

INSPECTION REPORT

SANDGATE SCHOOL

Kendal, Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112465

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Wendy McManus

Reporting inspector: R B Thompson
10781

Dates of inspection: 12th - 16th March 2001

Inspection number: 197242

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sandylands Road Kendal Cumbria
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Neil Mackereth
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10781	Robert B Thompson	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Physical education; Modern foreign language.	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils and students taught? Leadership, management and efficiency; What should the school do to improve further? Special educational needs.
11468	Judith Menes	<i>Lay Inspector</i>	Personal, social and health education.	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20466	Alan Tattersal	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Geography; History; English as an additional language.	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
27409	Susan Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Religious education; Personal, social and health education; Equal opportunities.	How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
18498	Denise Morris	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage; Information and communication technology; Art; Music.	The school's results and achievements.
1224	Graham Todd	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Design and technology; Post 16.	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?

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REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 PART B: COMMENTARY	
 HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	 6
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	 8
 HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	 10
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	 12
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	 13
 HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	 14
 WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	 18
 PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	 20
 PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	 24

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sandgate school is a mixed day special school for pupils' aged two to nineteen years who have profound, severe and complex learning difficulties. At present there are 51 pupils on roll. The current accommodation is approved for 31 pupils. However, an extensive building programme is under way to provide more appropriate and spacious accommodation for 48 pupils by September 2001. Sandgate is one of only five special schools in Cumbria and therefore the catchment area is wide, covering the southeast of the county. There are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. Over half the pupils have severe learning difficulties, almost one third have profound and multiple difficulties and there are five pupils who have difficulties associated with autistic spectrum disorder. The ratio of boys to girls is about two to one. Almost one third of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Six of the youngest children are on part-time timetables of up to half time.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with many good aspects. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching. The school is well led, governed and managed, and highly developed teamwork by a well trained and experienced staff ensures that pupils and students achieve well. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Teaching is a strength of the school. Teamwork between teachers and support assistants is very good.
- The school is well led, with the governing body playing an important part in guiding the school.
- Pupils achieve well in most subjects. They have very good attitudes towards school, behave well and develop excellent relationships.
- Provision for pupils and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Parents make a valuable contribution to the school, which enhances pupils' and students' progress.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision for the foundation stage.
- Accommodation for the Foundation Stage and Post 16, and also the changing facilities for physical education.
- Arrivals of pupils and students.

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

Since the last full inspection in 1996, the school has made good improvement. Standards of achievement have improved, largely as a result of improvements in curricular breadth and teaching, although, there is still work to be done in the Foundation area. Literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented well. The governors are more knowledgeable and informed, and are fully committed to school improvement. The school has almost completed a new building programme to enhance the accommodation. However, significant weaknesses in the quality of accommodation remain. Provision for information and communication technology has improved. The school has developed external certification for pupils and students and also introduced national Youth Awards. There is good integration between the school and local primary and secondary schools

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key <i>very good</i> <i>A</i> <i>good</i> <i>B</i> <i>satisfactory</i> <i>C</i> <i>unsatisfactory</i> <i>D</i> <i>poor</i> <i>E</i>
Speaking and listening	C	B	A	A	
Reading	C	C	B	B	
Writing	C	C	C	C	
Mathematics	C	B	B	B	
Personal, social and health education	C	C	C	C	
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	B	B	B	

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

The setting of school targets is developing well. Performance Indicators for Value Added Targets (PIVATS) are about to be introduced to help assessment become more fine-tuned. Targets in pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEP) are well matched to their prior attainment and, as a result of good teaching, they make good progress and achieve well. Pupils and students make very good progress in music and French. In English, mathematics and science, pupils make consistently good progress. External accreditation has been introduced for English, mathematics, science, music and art, and the Youth Award scheme is successful for secondary pupils and students at Post 16.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students enjoy school and are keen to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils and students behave very well in class, around school and when in the community.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Excellent relationships contribute to a positive atmosphere in school. Pupils and students willingly take responsibility when the opportunity arises.
Attendance	Pupils and students attend well, although some pupils are late into school due to transport difficulties.

Pupils and students attend well. They have excellent relationships with all staff and adults. They have positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic about school and keen to improve. Their behaviour in school and in the community is a testimony to the good work of the school. Pupils increasingly take responsibility throughout the school. For example, young pupils take and return registers. Older pupils take assemblies at the end of the day and help younger pupils at lunchtime.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall, with a very high proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Of 71 lessons seen, 6 (8.5 per cent) were satisfactory, 34 (47.8 per cent) were good, 26 (36.6 per cent) were very good and 5 (7.0 per cent) were excellent. In English, teaching is consistently good with some very good and excellent. In mathematics, it is consistently good, and in science it is consistently good and occasionally very good or excellent. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well across the school. As a result of good teaching, pupils achieve well and the quality of their learning is good. Teachers know the pupils well and match work to their individual level, enabling them to build on previous learning. The school generally meets the needs of all pupils well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The breadth and balance of the curriculum have improved. Provisions for literacy and numeracy have impacted positively across the curriculum. The curriculum for the foundation stage needs to be formalised to ensure full entitlement is met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' and students' moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Assessment is good. Teachers use this information well to plan the next steps. There are very good procedures for encouraging good behaviour. Good procedures are in place to monitor and support pupils' and students' personal development. Pupils and students receive very good quality support from school staff and a wide range of other professionals.

The majority of parents are very pleased with the school and the progress their children make. Parents make a positive contribution towards this progress by the extra help they give the school. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and the school makes good use of the community to enhance this. The school provides very good care for pupils' and students' health. A strength of this commitment is the availability of a full time nurse during school hours.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. The commitment to school improvement is strong, and teamwork highly developed. The acting headteacher and staff have led the school through a very difficult period, making significant improvement, and giving high priority to the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	This is good. Governors are well informed and supportive, committed to quality assurance and improvement through governance, and fully committed to school improvement and raising standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation are good. They are developing well and making a positive impact on standards and provision.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of all its resources, including the local community, to improve the curriculum and facilities for pupils, students and staff. The principles of best value are applied soundly.

Although the school has fewer teachers than is expected for a school of this type, staffing is enhanced by the good number and qualifications of support staff. Although accommodation has improved since the last inspection, several basic elements are missing. The school is well led, and the governors are very committed to the improvement of the school and raising standards. They are well aware of the principles of best value and apply them effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all parents say their children like school. • Behaviour is very good in school. • All parents agree that the school expects their child to work hard. • Most parents think their children are well taught. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small minority of parents would not feel comfortable approaching the school with a question. • A small number do not think the school works closely enough with them. • Several parents would like to see more activities after school.

