideration for others and the difference between right and wrong. There are high expectations of pupils' conforming to daily routines. These values and expectations are constantly reinforced along with good manners and help pupils develop good social skills and improve personal development. Individual education plans are well considered and parents take an active part in helping to set targets and this enables parents to

participate more actively in annual reviews. Annual review reports are very good and contain a large amount of detailed good quality information about progress pupils have made towards their targets. The school has good procedures for meeting the need of pupils with additional special educational needs and meets all requirements regarding the organisation of annual reviews and the Code of Practice.

49. The new progress files indicate progress made by individual students in several ways – for example through samples of work, some examples of pupils assessing their own work to see how well they have done and a good range of photographs which illustrate the pupils' experiences and achievements.
50. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are varied in quality but are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils' gains in learning and examples of what they know and can do are well presented at annual reviews and in reports to parents. Teachers also keep appropriate records of the pupils' involvement in lessons. Nevertheless, despite the strengths, teachers do not always grasp opportunities to identify the small steps of learning that pupils achieve in lessons. Because they do not always record this information in any systematic and detailed way, they have difficulty in using information about individual pupils' progress in their lesson planning. Where these procedures are good the lessons include details of how each pupil is to be challenged but, in the few subjects where there are weaknesses, the teacher usually plans for the whole class rather than specifying what each pupil will do and learn. Teachers recognise that their procedures are inconsistent and are already considering ways to improve them so that each small step of pupils' learning is recognised and addressed. Assessment procedures are therefore satisfactory overall but best in religious education and for students Post-16. Some subjects have only recently started using the agreed curricular content and approach and it is too early for this assessment to inform future work. In French the lack of a scheme of work hampers the possibility for effective assessment. The use of assessment information overall to guide curricular planning remains unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The school's partnership with parents is good and has improved much since the last inspection. The school places greater emphasis on working closely with parents and does all it reasonably can to ensure that parents are made to feel welcome and that they are kept well informed about school activities and the day to day performance of their children. The parents' questionnaire showed a very positive picture of parental general satisfaction with the school. The links between parents and the school help to boost higher standards of achievement.
52. Parents raised concerns in the questionnaire responses about the amount of homework provided. The homework policy was attached to the home school agreement that every family has signed. Parents have the opportunity to make individual arrangements for their children's homework that are appropriate and they are able to support learning at home in this way. Inspectors found these arrangements to be satisfactory but felt that, perhaps, some parents had forgotten that they could request homework by this route. Parents were also concerned about the late notice for meetings. On investigation, the inspection found that letters go out on time but rely on school transport escorts to deliver them and this system can cause delays when pupils are absent. The school organises its communication with parents well but has recognised the need to provide longer notice for meetings and to review its arrangements for homework.
53. The school surveys parents' views to ensure that the school is providing what parents really want in terms of their involvement with the school. There is good use of the home/school book for daily dialogue opportunities. The arrangements for consultation are good and the open mornings are well attended. Parents have the chance to see their children's work, talk to staff and take part in target setting for pupils' individual education plans. Parents can also come to school at their convenience and join their child's class to see what is going on and talk to staff about progress and any issues. The parents of two pupils came to school during the inspection and expressed their pleasure in being able to be part of their children's education. The effectiveness of the links with parents is good. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is only

satisfactory. Parents can be as involved as they want to be in their children's learning and the life of the school but parents do not have a parent teacher association and, due to other pressures on their time, many are not able to volunteer their help in school. The size of the catchment area is also an issue and some parents find it hard to get to school using public transport. Parents do, however, support their children by attending special assemblies and special occasions like the school concert and the Eid celebrations. A local organisation supports the parents of children with special educational needs at home and school for "drop in" support group sessions.

54. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The annual reviews meet all the code of practice requirements and also contain good information that the school has added throughout the year. These include educational and behaviour plans containing targets previously agreed with parents and the progress pupils have made. School reports include information from health care providers and others which address the needs indicated in statements as closely as possible. The annual school reports are very good and staff go to a great deal of effort to report fully on all aspects of pupils' progress. Newsletters are friendly and colourful and give a clear picture of school activities and achievements. The school prospectus and the Governor's annual report to parents are well written and contain all the information they should have.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The headteacher and senior management team exercise good leadership. The headteacher drives forward major initiatives, such as building development, and systems for appraisal, monitoring and evaluation, with energy and clear vision. The senior management team, who provide very good models of good practice in teaching, make a very good contribution to high standards in the school by holding regular discussions with teachers and support staff. Management by the headteacher, deputy head and team leaders is good but there have been vacancies and changes within the team at a critical time in the school's history and these have not been helpful. There are good monitoring and evaluation systems now in place, but they do not always, in practice, ensure that senior managers are fully and effectively informed of what is happening in classrooms and off-site provision. The role of curriculum subject leaders is not yet fully developed in all subjects, as some have been fulfilling their current roles for only weeks or months. When fully effective, as they are in English, physical education and personal and social development, the curriculum leaders' roles, which are well defined in job descriptions, should provide important feedback to senior management. The headteacher and his senior management team are a highly visible presence in the school. They are popular with staff and students and are easily approached by staff and pupils.
56. The governing body supports the headteacher and senior management team in driving forward improvements to the quality of the school's environment. The fund raising activity of governors for this purpose has been commendable. The relatively new governing body has recently reorganised into an appropriate committee structure. Governors are keen to develop their roles but some of the committees, for example, the curriculum committee, have not yet met and have not yet begun to take on a critical role in their designated area. Governors are aware of the need to develop these roles more fully and are currently planning to identify strategies for putting the necessary structures into place so that they are better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
57. The school has had a monitoring and evaluation policy in place for two years. It is used effectively in some areas such as in the monitoring of the effectiveness of the national literacy and numeracy strategies and the headteacher is developing the means of identifying the effect of such strategies on pupils' learning. In general the monitoring role is satisfactory but is not yet consistently applied throughout the school. The headteacher and senior management team regularly report to the governing body on progress towards the goals of the school improvement plan, which is of good quality and has clear operational targets, costings and time scales. Additional targets are contained in a plan for each subject area. These still need to be addressed fully as subject leaders develop their roles. Excellent specialist accommodation, resulting from an extensive drive to improve the learning environment, has only just been brought into daily use and the school is still developing its strategies to make best use of the space by adjusting its timetabling arrangements. The school has set appropriate targets for improving pupils' attainment and is well placed to ensure they are achieved.