Inspectors support parents' very positive views of the school. Information to parents is good and most parents are comfortable approaching the school. Many parents work closely with the school and parental involvement in school is high. This supports the school in consistently raising standards. Activities after school remain a problem due to the large catchment area of the school and associated transport problems, although pupils do have access to a range of extra-curricular activities throughout the year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge their attainment against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils and students know, understand and can do by the end of Foundation Stage, and by the ages of seven, 11, 16 and Post 16. Judgements about progress take account of information contained in pupils' statements, annual reviews and IEPs. References to higher and lower attaining pupils and those with additional needs are made within the context of the school's population.
2. Pupils' and students make good progress across the school. Progress has improved since the last inspection. Pupils between 11 and 14 make the best progress. Children under the age of five in the Foundation Stage of Learning make satisfactory progress.
3. Overall achievements in English are good and pupils and students make good progress. It is best in Key Stages 2 and 3, where the literacy strategy is having a positive impact on the re-organisation and planning of the subject. It is at this stage, pupils use language strategies well and build confidence in their own ability. At Key Stage 1 progress is satisfactory, particularly where pupils have additional special needs. Teaching is enhanced by regular visits of a speech therapist. However, there is a weakness in progress for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties because they do not have enough access to literacy sessions.
4. Achievements in mathematics are good. Pupils and students of all ages and degrees of learning difficulty, make good progress in lessons and meet targets set in their IEPs. The structure of the national numeracy framework has had a positive impact on planning and teaching. This has helped to improve progress across the school.
5. Progress and achievement in science are good, and often very good across the school. The main strength in science is the quality of teaching which is leading to high expectations. This fosters good progress in lessons. Progress is particularly good in the accredited work in Post 16.
6. Throughout the school, pupils of all ages, students at Post 16, and at all levels of attainment make good progress in their physical education. Pupils and students make very good progress in swimming. Parental involvement in swimming enhances the progress pupils and students make. The high quality of planning and teaching, which challenges pupils, coupled with their very positive attitudes, promotes the effective development of physical educational.

7. Progress and achievement in design and technology, and in food technology, are good. This promotes independent living skills for older pupils and students. Progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory over time in all areas of the school, including the youngest children. However, in lessons pupils often achieve well. This is because the new resources are helping to improve standards, but pupils have had too little access in the past to ensure that progress is appropriate. They are catching up and the subject is improving.

8. Good progress is made in religious education. This is linked to the good quality of the teaching by the temporary teacher, and to the additional resources since the last inspection. Progress in humanities is good. It is helped by some good cross-curricular learning, and by the promotion of literacy skills through humanities. Progress in art is good in all areas of the school except in Key Stage 1 where it is satisfactory. The major strength in progress is in Key Stage 3, which is linked to the good quality of teaching and the exciting range of activities.

9. Progress in music is very good across the school. A major strength in music is the achievement of pupils and students in making music with percussion instruments. Progress in French is very good. A major strength is the knowledge and understanding of the teacher. Progress in personal and social education is satisfactory. Little improvement has been made in the subject since the last inspection.

10. The progress of children in the Foundation Stage of Learning is satisfactory in most areas of learning. It is good in physical development, but unsatisfactory in knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils achieve appropriately in most lessons, but their achievements are limited by the lack of an appropriate curriculum linked to the early learning goals for children of this age.

11. Progress for students in the Post 16 classes is good. Accreditation has improved and good college links promote good achievements in lessons.

12. The progress of pupils and students with additional special needs is satisfactory overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and take an enthusiastic interest in their work and the activities the school provides. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved since the last inspection. They work hard in lessons, listen carefully to instructions and are eager to participate and answer questions. In a mathematics lesson for 10 to 14 year olds, pupils were fully engaged in acting the roles of shop-keeper and customers, calculating how much they could afford to buy and what change they should receive. Their involvement and confidence were such that, of their own accord, they began greeting each other in French and carried this on quite seriously throughout the session. Some Post 16 students enjoy regular visits to the College of Further Education, where they join classes in art and 'hair and beauty'. They participate fully in the lessons and show confidence and maturity in the relationships they build with the other members of the class.

14. Pupils behave very well at all times and there are no exclusions. Teachers and support staff are successful in helping pupils understand the behaviour expected of them, through praise and quiet reminders, and pupils respond with enthusiasm to the reward system. As they grow older, pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as taking care of the money on a shopping trip, leading the assembly at the end of the day, and helping other pupils at lunchtime. They carry out these tasks sensibly and willingly and pupils often offer to help, for example by pushing wheel chairs. Excellent relationships with staff support pupils on visits outside school so that they develop confidence, as when conducting transactions in shops while other customers are waiting for service.

15. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent throughout the school. They are characterised by mutual respect, courtesy and care. Pupils are willing to wait their turn; they listen to each other in lessons and respond positively. They are pleased when other pupils earn rewards, even hugging them on occasion, and sometimes suggest that another child should receive a reward. They help those less able than themselves, ask each other how they are and listen to the answer, reflecting the role models offered them by staff. Pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are well integrated into school life and fully accepted by their peers. No instances of bullying were observed during the inspection and any form of harassment would be conspicuously out of place in this school.

16. Attendance is good and there is little unauthorised absence. However, pupils often arrive in school late, due to transport arrangements, and registers are marked later than they should be to accommodate this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching is good overall. Altogether 71 lessons or parts of lessons were observed; of these 8 per cent were satisfactory, 48 per cent were good, 37 per cent were very good and 7 per cent were excellent. Teaching is best in the secondary department of the school where over half the lessons seen, were very good or excellent. At Post 16, 16 lessons out of 17 were good or better. In the primary department of the school, 18 out of 20 lessons were good or better. Teaching in the foundation department of the school is predominately satisfactory, with some good.

18. Teaching in French and music is consistently very good. In English, teaching is consistently good; half the lessons seen were very good and occasionally excellent. Mathematics teaching is consistently good across the school. In science teaching is consistently good with one lesson being very good and one excellent. Teaching in art, design and technology, humanities and religious education is good. Teaching in physical education is good, but teaching of swimming is very good.

19. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in discrete lessons is good, but more needs to be done by the whole school to ensure that ICT is taught and used more consistently across the curriculum.

20. The important skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are taught well. The promotion of pupils' and students' communication skills is a high priority for all staff and they seize every opportunity to reinforce them. Literacy and numeracy are taught well across other subjects. For example, pupils read and write in other subjects; pupils count in physical education and measure in science; they read in French and use their numeracy skills when counting and pricing items in their boutique.

21. An outstanding feature of almost all lessons is the highly effective teamwork between teachers and other staff. Large numbers of well qualified support staff in classes ensure that pupils and students are well supported, and they make good progress in most lessons as a result. Many examples were seen of excellent communication and understanding between adults in the classroom, all of which ensured that pupils and students were suitably challenged, well supported, and included with their peers, and that time was used well. For example, in a physical education lesson, sensitive support from a classroom assistant enabled a pupil with autism to participate fully in activities alongside his peers.

22. Teamwork is strongly supported by the quality of relationships amongst staff, and the thorough understanding that they all have of pupils' learning difficulties, individual needs, personalities and idiosyncrasies.

23. Teachers' planning and organisation also support teamwork. Support staff plan, assess and monitor with teachers. Adult roles are made clear, as are tasks to be approached, resources to be used, and the learning intentions. A particular strength is the planning of tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs, offering a suitable challenge, but with opportunities for success. Consequently, pupils expect to have to work hard, yet they know that there will be support, encouragement and help from staff when necessary. They respond very well, and in most lessons they work hard at tasks for relatively long periods, some older pupils even working independently.

24. Staff have high expectations of pupils' productivity and behaviour. For example, they always insist that a task is tackled before a favourite activity can be started. This works well in swimming when, at the end of the lesson, pupils are allowed to choose favourite aids to play with in the water for the last few minutes. Staff record pupils' choice and monitor carefully. They then remove aids to stop pupils choosing the same aid week after week, and add new aids to challenge pupils. In lessons, staff move pupils and students on from one task to another with a sense of purpose, and most lessons proceed at a good pace, with no time wasted.