58. There has been good monitoring of teaching by the senior management team and by outside advisers; this is well documented and has clearly contributed to the raising of standards in teaching. Appraisal is very well developed and the school's arrangements in this respect are ahead of those of most schools. There are good systems for the induction and support of new staff and a comprehensive staff handbook. The school is working towards accreditation by Investors in People. The school has taken effective action to secure improvement in the curriculum offered to pupils. Progress in monitoring this aspect of its work is no more than satisfactory at this stage, because new or revised schemes of work have only just been put in place and there has been insufficient work completed on the scheme to provide meaningful data. In respect of modern foreign language teaching, however, the delay in deciding what to teach has limited progress.
59. The school is well staffed in respect of numbers of teachers and classroom assistants to meet the pupils' needs. Teachers are well qualified by their initial and in service training and by their experience, to teach pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. There is some lack of specialist knowledge in a number of curriculum areas, for example, French and music and the match of skills to National Curriculum areas is no more than satisfactory. However, there is good expertise in special needs and staff show enthusiasm and initiative in meeting the individual needs of the pupils through imaginative teaching and use of resources. There is a good system of identifying staff training needs through the annual development and appraisal system, with the needs of the school and of individuals being taken into account and linked to the school's targets in its strategic planning. Classroom assistants make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning and take a full part in the assessment and evaluation of pupils' progress. Teachers and assistants form part of a strong team that show great commitment to their work. The arrangements to induct new staff are very good and teachers who have more than one year of experience are still well supported. The school is proving very effective in supporting teachers under training. Administrative and premises related staff also make a very valuable contribution by keeping the school running smoothly and allowing the headteacher and staff to concentrate on pupils' learning.
60. The school makes appropriate spending decisions, linked to the priorities of the strategic action plan. Expenditure on the building work, which has been the highest priority since 1997, has yielded a much better environment in which pupils can learn; the quality of specialist rooms is very good and the general level of internal decoration and furnishing is now good. This represents significant improvement since the inspection of 1997.
61. Day to day monitoring of finances is good; there are agreed financial procedures that are well understood by all staff. Computerised systems give easy access to budget monitoring information and the administration procedures allow the school to operate smoothly. The school currently has surplus funds set aside well in excess of the recommended five per cent of annual budget. Planning for these funds lacks some detail. While the new specialist accommodation is of very good quality and should make learning more stimulating for pupils and easier to organise for teachers, it is not yet being fully used as the school has yet to finalised timetabling arrangements. The outdoor areas are small and are mostly tarmac surfaces. They look drab and are in need of refurbishment to help make recreation and play times more pleasant and stimulating experiences.
62. Resources across all the areas have improved greatly since the last inspection and are at least satisfactory in most subjects and good in mathematics, information and communications technology, religious education and Post-16 work. The library is stocked with a range of new books that are entirely appropriate for this school. Expenditure on resources for learning, has been well judged since the last inspection and there has been good progress in ensuring that teachers have good quality resources to support the pupils' learning. The school has paid particularly good attention to ensuring that resources are, 'age-appropriate' – that is they are well matched to pupils' ability levels but also reflect their chronological ages and interests. In subject areas where new subject leaders have recently taken responsibility, audits are planned to match the current resources with new schemes of work to find out if there are any more resources needed. Overall, resources enhance pupils' learning and attainment very well.
63. Grants for information and communications technology equipment have been well used. Once the

equipment is brought into full use, it should raise standards in information and communications technology which, at the time of inspection, were no more than satisfactory as pupils were not receiving sufficient skills teaching to enable them to make best use of the equipment.

64. The school takes good care that the monies accruing to it are spent wisely. It follows correct procedures, obtaining three quotations for all large items, unless they are too specialised in nature to allow this. The headteacher keeps in touch with other schools through attendance at consultative committees related both to special and to mainstream secondary schools. This is good practice and enables him to compare what is happening in his school with others.
65. Because of the nature of the pupils, the size of the school and its situation in Inner London, costs per pupil are high. Nevertheless, given the improved standards of teaching and learning and the improved accommodation and equipment, the school now gives fully satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Make efficient use of all teaching time by

introducing consistent procedures in the school for the use of break and lunch times

rescheduling the times when pupils undertake tasks around the school so that they do not miss parts of lessons

ensuring that, where time is necessary for afternoon breaks, it is brief, clearly identified and that teaching time is not lost

Paragraphs: 18,29, 35

Improve pupils' skills and confidence in using computers by

ensuring that all pupils receive teaching in information and communication technology skills at appropriate levels

introducing assessment procedures which identify what pupils know and can do

ensuring that staff use assessment of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to identify their next learning targets

requiring staff to include opportunities for the use of information and communication technology in their schemes of work and lesson plans

Paragraphs: 7,21,24,32, 63,72,84, 109,110,111, 71

Improve the school's procedures for gathering information about its strengths and weaknesses by

reviewing current practice to seek ways of maximising the information it provides

ensuring that team and subject leaders fulfil their monitoring tasks

involving governors more fully in monitoring the work of the school during their regular visits

Paragraphs: 55,56,57

Ensure that the pupils' gains in learning are used to plan what they cover in each lesson by

developing a consistent system of assessment in each subject

recording all pupils' progress in lessons however small the steps

continuing to find ways of challenging pupils on an individual basis so that they learn as much as they can