25. Staff use a good range of methods, well suited to the particular needs of pupils and students with different disabilities. Good use is made of photographs, symbols and objects to help those with more pronounced learning difficulties understand the sequence of activities during the day. In French, the target language is used consistently through the lessons. Good use of mime, body language and clues ensure that pupils fully understand what is required of them. This works well and pupils achieve well and carry on conversations with staff and each other.

26. Home/school books are used well to communicate with parents. This promotes the notion of parents supporting learning at home. Several parents come into school on a regular basis, supporting pupils in classrooms and in the swimming pool. This contribution enhances pupils' progress and achievement.

27. Few weaknesses were seen in teaching. Where they did occur, lessons were led by outside professionals supported by school staff. In the foundation area of the school the school acknowledges there needs to be some training to ensure all staff teach to the new foundation curriculum, targets and activities.

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

28. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement to the curriculum at all stages except the Foundation Stage, where the range of activities for children under five is too narrow. All subjects have sound policies and schemes of work that are closely linked to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Opportunities for Post 16 students are now good and include a good range of accreditation. Statutory requirements are fully met and the school satisfactorily provides for drugs and sex education.

29. Teachers adapt and modify their lessons well to meet a wide range of complex individual needs. An example of this is the way in which they timetable and plan different activities for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism. In response to national priorities, the school has focused on the teaching of literacy and numeracy and successfully introduced good strategies for teaching both. They are finding that these strategies provide them with a clearer framework for planning and are helpful in monitoring pupils' progress. This has contributed to the improving standards in English and mathematics. Information and communication technology is used well by teachers for planning their lessons; however, most teachers do not use it as effectively in lessons. For example, it was rarely seen being used in mathematics, science, art, history, geography, music or design and technology.

30. Since the last inspection provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has remained satisfactory. It focuses generally on developing an appropriate range of personal skills and social competencies. However, there is a new policy in place and adequate provision at Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post 16 for drugs and sex education. The sex education is taught by the resident school nurse. Resources for PSHE are adequate.

31. After Easter, PSHE is planned to be taught throughout the school. At Key Stages 1 and 2, PSHE will be taught on a cross-curricular four year cycle with modules relating to personal safety, health and hygiene. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post 16, pupils and students will follow the PSHE and Citizenship 2000 scheme of work. This will be linked into the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) at Post 16, and work experience will be extended to include students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

32. In the one lesson observed at Key Stage 4 and Post 16, teaching was very good when pupils and students studied the dangers of cigarette smoking. They all watched intently while the teacher performed an experiment using a cigarette, bottle and cotton wool to demonstrate lung pollution.

33. At the time of the last inspection, an issue was raised over teaching time that was short of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) recommendations in Circular 7/90. Although some improvements have been made, this is still short because of the late arrivals in the mornings and the length of the lunchtime break. However, consideration must be given to the age of the children and pupils, and because of the large catchment area covered, the length and time of their journeys. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory; most notable, is the Young Riversiders who provide opportunities such as swimming and visits to the adventure playground at Brockhole.

34. All pupils have good access to the curriculum and provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory. It is suitably organised for most pupils within the school. However, for the small number of pupils with autism, strategies for effectively modifying the curriculum to meet their additional needs are not fully in place.

35. Since the last inspection, opportunities for inclusion have improved and are now good. Pupils integrate socially at St Thomas' Primary School and attend Queen Katherine High School for art and religious education. One pupil at Key Stage 3 integrates well at the Lakes Secondary School, Windermere for two days each week.

36. The curriculum for Post 16 students has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory, with the transition reviews being carefully followed through. Students receive a separate curriculum, which is tailored to preparing them for life after school. They follow a range of accredited courses mainly through the Award Scheme and Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). They study modules of work and learn about such things as independent living skills, self-advocacy and preparation for the world of work. College link courses are also used and these are selected on the basis of their relevance for individual students; for example, two students are taking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Level 1 in catering, and others are following courses in art and health and beauty. The school works well with local businesses and students have work experience placements at a local garden centre, ASDA and Woolworth's. The careers officer works closely with the school to guide students who are leaving. This year, four students are going to residential college and one to Kendal College.

37. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is fostered effectively through religious education lessons and assemblies. In whole school assemblies, older pupils often lead the assembly giving their own views and accounts to the younger children. This is done well with good use of signing and body language to enhance communication. However, some opportunities in art and music are missed to enhance this further. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Staff are good role models and help pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong. Assemblies also foster a very good communal spirit and are effectively used to celebrate achievement. Older pupils are given the responsibility of leading the assemblies; during the inspection they were observed congratulating younger pupils for having achieved well in lessons.

38. Provision for cultural development is very good. For example, French lessons are taught in the target language and in geography pupils explore local cultures. The multicultural aspect of the school's work is very strong in music, art, food technology and religious education. A good example observed during the inspection was pupils making couscous in food technology after learning about Judaism in their religious education lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. A very strong ethos of care and respect for personal dignity is evident in the school; all staff know the pupils and students very well and are aware of their medical and learning needs. Pupils feel secure and valued members of the school community, and this enables them to work to the best of their ability in class.

40. The school takes very good care of pupils' health, with nursing care available on site during school hours. This marks a considerable improvement since the last inspection and enables pupils with more severe health and medical problems to attend school. The school doctor attends the school regularly and is available for consultation by parents and staff on behalf of pupils. Staff have received training on a variety of health issues including asthma, gastrostomy and anaphylactic shock treatment. A good range of specialists, including physiotherapists, speech and music therapists, visit the school regularly to work with pupils referred to them.

41. The school has good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety and staff are vigilant in monitoring safety in the building and on visits out of school. Procedures for child protection follow local guidelines and are satisfactory, but the school has not yet produced a written policy specific to the school.

42. Most pupils travel to school by taxi or bus and the layout of the access to the site means that pupils descending from buses and going into school encounter other vehicles arriving and turning. The safety of pupils in this unsatisfactory situation is ensured by the vigilance and care of staff. Buses and taxis often arrive at school late and may then have to wait to let pupils off, so that many pupils come into school well after nine o'clock. The head teacher has tried hard to remedy this situation without success, but registers are not marked correctly with pupils' late arrivals as registration occurs late to accommodate them. Pupils brought to school by their parents and carers also sometimes arrive late.

43. There is no formal written policy for bullying and harassment, but the school has good procedures to promote good behaviour in pupils and eliminate bullying. Good classroom management and effective use of support staff keep pupils' attention focussed on their learning. Reward and encouragement are a strong feature in the life of the school; all staff consistently remind pupils of expected behaviour and praise them when they do well.

44. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the procedures for monitoring progress and personal development. Baseline assessment is carried out on entry for all pupils. The school is using the 'P' scales to assess pupils. However, once training can be established with the local university, they are hoping to introduce shortly the PIVATS to

help assessment become more finely tuned. There is still some additional work to be done to ensure assessment is implemented consistently throughout the school and across all the subject areas. Assessment is good in certain subjects, for example mathematics and swimming, and satisfactory in science, religious education and English.

45. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have improved and now have a consistent format across the school. Each IEP has four achievable targets for literacy, numeracy, science, personal, social and health education, and information technology, and these are reviewed every term. Information from the IEPs is used well in annual reports, which clearly indicate what pupils know, can do and understand in all National Curriculum subjects. Arrangements for annual and transition reviews are satisfactory. However, the Statements of Special Needs for a small number of pupils who are on the autistic disorder spectrum need to be reviewed more rigorously to ensure that the specific special needs of these pupils are being met.

46. The school values and celebrates pupils' successes and marks them with a range of merit certificates that in turn contribute to the pupils' Records of Achievement, which are of a high standard.

47. At the present time Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) and Teacher Assessments (TA) are not being carried out, in accordance with the Assessment and Reporting Arrangements 2001, for pupils who are working below Level 2. However, the school needs to ensure that these assessments are carried out for pupils who are performing above National Curriculum Level 2 in English, mathematics and science.

48. Since the last inspection there has been a great improvement in accreditation and assessment at Key Stage 4 and Post 16, and this is now good. Pupils undertake NEAB accreditation with six pupils achieving six NEAB Certificates of Achievement. Last year two pupils achieved commendations in numeracy and literacy. Post 16 students follow vocational educational courses that are highly relevant to their needs and accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). This provides the students with a method of self assessment as part of their course module. Through good use of IEPs, pupils' achievements are assessed regularly and the information used to inform future planning and also check the work they are doing is at the right level for each individual.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The great majority of parents are pleased with the education their children receive at the school, and value the commitment of the staff. Teachers and parents make good use of home/school books to keep in touch, for example to inform each other of details of a child's progress and health or to ask for information. This is a particularly useful means of involving parents as partners in their children's education where families are scattered over a large catchment area and pupils come to school by bus and taxi.

50. Parental help in school makes a good contribution to pupils' learning in a variety of ways, for example with conductive education for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school arranges training where necessary to ensure that volunteers are effective, and also offers parents the opportunity to attend courses in signing. Parents of children with complex medical needs come into school to help with their child's swimming. A group of parents helped to paint and decorate a room to simulate a forest for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Parents also support the school very effectively through the Family and Friends group who are raising funds to improve the playground. Social events for parents and staff help to build informal relationships and strengthen the partnership between home and school.

51. The school provides good information for parents through the prospectus, governors' report and regular newsletters. Guidance on health matters is also available, for example on the appropriate numbers of days off school for different ailments, and parents have the opportunity to consult the school doctor if they wish. Pupils' annual written reports are satisfactory and provide an opportunity for parental comment.

52. The school arranges formal occasions for consultation with parents after the written reports are issued and at Annual Reviews. Most parents attend their child's Annual Review and their views are taken into account when formulating pupils' IEPs. However the school welcomes parents who wish to speak to staff or telephone about their children's health and progress, and many parents seek information this way.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. Since the previous inspection in 1996, the school has gone through a difficult time. The permanent headteacher had a long illness and eventually retired. The deputy headteacher has been acting as headteacher for nearly two years and the senior teacher has been acting as deputy headteacher. The school has been subject to much-needed building improvements that have caused disruption to classes and organisation. Despite these difficulties, an HMI inspection in March 1998 concluded that improvement since the last inspection was satisfactory and that the school no longer required special measures.

54. Since that inspection, the school has undergone further building improvements, which in fact will not be completed until April 2001. The school has fully resolved the key issues raised by HMI. The school development plan is now fully costed and identifies targets and responsibilities; curriculum developments have been consolidated, and the transition of pupils to Post 16 provision is now more effectively achieved. The improvement in teaching and learning and the successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies indicate that the school is well placed to continue to improve its performance.

55. At the time of the last inspection, the school lacked a common sense of purpose, and made no reference to the statutory requirements of the Education Reform Act. There was no school prospectus to inform parents of the main aims and priorities of the school. This has all been rectified. The school now has a positive ethos; excellent team work, meets all statutory requirements and keeps parents fully informed of developments. Good improvement has been made.

56. Leadership and management of the school are good. The day-to-day management of the school is effective and this ensures that communication is clear and routines and roles understood. The school has developed appropriate aims and values directly related to the special educational needs of the pupils and students. Their education takes place within a very supportive atmosphere where relationships at all levels are very good. The very positive ethos, evident in the daily life of the school, means that pupils and students enjoy coming to school and have confidence and trust in staff that work with them. This, together with high staff morale, means that teaching and learning are consistently good. It is clear that all staff and governors are fully committed to improving the standard of education provided for pupils and students.

57. Monitoring of teaching is well established, carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Governors are now involved in this and are being trained to carry out observations. Since the last inspection, the governing body has reorganised, recruited new members, and become more involved in and knowledgeable about the daily life of the school. It is very supportive and has a clear understanding of what the school's current and future priorities should be to bring about improvement.

58. The governors are a skilled and supportive group, who carry out their responsibilities very effectively. They are strongly committed to school improvement through governance, and frequently visit the school, to attend functions or carry out checks, for example. Every time one does so, a report is written, which contributes to governors' thorough knowledge of the school, its strengths, and areas for improvement. This good practice has been extended to include governors in the monitoring of teaching and learning, and curriculum developments across the school.

59. A good start has been made to performance management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been identified as team leaders. Team members have been allocated, and initial objectives agreed. This is an indication of how the governing body approaches its responsibilities. All appropriate committees are in place, and the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. It is clear that all members of the governing body are very committed to the development of the school.

60. Although the number of teachers is fewer than expected for a school of this type, there is very good provision of high quality support staff. They share responsibilities extremely well, working as an effective team to ensure that pupils receive a good level of support and guidance. This good level of support in lessons is a significant factor in promoting the good progress made by pupils. The subject leaders provide a good match of expertise to the needs of the school. They have led good improvements to their subjects, thereby making a significant contribution to promoting pupils' good and often very good progress in lessons. However some staff are temporary, such as those for science and modern foreign languages, and this reduces security in maintaining standards.

61. Staff receive good opportunities for professional development, linked to school and personal needs. The school usually identifies appropriate priorities, acknowledging for instance the need for more training for staff to support pupils who are on the autistic disorder syndrome. However, procedures have not identified all relevant training needs, such as better preparation of teachers for the youngest pupils. This is a significant factor in reducing the rate of progress.

62. There are satisfactory arrangements for the induction of new staff. Teaching assistants and trainees receive good induction and support from colleagues to ensure that they understand pupils' special needs. The school is very successful in supporting trainee nurses and nursery nurses on work experience, and student teachers on placement. During the inspection week, a student enjoyed valuable experience, whilst making a good contribution to promoting pupils' learning in science. However, there is not a sufficiently formal induction procedure for teachers to ensure that they receive all the information and support that they require. This is particularly important when they undertake responsibilities outside of their usual experience, such as teaching the youngest children.