Paragraphs: 27,30,50,71,73, 87, 89,96,102,122

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	22	22	43	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	50
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	35

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.9

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	35
Chinese	1
White	9
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.3
Average class size	6.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	378

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	99/2000
	£
Total income	793,409
Total expenditure	757,795
Expenditure per pupil	15,466
Balance brought forward from previous year	77,149
Balance carried forward to next year	112,763

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	50
Number of questionnaires returned	24

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	21	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	29	46	8	4	13
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	25	12	17	17
The teaching is good.	25	58	4	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	37	0	4	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	29	0	0	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	33	0	4	8
The school works closely with parents.	50	42	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	46	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	29	4	8	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	37	0	8	8

NB some blank returns therefore totals do not equal 100

Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by parents on the questionnaires. It is understandable that some parents would be concerned about their child's progress given that some pupils at this school have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Nevertheless they all make at least satisfactory progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. The school provides homework when they feel it is appropriate or if parents request it; the headteacher has made this clearer since the inspection.

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

ENGLISH

66. Throughout the school pupils achieve well in English and make good progress towards targets on their individual educational plans. In relation to their abilities and their previous achievement pupils work well.
67. At Key Stage 3 they are learning to pay attention and respond to one another by looking at the person who is talking and listening carefully to what they say. The teachers' promotion of, and expertise in, signing helps pupils make particularly good improvement in their communication skills and they increasingly use accurate signs and good speaking and listening skills. Teachers use a very good range of everyday objects so that pupils with complex needs understand when activities are due to start and what they are. This results in increased awareness and these pupils show their pleasure by smiling and gesture. In drama sessions pupils learn to respond to one another and to the teacher, for example, in a lesson on 'A Christmas Carol'. Pupils are beginning to learn the skills needed to develop writing. They feel a variety of textures and begin to use fingers and thumbs to grip objects. Some pupils use pencils and crayons to make marks on paper concentrating well on their work. In reading activities pupils share a big book. They ask and answer questions about the story and can read some sentences using symbols.
68. At Key Stage 4 pupils continue to develop their speaking and listening skills very well. They participate in a project to further develop their signing skills. Very good teaching encourages pupils to take turns to lead other pupils in signing. The teacher focuses on the skills of listening, following instructions and taking turns and, as result, pupils improve the clarity and accuracy of their signing. Speaking and listening skills continue to be well supported through drama activities. Pupils are studying 'Romeo and Juliet'. In this exciting activity pupils take the parts of the main characters. They have to listen carefully for their cue to participate in the action. The narrator reads lines from the play and one pupil uses a switch to speak his lines. Pupils develop their reading skills using a useful commercial scheme, which has been recently introduced to the school. Pupils can identify the main characters and begin to understand the background to the stories.
69. Students Post-16 use and extend their signing vocabulary in other areas of the English curriculum. Teachers make very good use of materials that are meaningful to the students and in one class, students are developing their reading skills through material based around a popular television soap opera. They read the names of the characters, distinguish between those names that begin with the same letter and practise the correct use of 'he' and 'she'. Other students work on reading names of students in their group, using signing and eye pointing to answer their teacher's questions. They improve their writing skills through practising the writing of individual letters and by writing words independently and using the computer. Students have opportunities to use their skills in practical situations. Whilst shopping for food in a local supermarket students confidently asked a member of staff for the location of an item they could not find.
70. There have been significant improvements in the teaching and learning of English since the last inspection. A new scheme of work which pays due regard to national curriculum requirements has been introduced and developed to meet the needs of pupils and students. However, the school is still becoming familiar with its use and with the benefits it is clearly having on pupils' good levels of interest in their learning. Teachers and support staff have worked hard to develop the use of signing, particularly the accuracy with which it is used. Pupils and students have a good vocabulary of both signs and symbols, which they use with one another and with adults.
71. The introduction, development and monitoring of the National Literacy Strategy are having a positive impact on the development of such skills and the strategy is now becoming embedded into the work of the school, so that the focus on literacy is promoted in all subjects and pupils are increasingly encouraged to use their reading and writing skills to good effect. The effect of this focus is demonstrated in the way literacy is promoted in displays throughout the school which are clearly labelled with both the words and symbols thus maximising pupils understanding of the

purpose of text. Whilst the use of a symbol writer program helps the pupils with their reading and writing, the use of computers overall, as a tool for learning across the curriculum, is underdeveloped. Although there are sufficient computers within the school, teachers do not enable pupils to use them on a regular basis and there were few examples during the inspection of pupils making good use of such tools for learning.