63. Although improved since the previous inspection, accommodation remains unsatisfactory. There has been significant building work to improve access for wheelchairs, and corridors now provide more space for mobility. There is a good range of ancillary rooms, such as light stimulation rooms, a medical room and a soft playroom. The design and technology room now provides well for pupils' learning. The hall is too small for the number of pupils and the equipment they bring with them. Many pupils eat their lunches in classrooms, and this reduces opportunities for social integration and learning. There are no suitable changing facilities for physical education. The provision for food technology is unsatisfactory and does not provide appropriate facilities to promote better standards. It lacks appropriate storage, work surfaces and appropriate tables. This room shares the lack of suitable adjustable furniture that is evident throughout the school, for instance to meet the needs of pupils in wheelchairs. The provision for the youngest children is unsatisfactory. The layout, furniture and facilities, such as toilets and outdoor play, do not match their needs. The provision for students at Post 16 does not provide adequately for their needs. They do not have their own room to follow a distinct course and develop more independence. The school has the opportunity to improve some of the accommodation when the new extension is completed. However, there is no coherent plan for the optimum use of all the accommodation to meet the requirements for the range and number of pupils in school. The school has worked hard to improve the way that pupils arrive and depart by organised transport. However, the layout of the area available for vehicles to manoeuvre requires further modification to reduce the time taken, ensure safety and improve the convenience for pupils, so that they can, for instance, alight nearer the main doors.

64. Resources for learning have improved significantly and are now satisfactory overall. Staff appreciate additional aids such as hoists because of the benefit they provide for pupils. The school has responded well to national initiatives such as the National Numeracy Strategy. Resources are deployed well, for instance in numeracy and science lessons, and this makes a strong contribution to engaging pupils in the work and enhancing their learning. Resources for information technology have been improved. The school acknowledges the need to provide more computers in classrooms and a greater range of software in order to improve the

use of technology to support pupils' learning. Resources for the youngest children are unsatisfactory and do not meet their needs, thereby restricting progress. The school uses resources in the community well. For instance, it takes advantage of swimming and sports facilities to enhance pupils' learning in physical education.

65. The school makes good use of information technology to monitor budgets, although this is achieved by a 'school approach' using spread sheets. The school receives good financial advice from a local education authority finance officer and is ready to change to a nationally accepted information technology system in April. Through the school's present system, very careful oversight of expenditure is maintained and detailed information is provided for the headteacher and governing body, who appreciate the way in which figures are presented. The governors' finance committee meets regularly and conscientiously reports back to the full governing body. This is good practice.

66. Routine financial management and administration procedures are good. Administration support allows teachers pursue their main task of teaching pupils. The latest auditors' report (1999) made minor recommendations. These have been fully implemented, indicating the positive attitude of the school to improvement. Management of finances is both prudent and efficient, and there is a clear link to school priorities. The school development plan successfully supports development. It is formulated following wide consultation, and reflects local and national priorities as well as specific areas the school has identified for further improvement. It is fully costed, responsibilities identified, success criteria set and timed. Identified personnel, the senior management team and governors, monitor closely the implementation of the plan.

67. The Standards Fund is spent appropriately to support and extend the management and teaching skills of staff. In these ways it has supported implementation of National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, curriculum developments, performance management, and ICT development. Advantage has also been taken of courses offered by the National Grid for Learning.

68. The school successfully achieves its stated aims and provides a facility much valued by parents, pupils and students. This view was consistently put to inspectors during the inspection by parents voluntarily working in the school. Pupils enter the school with significant learning difficulties and underdeveloped personal and social skills. Considering the progress in both their academic and personal development, their good attitudes towards learning and the consistently high quality of teaching, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. The school should now:

- Formalise a foundation stage curriculum and scheme of work, and raise standards in the foundation stage by:
 - * Writing a formal foundation stage curriculum policy and scheme of work; improving accommodation; improve liaison between foundation and Key Stage 1, increasing learning resources and providing further training for staff.
(Paragraphs: 28, 61, 63, 64, 72, 79)
- Ensure that accommodation meets appropriate standards by:
 - * Liasing with the Local Education Authority (LEA) to ensure that the accommodation for foundation children allows them to pursue a full foundation curriculum; upgrading the food technology room; making discrete provision for Post 16 students; improving social provision for pupils between 14 and 16 years; providing adequate changing and showering provision for pupils and students for physical education; increasing the amount of adjustable furniture for pupils, and creating adequate toilets and changing facilities for disabled children, pupils and students.
(Paragraphs: 63, 79, 115, 150)
- Ensure arrivals of children, pupils and students are safe. Ensure they are punctual into school for lessons and increase taught time by:
 - * Continuing to liaise with the LEA to ensure transport is punctual, safe and orderly so that it allows children, pupils and students to disembark in time for lessons to start promptly, and also reviewing the length of the lunch time.
(Paragraphs: 33, 42)

70. The governing body, headteacher and key staff should also consider the following smaller improvements for inclusion in their action plan:

- * further improve standards of achievement in, and cross-curricular uses of, information and communication technology;
(Paragraphs: 7, 29)

- * Provide a written policy for anti-bullying;
(Paragraph: 43)

- * Formalise induction procedures for new staff, particularly those working out of phase, such as foundation stage;
(Paragraph: 62)

- * Ensure attendance registers are marked accurately in line with registration regulations by monitoring lateness more effectively and follow the agreed regulations accurately.**
(Paragraphs: 16, 42)

***NB: this issue was resolved and fully implemented by the time the inspectors went back to the school to feedback the report.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	37	47	9	0	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	Nursery	YR–Y13
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) (6 part time and 4 full time in nursery)	7	41
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y1–Y13
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	45
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register (6 part time and 4 full time in nursery)	10	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	8.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.6

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

It is not appropriate for pupils in this school to take National Curriculum tests and tasks: (Assessment & Recording Arrangements 2001: Appendix D.)

Achievement: June 2000:

NEAB Certificate of Achievement

Mathematics. 2 distinctions

English. 1 distinction. 1 credit.

June 2001.

Pupils and students will have completed NEAB courses.

Mathematics, English, science, French

ASDAN Youth Award, Bronze Award

NVQ, Catering

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	51
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	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:

YN – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.8
Average class size	9.2

Education support staff:

YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	480

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	537538.00
Total expenditure	503960.00
Expenditure per pupil	10079.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	18022.00
Balance carried forward to next year	51600.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	51
Number of questionnaires returned	19

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	38	0	5	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	58	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	40	27	0	6
The teaching is good.	56	32	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	48	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	22	0	15	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	37	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	33	10	10	0
The school is well led and managed.	37	48	10	5	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	44	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	28	22	16	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were concerned at the length of time it was taking to appoint a permanent headteacher.

Access into school is difficult as a result of extended building work.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

71. The progress of the children in the Foundation Stage of learning is broadly satisfactory overall, and they achieve satisfactory standards in most lessons. Sometimes their achievements are unsatisfactory, however, because there is no discrete curriculum for this age group, and a lack of understanding of their particular needs. Currently ten children at the school are under the age of five. A nursery class caters for the six children who are three years old. Reception age children work with the Key Stage 1 class. There are few overall links between the two classes, and provision is not sufficiently monitored to ensure that activities are appropriate to children of this age.

72. Children's communication, language and literacy skills are developing in a satisfactory way in both classes. They enjoy stories and show interest in discussions about the day. They interact with each other and with adults as they work and play together. They benefit from the use of signs and symbols when needed, and these help children who have very limited language skills to make their needs known. Their language skills are promoted through many different activities and areas of learning. For example, when they are in the pool, they sing nursery rhymes and songs, and learn to interact with each other through group games. They benefit from good use of puppets and resources to help them understand stories. However, more opportunities should be provided for children to use books. Few books are available for browsing, and children need more opportunities to make choices of the books they want to look at. Children do have access to simple writing tools so that they can begin to make marks on paper. They use brushes to paint and learn to hold pencils correctly. Overall, however, the provision for improving writing skills is unsatisfactory. Too little time is allocated to enabling children to experiment and explore ways of making marks and talking about them.

73. Children's mathematical skills are broadly satisfactory. They count every day. For example, each morning they count how many children are in class. They count many different objects as they practise their number skills. In both classes they focus on numeracy as the main area of learning. In the nursery, children work closely with adults as they build towers with bricks. They show excitement and pride as they try to build a tower that is even higher than the teacher's. They count how many bricks are in the tower, and try to identify the colours of the bricks. They make satisfactory gains in learning as they repeat the exercise many times. In the reception class, they learn about the shape of numbers by drawing over them and trying to remember their names. Overall provision for the development on numeracy skills is satisfactory, although there are too few opportunities for practical application of the concepts of mathematics. For example children do not have enough time to play with sand and water, or in social areas, to enable them to learn about sharing, dividing, pouring, filling and emptying.

74. The personal, social and emotional development of the children is satisfactory. They have daily opportunities to listen and take turns with others during group times. They generally obey simple instructions and 'stop' on request. They behave well and show respect for others. In both classes, children respond well to adults and enjoy working with them. They have good attitudes and almost all enjoy coming to school. They are interested in the activities on offer. Many are encouraged to help in some small way. For example, they take registers to the office, clear away their own toys and take responsibility for their own coats. There are too few opportunities, however, to promote social skills through play. Although there are areas for social play, such as in the house, and resources such as dressing-up clothes, and outdoor toys, children rarely have the opportunity to choose these activities for themselves. Lessons are structured so that there is little time for 'choosing' or taking responsibility for decision making.

75. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is limited. Too few opportunities are offered in which children can learn about aspects of this area of learning. Children in the nursery show curiosity as they look at, and feel and smell a plant that they were growing. In the reception class, children show amazement as they explore eggs, and learn about the difference between raw and cooked eggs. However these experiences are rare and do not allow sufficient opportunity for children to extend their knowledge and enquire further into aspects of these experiences. Simple switch skills are developing appropriately in both classes. Children have opportunities to develop their cause and effect skills through the use of touch screens and switches. They enjoy these activities and work hard to succeed.

76. Children's creative skills are satisfactory. They enjoy music and singing, and have opportunities to paint and build a range of structures. They make the best progress in their music lessons. They show skill in using simple percussion instruments. Children in the reception class join in very well with the Key Stage 1 music time, and learn by copying and watching others. They benefit from the good music teaching that they receive. In both classes there are different opportunities to paint and explore textures. Children enjoy these times. However, the sessions are sometimes too structured. Children do not have enough time to experiment, make choices and choose the resources that they want to work with. Sometimes too much is done for them. For example, in the nursery when children were making a sock puppet following a story, adults held their hands as they chose their material and as they used glue sticks to stick materials together. Children did not have the opportunity to choose independently, or to experience what glue feels like. This reduced their understanding of the task.

77. Children's physical skills are good. They are promoted through a variety of opportunities in which they receive good support to improve their physical development. For example, they work individually with adults in the reception class to improve their movements during physical education lessons. Both classes have good opportunities to use the pool and they make good gains in water confidence and movement in the water because of the good resource and support. For example, one reception child who was very nervous in the water benefited from good support so that he was eventually able to propel himself in the water and enjoy it. Children in the nursery enjoy the pool. They wear armbands and show confidence as they kick and splash. This valuable experience is having a positive impact on standards in this area of learning. Sometimes progress is limited because children are not allowed to explore space and experiment with movements for themselves.

78. The quality of teaching for children under five is broadly satisfactory overall. Teachers enjoy working with the children and good support is available when needed. They know the children very well and work well with parents to promote learning. However, there is too little expertise in relation to the needs of children in the Foundation Stage of learning. Some aspects of the provision are not appropriate for children of this age. For example, sometimes there are too few opportunities for children to explore and experiment for themselves. Lessons are often too structured with children taking turns one at a time. This is unsatisfactory and inhibits the amount of learning time that children have. The curriculum is also unsatisfactory. No links have been made with the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. This leads to a lack of a continuous and progressive range of learning opportunities across the two classes. For example, because teachers do not measure the progress of children in relation to the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum, children may undertake the same activity at the same level in each class. Hence they do not make progress. This is unsatisfactory. Also some of the activities are inappropriate for children of this age. They are sometimes too difficult and adults have to give so much support that they are almost doing the task for the children. The accommodation for this stage of learning is also unsatisfactory. There are no adequate toilet facilities for the nursery. There is no outdoor covered play area discrete to this age group, and no area designated as a wet-play area for activities such as sand, water, and clay. This limits the amount of time allocated to areas of learning in which children choose to 'make a mess' and experiment with wet play.

ENGLISH

79. Standards of achievement are satisfactory at Key Stage 1, good at Key Stages 2, 4 and Post 16, and very good at Key Stage 3. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been successful and has had a positive impact on standards. Progress towards meeting the schools' targets in literacy has been good; the co-ordinator has ensured this. Long, medium and short-term plans are in place throughout the school and IEPs are set every term. Pupils are given baseline tests on entry to school. However, they do not sit standard assessment tests (SATS) or teacher assessment tests (TAS). This is appropriate for pupils achieving Level 2 and below, but the school will need to review this in the light of the fact that some pupils and students are achieving Level 3 and above in literacy. There is, however, external accreditation at 16 years old when pupils sit the NEAB literacy certification. Two pupils achieved this last year, one gaining a merit and another a distinction. Six pupils are sitting it this summer. At Post 16, students gain accreditation as part of their ASDAN programme.

80. Pupils by the age of seven years are making satisfactory progress. However, pupils with additional special needs are sometimes not making the progress they should owing to a lack of expertise by staff. Additional training is necessary in the area of autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) in literacy. In addition, there needs to be more integration at Key Stage 1 for the PMLD pupils to join in the main literacy sessions each day rather than once or twice per week. Higher attaining pupils, however, develop their speaking and listening skills through the use of language, signs and symbols. There is very good input by a visiting speech therapist two days per week. In one session, reception, Year 1 and 2 pupils are saying and signing their colours and suitable clothes. One reception pupil signs and says, 'You have put blue trousers and a red jumper on teddy.' When a support assistant returns to class, one Year 1 pupil asks, 'Where have you

been?' They enjoy listening to stories and many are beginning to answer questions well. By the age of seven years, pupils can hold pencils, copy simple drawings and recognise their name and the names of their peers. Other pupils are beginning to achieve eye contact, give a ball on request and respond appropriately to adults.

81. Throughout Key Stage 2, progress is good. Pupils up to the age of 11 years continue to develop their language skills through a range of good experiences. They respond in different ways, some use pictures or symbols while others sign or use spoken language. During a science session, words such as 'circuit' and 'switches' are being spoken, pupils recognise weather changes and recognise words such as rain and cloud, assisted by good flash cards. In humanities, literacy plays a strong part in sorting materials. For example, pupils recognise the word 'aluminium' when they go to the bottle bank. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in reading up to the age of 11 years, achieving National Curriculum Level 2. The use of the Oxford Reading Tree Scheme and the use of the computer contribute significantly to this progress and develop independent learning skills. Pupils with pre-reading skills are very articulate in describing a story from picture clues. During a literacy session with a predominantly Key Stage 2 class, based on the big book, 'I Wish I Had a Monster', there was good use of cross-curricular links with numeracy, technology, art and music. Pupils were singing, cutting, sticking and counting the body parts of various monsters and insects.