72. Teaching is good at all key stages. Teachers are enthusiastic and have a thorough grounding in the development of both literacy skills and the wider aspects of English. Pupils' good achievements in English is a result of the good, and often very good teaching that they receive. Because teachers' planning is thorough and learning outcomes are well matched to pupils' needs, pupils including those for who English is an additional language are working at appropriate levels. In the very good and excellent teaching observed teaching is lively and the imaginative approach to activities motivates pupils and maintains their interest and attention. Teachers keep pupils' interest and concentration well focused. They know the subject well and are particularly expert in signing and ensuring that all pupils are totally challenged. Their high expectations of pupils and students results in good gains in speaking and listening. In the very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, time is not used well and activities are not challenging because they are repeated too often and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to do more or to understand what they have achieved. For example, one pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties practised signing 'Good morning' when walking around the school but, as the opportunities depended totally upon whom she met, the activity had become a daily routine. The task did not sufficiently challenge the pupil by, for example, requiring her to tally how many people she had met and greeted.
73. Teachers assess pupils' progress and achievements regularly and the information they collect is collated at the end of each term in order to ensure pupils' progress towards the targets on their individual educational plans. Whilst these procedures are satisfactory, some teachers do not assess pupils work regularly and therefore do not use the information to plan the next small but challenging steps of learning. At the end of the year reports to parents give good descriptive accounts of what pupils have covered in lessons together with details of their current targets.
74. The work of learning support assistants is very effective and pupils benefit from working intensively with adults who encourage them to do their best. These assistants are highly skilled and are well informed about the needs of the pupils because they are involved in planning assessment and record keeping. All members of staff manage behaviour well. The very few pupils with challenging behaviour benefit from good behaviour management plans which are well implemented so that disruption to other pupils is kept to a minimum. Overall the behaviour of pupils and students is very good; they enjoy the wide range of activities planned for them, listen attentively to stories, contribute well to discussions and try hard to work hard.
75. Communication aids are used in all lessons. Progress in reading is now good. The adoption and continuing development of appropriate schemes motivates pupils and maintains their interest and attention. Progress in writing is good. Pupils learn early writing skills such as mark making alongside the development of appropriate pencil grip. Older students record their work using worksheets with symbols. All staff are aware of the importance of the development of communication skills and opportunities to develop these skills are taken in all curriculum areas.
76. The leadership of the subject is very good and includes good practice in monitoring the practice of teaching and the appropriateness of the planning and assessment procedures. Because the subject leader also teaches the subject across the school she is very well informed about its strengths and weaknesses. The subject leader acts as an advisor to other staff supporting them through training and through her own enthusiasm for the subject. She has a clear view of the future direction of the subject and is steadily developing more appropriate resources to further the study of literature. The management of English provides a model of good practice for the remainder of the school.

MATHEMATICS

77. Pupils' achievement in mathematics across all key stages is good. Pupils are organised into ability groups and they follow a structure broadly related to the National Numeracy Strategy, working in both classes and groups. As they acquire new skills and deepen their understanding of numbers and their use, they make good progress towards their own, individual targets.
78. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with schemes of work now in place and an improvement in teaching. The planning shows a broad and balanced programme, with assurance that pupils are able to move from one stage to the next in the school with a degree of continuity.
79. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can match numbers and objects and sort out colours. They work with the basic shapes of triangle, circle, and square. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to count by rote, and some pupils can relate time to the events of the school day such as lunchtime or break. They recognise the sequence of the morning, knowing that breakfast, travel and school follow one another. Some pupils count to ten and recognise the written numbers to match the names, and a few can write the numbers one to five in order and know when one is left out. They successfully recognise coins to make a 10p total. Teachers ensure that they link the work in mathematics to the pupils' experiences and when some pupils tell the time in half-hours the teacher relates this work to the timetable and the activities of the day so that the work becomes more meaningful.
80. In Key Stage 4, pupils can choose shapes such as a triangle, and sort out matching colours. Teachers increasingly plan a focus on practical mathematics and, as pupils recognise and name coins up to and including a £1 coin, distinguishing between bronze and silver coins, they use these skills to sort numbers for their mini enterprise scheme. Some count reliably up to ten and speak and sign the numbers. They were successful in the above task, sorting numbers and choosing from varieties of colours and shapes to make cards for pricing items for sale. Some are able to hold up the correct card when the number is called. Older pupils were able to anticipate the teacher when counting them into jumping, 'one, two, three, jump'. Some pupils understand such terms as 'larger than' or 'smaller than' and are able to talk about heavy and light objects.
81. As a result of very high quality teaching and stimulating activities, Post-16 students make very good gains in learning. They can stack objects according to the number asked by the teacher and for those who have hearing difficulties, the assistants use a drum or other percussion instrument to sound out the number for them. They were seen working out which container had more or less than others and which was empty. Others are able to sort colours and shapes. They explore shapes using sensory perception and one pupil is able to respond to a triangle shape when the instrument is played. Teachers are imaginative in their use of resources, for example, square shaped crisps are a help in recognising the shape and there is the added advantage that they can be eaten afterwards! Some pupils can name the days of the week, use money in practical situations, such as the shopping trips, and can manage some change when they buy items in shops or supermarkets. The students at college use these practical skills by putting the correct money into drinks machine at college and selecting their choice of drink.
82. Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, pupils work well and are willing to learn. They behave very well in lessons and co-operate with adults and with each other. Because teachers plan a series of interesting activities for them which are changed regularly, pupils are motivated to learn and able to concentrate well and try hard. Teachers plan well and know the needs of their pupils. They provide activities which clearly reinforce the teaching and stimulate the pupils' interest, such as in a practical design and technology lesson where the teacher continually reinforced the mathematical aspect by persistently questioning the pupils on 'how many' canes they had used in one section and 'how many altogether', and 'how many more' were needed. This led to good learning but several pupils had difficulty in retaining the knowledge they had gained. However, the teacher showed patience and gave much encouragement until they were successful in recalling the necessary numbers. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and they work very well with support assistants. The assistants are very involved with the learning process and offer much practical help, often signing very well and enabling all pupils to join in with all activities. All teachers evaluate each lesson and they share this process with the assistants which helps all staff to share a clear understanding of what the pupils have learnt as a result of the

lesson plans.

83. Assessment of mathematics is good and comprehensive records are kept of all pupils' progress. Details of each mathematical skill and appropriate responses and level of acquisition are also recorded fully. All teachers are committed to mathematics, and, encouraged by enthusiastic leadership, put time and thought into preparation of the various methods of teaching the required skills to pupils.
84. Nevertheless, the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning in mathematics is underused. Pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to reinforce their learning by the use of computers within mathematics lessons themselves and in the application of mathematics in other subjects.
85. The school has adopted a commercial scheme for mathematics, but the newly appointed leader, while making a satisfactory start, has had no time in which to evaluate the scheme or make any adjustments to it. The scheme allows pupils to progress from stage to stage well as they move up the school, and it also provides well for the diversity of special needs represented among the pupils.