82. The high standards in Key Stage 3 are closely linked to the effective strategies used to promote learning in all pupils. By the time pupils reach 14 years, their confidence in their own ability and skills increases. This is mainly due to very good or excellent teaching by both teacher and support staff. They are very skilful at encouraging pupils to make choices and to be fully involved in language activities. By the age of 14 years, pupils order the alphabet. A pupil with additional special needs can say 'ambulance', 'apple' and 'boat' recognising words using a Letterland game as an aid. All Key Stage 3 pupils recognise and use rhyming words. This achievement is celebrated by a 'golden moment' when a potted singing sunflower sings 'Congratulations' to them. Great hilarity and pride in their achievements follow! By the time they are 14 years, high attaining pupils write simple stories using cursive writing and information and communication technology (ICT) to reproduce their work. They read fluently and with expression, achieving National Curriculum Levels 4 and 5. Less able pupils read from flash cards and copy simple four-letter words. They recognise many letters and often try to build words that they do not know. They enjoy using books and treat them with care and respect. All pupils at Key Stage 3 have access to many books. Pupils with more profound difficulties benefit from the good use of resources and very good teaching strategies to support the acquisition of early literacy. For example, in one lesson a support assistant used a Letterland word board to help PMLD pupils recognise and spell their names.

83. Achievement between the ages of 14 years and 16 years is good, and pupils remain confident. This was evident in a session where pupils were discussing headlines in the newspapers. One pupil who lives on a farm picked out an article about foot and mouth disease in France. Another pupil wrote about 'My best adventure,' and suggested doing it in 'posh letters' on the computer. High attaining pupils are reading their books every morning on arrival to school. They read with expression and are able to self correct.

84. At Post 16, students' reading and writing skills are often linked to their ASDAN studies. They write simple sentences independently either with a pencil or on the computer. They can discuss current affairs in a mature manner. One student explained the problems of living on a farm where there is the threat of foot and mouth disease; another explained the advantages of holding a Red Nose Comic Relief Day in school and how Mozambique will benefit from money collected. The high attaining pupils read fluently with understanding, retrieving information and collating it to achieve National Curriculum Level 6.

85. PMLD pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and Post 16, receive high levels of support to help them access computers using switches. This ensures that each pupil and student achieves their potential and that they make progress in communicating with others. It would be beneficial if switches were used more with the younger pupils in literacy, so that they could be included in question and answer sessions.

86. The quality of teaching in English matches achievement: satisfactory at Key Stage 1, good at Key Stage 2, 4 and Post 16, and very good at Key Stage 3. In the best lessons, the teachers plan well and link the learning outcomes to the schemes of work for pupils of that age. Teachers in these lessons are skilled in the use of different strategies to support literacy. They plan work to suit individual needs and they use resources in an imaginative way. This helps to motivate pupils and students and they respond by working hard and showing high levels of enjoyment. These effective strategies are supported by good assessment. This ensures that tasks are well matched to ability. Teachers and support assistants in these lessons manage pupils well. They know their pupils and students and relationships are good and play a positive part in the quality of learning in English. Teachers use questions very well to improve speaking and listening skills and to encourage participation. Pupils and students respond well to each other, they often share and take turns praising each other if they do well in class.

87. Since training has now taken place, monitoring is due to be implemented and this should have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are good and there is now a small library. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils and students are encouraged to use their literacy skills in many other subjects across the school, such as science, physical education, humanities and religious studies. One Key Stage 3 pupil explained in great detail why Jesus was going to Jerusalem with his twelve friends. They use their communication skills at all times. This is a significant strength which contributes well to pupils' and students' social development.

MATHEMATICS

88. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in mathematics throughout the school. Pupils make good progress at all Key Stages. The National Numeracy Strategy has provided a good framework and clear guidelines for teaching mathematics; this, together with the improved teaching, has been a key factor in raising standards. Last year, two pupils in Year 11 taking the Northern Examination and Assessment Board's (NEAB) Certificate of Achievement examination gained distinctions.

89. The youngest pupils in the school are learning about different shapes. The higher attainers recognise a triangle and a circle, and when questioned by the teacher they name them and then sort them correctly into sets. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are very well supported; this helps them to successfully participate in the lesson by feeling different three-dimensional shapes whilst the support assistant talks about their properties. By the age of seven, pupils are learning new mathematical concepts and developing basic mathematical language. In a very good practical lesson, the pupils attached woollen tails to cardboard mice. Very good teaching enabled them to lay these on the floor and order them by size. At the end of the lesson nearly all knew and understood the difference between long and short.

90. As they move through the school, pupils' basic number skills improve, and by the time they reach the age of 11, the higher attaining pupils are capable of counting on in twos, fives and tens to thirty. Some are beginning to understand number bonds. In one class, the highest attainer can count backwards in threes from thirty; a considerable achievement. Pupils with complex needs enjoy mathematics and receive a curriculum that is adapted effectively to meet their learning difficulties. Practical activities are integrated naturally into lessons and teachers use a wide range of resources to reinforce different concepts. In an excellent lesson, the teacher prepared lower achievers for a supermarket challenge. Pupils aged 14 were given £2 and sent to the local shop to purchase a variety of fruit, biscuits and drink. They made various choices, and good support helped them to consider the prices carefully. This resulted in their having to return some items to the shelves because they were not within their budget.

91. Pupils are given good problem-solving experiences that involve money, time and measurement. By the age of 16, the higher attaining pupil, studying for the NEAB Certificate of Achievement examination, is asked by the teacher to think about a problem more carefully and if necessary read it again until he fully understands it. This results in a much better analysis of the bus timetables and accurate working out of departures and arrivals, from different points on the route. At Post 16, the work is mainly concerned with developing skills for when pupils leave school. An example of this was observed during the inspection. Pupils working on an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) module of work went shopping for ingredients to be used in a food technology lesson.

92. Numeracy skills are applied well in other subjects. Good examples of this are: counting the number of passes and getting into groups in physical education, counting in French, and weighing and measuring ingredients in design and technology.

93. Pupils' response is good overall. Most work well individually and, when asked, collaborate well in smaller groups. They are attentive and show interest in their work, with some higher attainers sustaining their concentration for long periods of time.

94. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. Teaching was excellent in one lesson, very good in another, and good in all others. Teachers have responded to the numeracy training enthusiastically and whole-class teaching at the beginning and end of lessons is having a very positive effect on raising the level of achievement. Planning is good overall and clearly identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught. Most teachers have high expectations and use good questioning skills to reinforce learning outcomes and assess what pupils have learned. They manage their pupils

well, use time effectively and adapt lessons appropriately to meet the diverse learning needs of the pupils. The scrutiny of pupils' work, shows that teachers ensure National Curriculum requirements are fully met and that pupils' work covers a wide range and is not just narrowly focused on number. Some work was seen where information and communication technology was used to display information in bar and pie charts about a survey on cars. However, the school has not given sufficient thought to how computers can be used to support the work in mathematics.