SCIENCE

86. Pupils make satisfactory gains in learning in science at both key stages. It was not possible to see any science lessons with students Post-16 during the inspection but from scrutiny of records and photographs it is clear that they benefit from opportunities to develop gardening skills and grow plants which make their classroom more pleasant. They know about cleanliness in food preparation and they begin to know how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
87. Since the inspection of 1997 satisfactory achievement and progress in lessons have been maintained. A new and more appropriate scheme of work, introduced after the 1997 inspection, has helped to improve the progress over time, and the breadth of coverage of science, both of which were unsatisfactory at that time. A revised scheme of work has recently been adopted and is not yet fully familiar to teachers; care will therefore need to be exercised to ensure that pupils build systematically on previous knowledge.
88. Pupils benefit from the practical activities planned by the staff and by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to plant seeds, water them and begin to understand that growing things need water. Pupils who have more complex needs gain from the sensory experience of feeling and smelling soil, herbs and growing plants. Pupils are able to experience light and dark, using dark rooms and light sources, and manipulate or respond to light and dark in ways appropriate to their abilities and needs. They can use switches to activate electrical devices or explore them at a sensory level. By age sixteen pupils have an understanding that water can turn into ice or steam and back to water again and they are able to experience these changes through practical activities such as freezing a balloon full of water or watching steam condense on a cold surface. They express curiosity about the changes and try to predict how long it will take the ice to melt. Pupils with more complex needs experience a variety of textures and begin to develop preferences for hard, soft, rough or smooth objects or foods. Pupils are generally positive in their attitude to science activities, try hard and behave well. Pupils work well and are willing to learn. They co-operate with adults and with each other. Because teachers plan a series of interesting activities for them, pupils are able to concentrate well.
89. Teaching in science is satisfactory in all lessons. Teachers demonstrate a range of strengths and weaknesses; they generally plan lessons well; appropriate activities are prepared for pupils of all abilities, based on the recently updated scheme of work; there are well thought out science targets for all pupils and their attainment is conscientiously recorded, promoting sound progress. Where teachers have interpreted the scheme of work with imagination, lessons are more stimulating and enjoyable for the pupils and they remember what they have learned better. An example of this is the video made by a teacher, with the pupils as participants, shown for a few minutes at the end of a lesson on ice and water. This reinforced the ideas and facts learned during the topic. Teachers try to involve pupils in asking questions and making predictions. In more successful lessons pupils are given time to think and are encouraged to be curious. In less

successful lessons teachers answer their own questions too quickly and do not involve the pupils enough in exploring ideas. Opportunities are missed – for example, in a lesson on growing plants the relationship between the dried herbs and the plants which are to be grown was not made sufficiently clear. There is careful evaluation of pupils' progress during lessons, but sometimes this is done through a conversation between adults which does not actively involve the pupils. They have to sit and wait while they are being talked about, leading to boredom and passivity, as well as some lack of dignity. Assessment opportunities are provided by the scheme of work and the quality of assessment is satisfactory but the details from such conversations are not always translated into meaningful records which are used for future planning. Nevertheless, good use is made of photographic and video recording to illustrate progress and achievement. Information and communications technology is used to assist in producing worksheets but not yet as a comprehensive tool for recording results or researching and investigating topics. Language and literacy skills are well used to support science, especially through sign and symbol.

90. There is a new leader for science, who brings much enthusiasm and commitment to the subject, but who has not yet had time to make an impact on standards of teaching and learning. The school is lacking in trained science teachers, although teachers have adequate subject knowledge. There are good resources, including a recently completed specialist science room, which should do much to increase pupils' opportunities and make science more exciting. Unfortunately, the necessary changes to time-tabling have not been addressed, so that the new specialist facilities are not yet being fully used. The school makes good use of local science and gardening centres and of the environment around the school, including the 'wilderness' area of a neighbouring mainstream school; there have also been visits to the science museum. All these factors enhance the curriculum for science that is satisfactory and improving.

ART AND DESIGN

91. Pupils' achievements in art are satisfactory and in the three lessons observed they made satisfactory progress in manipulating brushes, paints and materials. As a result of activities which they enjoy pupils respond well to the subject. They try hard to follow instructions, for example by concentrating well when weaving material 'under' and 'over' when making an African artefact. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) enjoy the different textures of the material while higher attaining pupils describe or sign the characteristics of the materials they are using such as 'smooth', 'slippery' or 'sticky'.
92. As they get older pupils make a link to their present work from the products of previous visits or photographs from magazines. For example, in a Key Stage 4 lesson, pupils were using photographs of a previous visit to a dome as source material for their observational drawings of houses. Teaching is satisfactory in all lessons but, in some instances, the work planned for pupils with PMLD does not have a clear link to that undertaken by the higher attaining pupils.
93. The teachers' use of varied materials interests the pupils and they try hard to use the ideas in producing their own work. Teachers plan a good range of activities and ensure that the classrooms and corridors include a variety of art displays, including some very good three-dimensional work, both by the pupils and by other artists. The environment of the school is enhanced by such display work and the pupils' literacy skills are further reinforced by the good use of symbols to label the presentations and add meaning.
94. The curriculum continues to be developed for art and assessment procedures do not currently fully inform the teachers in terms of what pupils know, understand and can do. However, the school has recognised the need to review this aspect of its work. The school has maintained the standards found at the last inspection and the subject leader is well placed to use the new curriculum to develop provision further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. It was possible to see only four design and technology lessons, and judgements are therefore based upon those, together with work on display, records and discussions. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection; in particular, the planning and schemes of work, with more opportunities for construction work now being offered to the pupils.
96. Pupils' achievement and progress are good at all levels across the school, and this represents a good improvement since the last inspection when their progress was judged to be satisfactory. The school keeps very good photographic record of what pupils have done and made, and from these it is clear that they enjoy this subject and concentrate well. Many pupils need individual help to manipulate tools or materials, but nevertheless they have made card puppets with moving limbs and coloured squares glued to them to form colourful 'clothing' in Key Stage 3. They successfully join paper and card sometimes with paper clips and also with glue. Pupils also enjoy food technology and can identify the ingredients and can express their likes and dislikes either verbally or by signing. Some, with more profound difficulties, are able to spoon the contents into a container, and some pupils are able to use a grater for food preparation. They stir the ingredients and help to cut and make sandwiches.
97. During the inspection, a group of younger pupils, helped by a visiting teacher, constructed a very large dome in the hall, which later became a mosque for assembly. They had previously practised putting it together outside. The whole experience gave them the chance to follow instructions, assemble the right parts and to hoist the very large construction into place on the six pillars they had made. It was a very impressive exercise.
98. Later, in Years 10 and 11, pupils become familiar with cooking equipment and with spreads such as butter or margarine and can fill sandwiches. Some pupils are able to recognise materials for a special purpose and can tell the difference between rough and smooth, or hard and soft. More physically able pupils have prepared and made pizzas. Teachers make good connections to literacy and, when writing is difficult, pupils are able to circle the ingredients on a chart.
99. Older pupils also follow charts of ingredients in food preparation and some shop in groups in the life skills course. The teacher's plans are comprehensive and enable students to learn the symbols for a range of items, queue patiently and wait for change and their receipt. In an outstanding lesson the teacher continually challenged the pupils to name, describe and compare the qualities of fruit and vegetables before buying those that they needed. This resulted in motivated students who were very keen to get their answers and their shopping correct. They also appreciated the humour of the situation as they laughed together when comparing the smells of garlic, coffee and cauliflower.
100. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan well and provide interesting activities for pupils. They organise practical sessions well and include opportunities for pupils to go outside the school to experience how other people live, shop and work. An outstanding lesson seen included a visit to the garage that provides pupils' transport. Pupils were made very welcome and talked about a variety of jobs, such as the office staff, the controller, and the drivers, many of whom they know very well. The teacher had left nothing unprepared, and had assessed any possible risks, so that all pupils were very safe throughout the visit.
101. There are always clear lesson objectives and support assistants work very well with teachers to make the subject accessible to all pupils.
102. The scheme of work is new and the subject leader has very recently taken over the subject. Whilst the curriculum and arrangements for assessing pupils' gains in learning are satisfactory overall, there has been no opportunity to 'tailor' them to the specific needs of the school, but a good start has been made.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

103. Geography and history are taught in discrete units throughout the year - geography in the autumn and spring terms and history during the summer. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Subject audits have been undertaken and both history and geography are timetabled during the school year. The new scheme of work is in place and work is being undertaken with staff to ensure appropriateness of resources and accessibility of content.
104. During the inspection it was possible to observe only three lessons of geography. Evidence is also drawn from discussions, pupils' annual reports and scrutiny of work. Pupils make satisfactory gains in learning and behave well in lessons. The younger pupils use their senses to touch and smell familiar objects. They learn about their environment and how to care for it. Pupils identify routes around the school, guiding adults to the places they want to go. Other pupils learn about areas in the world that are hot or cold. They study maps and identify countries, which are hot, and those which are cold. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities for pupils. They experience what it feels like to wear clothes appropriate for cold countries by dressing up in winter coats, gloves, hats and boots. In one lesson pupils learn about Bangladesh. They touch and feel artefacts, study pictures of the country, listen to sound effects and have the opportunity to taste food from Bangladesh. These very valuable experiences bring the learning to life and enable pupils to experience the artefacts at first hand; they also ensure that pupils deepen their understanding of the world around them and the habits and customs of other cultures.
105. Teachers make very good use of the local community by arranging study visits to inspire and motivate the pupils. Older pupils have studied the local environment focussing on facilities such as cafes and transport. Visits have included the café, a local station and leisure facilities such as museums and galleries. In history pupils have focused on personal history, using photographs to discuss how they have changed. They have used timetables to relate past, present and future.
106. Teaching is satisfactory. Planning for lessons is good and is based on a new scheme of work introduced this term. Teachers plan a range of activities to ensure that all pupils' needs can be addressed. The very practical activities help pupils understand the relationship between different places and how they are similar or different.
107. The new scheme of work is currently being implemented and elements from work done previously integrated into planning. The subject leader has drawn up an action plan, which encompasses monitoring the effectiveness of the new scheme. Resources for the modules for both history and geography are organised appropriately.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Pupils' progress and achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are now broadly satisfactory and this represents a satisfactory improvement since the inspection of 1997. Nevertheless, the school does not yet make sufficient provision for pupils to develop their skills in using the computer as a tool for learning in all areas of the curriculum. Opportunities are therefore lost for pupils to use computers to look up information, to draft or word process work or manipulate simple data sets.
109. Pupils at all age and ability levels have a regular experience of using information technology; pupils who have communication difficulties use switches or simple communication devices which 'speak' for them, enabling them to respond to the calling of the register, greetings by staff and pupils or direct questions. Higher achieving pupils in all classes are able to use a 'mouse' to draw lines and shapes or trace their name on the screen; they type their name or part of their name and use the writing with symbols program; and they choose the correct answer from an array on the screen using a switch. Pupils with more complex needs respond to computer-generated stimuli or discover that they can control music, light or computer screens with switches. Older pupils are shown how the frequency of their choices or characteristics can be expressed on a computer-generated chart. Pupils like using computers, they behave well in lessons and often show good concentration and effort.
110. Information and communication technology continues to be taught only through other lessons

although an ICT focus should now be included in one subject area at least once a week. Teachers' use of ICT as observed is satisfactory. They are secure in the two major programmes on which training has been given – the writing with symbols programme and 'Clicker Plus' which allows pupils to select answers from the screen using a switch. Particularly good use is made of the symbols program in preparing work sheets for lessons which allow pupils to select and record answers and observations. However, opportunities for the support of curriculum areas through ICT need to be built into planning as teachers become more familiar with new schemes of work in all subjects.

111. The school has adopted a satisfactory commercial scheme of work and introduced a new assessment booklet. These developments are very new and their impact cannot yet be seen. Also recently introduced has been an individual pupil target for ICT. Satisfactory systems are now in place for assessment, but the use of these would be facilitated if time were set aside for direct teaching of ICT skills.
112. The school has benefited from funding for computerised learning and has used this opportunity well. Additional computers have been purchased together with more communication devices, modern touch screens, switches and very useful and appropriate software programmes. Not all these are yet in use, but the planning, purchasing and training have been well carried out. The school is not yet connected to the Internet, pending cabling work, but plans are well in hand for this. Resources are currently satisfactory and improving steadily.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

113. Pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 all now have an experience of a modern foreign language and the culture and customs of another European country. In this respect there has been satisfactory improvement since the inspection of 1997 when no modern foreign language was taught. In the week of inspection French was being taught to pupils aged 11 – 14. Pupils aged 15 – 16 have an experience of Spanish language and culture for part of the year but no Spanish teaching was taking place during the current inspection. Progress in French as seen in lessons is satisfactory overall; while pupils have only a minimal command and understanding of French words and phrases they have experiences of French music, are receptive to tasting French food, such as cheese and croissants, and have some knowledge of famous landmarks in France. Pupils try hard to pronounce words accurately in imitation of the teacher and can respond with a 'oui' or 'non' appropriately and greet each other and staff. Pupils enjoy their experience of a modern foreign language and try very hard to speak and understand and willingly explore new tastes, smells and sounds.
114. The teaching of French is satisfactory. Teachers try hard to give pupils an experience of another European culture and plan activities which give all pupils access. There is a lack of specialist knowledge of French teaching but teachers make valiant efforts and use their knowledge of the language with variable success. In some lessons where pupils need a sensory approach, there is little attempt to use the target language; in others, French is used in a conversational but unfocused way so that there is insufficient clarity as to what the target words and phrases are, and there is insufficient repetition. Teachers are not currently supported by a scheme of work or an agreed core vocabulary and this makes their teaching more difficult. It also makes it difficult to assess pupils' progress over time as there are no clear criteria against which to assess, although teachers and classroom assistants make careful evaluations of pupils' achievement during lessons. Pupils have one hour of French per week for part of the year. This arrangement makes it more difficult for them to remember what they have learned than if they had more frequent but shorter learning sessions.
115. There is a new leader of modern languages who brings much enthusiasm and has plans for developing the teaching of Spanish as the school's main language. In the recent past, however, management has not been sufficiently clear as to which, if any, modern foreign language should be taught, making improvement in this area less secure than in many other areas of the curriculum.

MUSIC

116. Pupils' achievements in music are no more than satisfactory during lessons but they demonstrate that they can sing in tune and maintain a rhythm when singing together in assembly. There has been little improvement in standards since the last inspection.
117. Pupils' gains in learning during lessons are satisfactory in terms of social interaction and turn taking but their acquisition of musical skills is limited. However, these weaknesses are compensated for by the enjoyment that the staff generate even though they are not totally confident about teaching the subject. Consequently, because they do not follow the scheme of work consistently, they attempt to cover aspects that are not well matched to the pupils' abilities and are too difficult for some. In most lessons pupils try hard and staff give good support; they reinforce language such as 'low' and 'high' and enthusiastically sing or play percussion instruments. However, because the planning does not take account of individual pupils' needs it does not consistently challenge pupils to do well.
118. The school has instantly recognised the difficulties encountered by staff during the inspection and, by the end of inspection week, had already put alternative plans in place to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement to the music curriculum. The school has very good resources for music, but during lessons these were not used effectively to promote pupils' learning.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

119. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social development (PSD) both in lessons and at other less formal times of the day. The work makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development and records show that pupils are making good progress in meeting their PSD targets on individual educational plans. The 30 minute daily eating and drinking clinics are well-established routines. These targets are well considered and help pupils work towards improving social skills. Pupils who are more mobile have more challenging tasks including helping to lay tables and doing much of the clearing up. Good eating habits and manners are constantly reinforced to good effect.
120. Pupils enjoy learning how to cope with growing up and how to become more self-sufficient. They realise the importance of PSD and make a real effort to contribute and this enhances learning. When in Post-16 PSD lessons students were focusing on a range of human emotions and how these are generated, students tried hard to role-play along with the teacher and explain how they felt at different times and were able to reflect on aspects of their lives openly. The quality of teaching in lessons is at least satisfactory and often very good with consistently high standards of support and guidance given at other times of the day; all these factors contribute towards the good gains made by pupils in terms of confidence, self-esteem and maturity. Teachers know their pupils very well and know how to help them effectively understand the main learning objectives in a well planned and often light hearted way. Where teaching is less effective the students are less involved in helping with preparing drinks and snacks for break time or in the more important parts of cooking and clearing up. The school nurse plays an important role helping to teach aspects of healthy living including personal hygiene, healthy eating and some of the sex education.
121. The subject leader has recently taken up this post but has already implemented a PSD plan for the school with major focus on such topics as 'Ourselves', 'Health Awareness' and, in Post-16, on 'Life Skills'. These modules are entirely appropriate and help encourage the students' greater independence.
122. The leadership of the subject is very good. All classes have a PSD timetabled lesson and staff have specific lesson plans provided by the subject leader to ensure consistency across the key stages. Resources in terms of books and display materials are good and the school is building up more practical resources to help boost standards further. The subject leader has not had the chance to monitor PSD lessons yet and it is too early for staff to feedback to him on how the programme is progressing to refine it further. The best practised assessment is when lessons outcomes for individual students are noted and teachers estimate how much pupils have learnt and how this impacts on the next lesson. There is some self-evaluation of life skills by the Post-16 more able students that they complete as part of their shopping, preparing food and cooking. During the inspection week they demonstrated their understanding of the skills required to cook pizza and vegetable cous cous and were very careful to take account of health and safety issues.

123. PSD makes a good contribution to moral and social development. There is some explicit guidance on the difference between good and unacceptable behaviours, moral issues on the environment are explored and there are many examples of encouraging good social skills. Personal and social development plays a vital role in preparing pupils for the next stages of their lives particularly as they approach the time to leave school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

124. It was only possible to see three physical education lessons during the inspection but scrutiny of photographs, records and reports as well as discussions with staff and pupils supplement these observations. Pupils' achievement overall in physical education is good, and they make good progress across all ages. Teachers plan so that pupils enjoy these lessons and learn well. Where pupils follow their own individual physical development plan, they make very good progress.
125. Since the last inspection, there has been good progress. Schemes of work are in place, and pupils are able to use the local leisure facilities and centres. The development plan for physical education clearly shows that while a good start has been made, there are some exciting things to come such as aerobics, dance, sailing, and the use of local schools. The pupils are not currently able to benefit from hydrotherapy but a hydrotherapy pool is planned as a part of the next phase of building.
126. Several pupils by the end of Year 9 may still need help with dressing and undressing, but some can throw a ball, place objects in a container and some are able to balance on their side or across a large ball. They understand the rules about safety and listen to instructions well. They are aware of other pupils and do not invade their space. Some are able to catch a beanbag with two hands, change direction at a signal, and understand the importance of the warm up session. Some pupils throw with accuracy and can hop on one foot without overbalancing.
127. By the end of Year 11, several pupils can shower, dress and undress with minimal help, while others benefit from the considerable assistance they receive from staff. In swimming sessions, several can enter the pool by the steps and follow instructions with confidence. A few older pupils can swim. Others enter from the edge of the pool, and can walk the length, allow water to splash in their faces and can partially duck under the water. Higher attaining, older pupils respond to the challenges set by teachers to hold onto the side and kick their legs and their achievements are well recorded in photographs.
128. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were throwing and catching at three metres apart, and aiming at the netball goal. Some pupils are able to go horse riding, and progress from getting to know the horses, to putting their feet in the stirrups and sitting on. Others are able to experience rides, with some assistance.
129. Teaching and learning overall are good with enthusiastic staff who join in activities and provide good role models. Pupils with restricted movement benefit from working with a specialist group who support their physical development; this supplements the pupils' physiotherapy and they and the staff delight in these sessions. The activities further their confidence and self-esteem. Planning for physical education is good, and the new leader brings plenty of enthusiasm to the post with activities that are planned to keep the pupils' interest and concentration. Staff carry out individual programmes of massage, therapy and movement and treat pupils with great respect, talking to them while they work and giving the maximum of encouragement. Classroom assistants also work very hard and support individual pupils as well as assisting the teachers. All pupils are assessed for each session and good records are kept, enabling staff to see how well a pupil is progressing.
130. The curriculum is closely referenced to the basic skills of the national curriculum, so hopping, jumping and crawling are incorporated. Pupils learn to move quickly or slowly according to instructions and they stop when told. For pupils with multiple difficulties, exercises for the head, neck and trunk are added, as well as posture for sitting, taking turns, grasping and holding. They learn social skills, practise co-ordination, and join in games.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

131. It was possible to see only one lesson of religious education during the inspection time. Judgements are drawn largely from analysis of pupils' records, some display and discussion about the subject. Assemblies also add background to religious education. Pupils' achievements and progress in religious education are good, across all ages, and there has been very good improvement in the subject since the last report. There is now a fully developed scheme of work, closely following the locally agreed programme of study. Much hard work has been done to work out this scheme across all ages in the school.
132. By the end of Year 9, pupils have heard stories from a variety of religious faiths such as the Hindu story of Rama and Sita, which is the background for Divali. They think about their own unique identity and express their likes and dislikes. They have contributed to the story of Christ's nativity by joining in role-play with music and dress. They have been able to express their feelings about Christmas, and hear and sing carols. Atmosphere for reflection is given by the use of candles and incense sticks in some lessons. Pupils have also experienced food related to the festivals of various faiths, such as eggs and hot cross buns at Easter. Some pupils were successful in 'blowing' eggs and decorating them for Easter. They also know something of the Muslim attitudes of prayer, and there are photographs of pupils preparing for prayer with the Wudu ceremony of washing.
133. By the end of Year 11, pupils have learnt about Buddhism as well as the other faiths. They know that the Buddha was a 'good man', and they have experienced the prayer wheels, mediation positions and some have put on robes such as Buddhists wear. Those who have less physical movement were able to touch the prayer wheels, the beads and the bells associated with Buddhism. Pupils across the whole age range have learnt about the Muslim practice of pilgrimage, using a prayer mat, and have linked the importance of pilgrimage to Mecca. Photographs show pupils dressed in white, as for the Hajj. They know that the prayer mat must face towards the Holy City.
134. Teaching and learning are very good and in the lesson observed, the teacher was using resources to help the pupils make very good progress in understanding the creation. She used a globe atlas to represent the world and some seeds that the pupils had planted to demonstrate life and living plants. The pupils immediately understood, because these were 'their' plants. The room was darkened for the beginning and pupils put on the lights as the story of the creation of light and dark was told. This simple device added a dramatic emphasis to the lesson through very good planning and stimulating methods that enabled them to achieve the teacher's goals.
135. Pupils are taught to respect all religions and faiths, and on one occasion a Muslim pupil covered his head when handling the Qur'an, while the teacher reinforced this respect by being very careful with the holy book. Use of resources is very good, with models of birds and animals, and opportunities for pupils to pick out the country of their family origin on the globe. They are reminded of work they have done in other subjects such as science.
136. A very large part of the success of the learning in religious education is due to the leadership of the leader and the overall planning. Very good improvements have been made since the last report, especially in the teaching and learning, planning, and organisation. The subject now meets its legal requirements and is a strength of the school. Much of what is taught in religious education is strongly reinforced in some assemblies.