95. Mathematics is co-ordinated well throughout the school. The co-ordinator liaises effectively with other teachers and has been instrumental in the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Assessment is good and used effectively to formulate mathematical targets on individual plans. The quality and range of mathematical resources is good.

SCIENCE

96. Pupils' achievement in science is good. All pupils make good, and often very good or excellent, progress in lessons. They find the work interesting and stimulating, looking forward to lessons with pleasure. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good, being very good or excellent in lessons taken by the co-ordinator. This is a significant improvement since the inspection undertaken in 1996. Lessons are prepared effectively to promote learning of different groups of pupils. A strong feature of lessons is the way that resources are prepared very carefully for pupils to use them. This quickly engages pupils' attention and they proceed rapidly with their work. This, together with the effective use of rewards, ensures that behaviour remains very good. Pupils who have more complex learning needs make the same progress as other pupils because of effective planning and support.

97. The youngest pupils make good progress investigating materials used to make clothing. They carry out experiments and learn that some materials repel water. Pupils' behaviour is very good and this enables staff to allow pupils freedom to handle resources such as pouring water on to material. Through effective discussion and carefully directed questions, pupils begin to explain the differences in their results. Teaching assistants provide very effective support. They lead parts of lessons, such as teaching the group of pupils who have more complex learning needs. They help pupils to handle musical instruments that make the sound of rain and ensure that pupils have the opportunity to investigate materials in terms of water resistance.

98. Pupils build upon their knowledge well, making excellent progress in lessons for pupils up to the age of eleven led by the co-ordinator. Exemplary planning enables pupils to follow three activities in the lesson and gain strong support from teaching assistants. Behaviour management is excellent and pupils apply themselves to tasks enthusiastically. They follow the clear instructions to relate the results of their experiment on waterproof materials to the choice of an outfit for a young person to wear. Teaching assistants, who help pupils to read books or to use the computer to link clothing to the weather, reinforce pupils' learning well. This also promotes language well, and pupils demonstrate a growing vocabulary of words to describe clothing and the weather through the carefully structured approach. Pupils build well upon their learning in humanities about recycling by sorting materials by composition, such as glass and aluminium.

99. Pupils up to the age of 14 make good progress when they learn about electric circuits. This enables them to create circuits to control a bulb. The student on initial teacher training placement receives effective support from teachers and assistants and makes a strong contribution to promoting learning. Staff provide very good examples, for instance, of how to introduce topics and ask questions to promote pupils' learning effectively. This results in pupils beginning to ask questions themselves, such as what would happen if they removed the switch from the circuit. Consequently, they deepen their knowledge as they find that the switch enabled them to control the light and save the battery.

100. The oldest pupils make very good progress, preparing for accreditation. They build upon previous work on circuits to answer questions about changing the circuit as part of a homework assignment. Pupils are beginning to develop an understanding that they can look at a diagram to decide if the circuit will work before they assemble the parts. Progress is rapid and keeps pace with the need to cover a wide range of topics in the time. Pupils are already making good progress in understanding about magnetism because of careful planning and skilful questions by staff. This is evident in the way that the teacher asks a series of questions, and finds that pupils can describe magnets but they need more help to explain the attraction to steel. This enables pupils to receive very good subsequent support to promote rapid progress. Pupils who have more complex learning needs receive very effective support to enable them to make good progress. They use senses of taste, touch, smell and sight to make judgements about differences between water and oil through effective staff support.

101. The co-ordinator provides strong leadership, ensuring that standards are far higher than at the previous inspection. This includes a good over-view of what is happening throughout the school so that there is a consistency of approach. This will lead to the monitoring of teaching and learning, following recent training to observe lessons. There are good plans for development to improve standards further, for example, by cultivating links with mainstream science provision. This will give pupils a wider experience of resources. However, the post of co-ordinator is only temporary. Pupils follow a good range of topics as they pass through the school. There is particularly good emphasis on promoting scientific enquiry and experiment. There are good links with other subjects, such as humanities, to build upon pupils' knowledge of recycling. Although there are some good examples, there is insufficient planning to use information technology to support learning.

ART AND DESIGN

102. Progress in art is good in almost all areas of the school. It is particularly good between 11 and 14, but there is some underachievement up to age seven. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

103. By the age of seven, pupils develop satisfactory art skills. They have opportunities to explore paint and texture, and they create many different pictures using several techniques. For example, they paint bubble pictures, create collage work, and experiment with colours. Progress throughout Key Stage 1 is limited however by the narrow range of activities and often by the over-use of a turn-taking approach in lessons. This sometimes means that pupils wait for a turn and lose some of their

allocated art time.

104. By the age of 11 artistic skills improve. This is because of the increased range of activities and the good quality individual support that ensures effective use of time. For example, during an observational drawing of a daffodil, pupils received good support to ensure that they closely observed the flower, learned about its components, and knew what it smelled like and felt, before they attempted to paint it. Because they had this sensory knowledge, their drawings and paintings reflected the real thing and were of good quality. Their pictures showed good understanding of texture, colour and shape.

105. By 14, pupils achieve very well. This is linked to the very good teaching that they receive. Pupils throughout Key Stage 3 show very good knowledge of the artists they have studied. They explain clearly how they have developed repeating patterns in the style of Mondrian. They are able to describe the work they have undertaken with a resident artist, and show maturity as they discuss the benefits of working with a 'real' artist. During one lesson they observed the work of the 1960's artist Bridget Riley. They were very interested in the work and were able to make some good copies in her style using black and white paint. They achieved well because of the very high quality of support that they received.

106. Pupils at 16 and Post 16 make good progress as they consolidate and improve prior skills. They study and observe paintings from different artists. They have undertaken some in-depth observations of three-dimensional sculptures at the local church and castle. They benefit from some good integration opportunities at the local college in which their art and design skills are promoted and improve. They benefit from good accreditation that provides a clear focus for their work.

107. The quality of teaching in art is good. Teachers make good use of resources and provide a broad range of activities. This keeps pupils interested and enables them to improve their skills as they move through the school. Because there is a good level of support in lessons, pupils of all abilities are able to make progress. The very good preparation and knowledge of the Key Stage 3 teacher has a significant impact on the achievements of the pupils in that Key Stage. Pupils in Key Stage 3 benefit from this good teaching and improve their critical analysis of their own work because of it. Some effective strategies are used across the school to help pupils with more challenging difficulties. Activities are used to promote hand function so that pupils improve their control of simple tools.

108. The art and design curriculum is good and ensures that activities are appropriate to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The effective leadership of the subject ensures that there is a rich variety of opportunities for all pupils. There is, however, a lack of monitoring and assessment of pupils skills. This is a weakness that the co-ordinator recognises and is aware of. The majority of classes display pupils' art work well. This is particularly evident in the older classes. Sometimes in the younger classes the display of pupils' art work is not of such a high quality and does not promote sufficient pride in the finished article.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. Pupils' achievement and progress in design and technology are good throughout the school. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. New workshop facilities have been introduced and pupils are working with a wider range of materials, but because the teacher is part-time, the workshop is currently underused. Food technology is well taught, in the main by classroom assistants, but more emphasis is required on the teaching of textiles.

110. By the time they are seven, pupils are starting to develop early design skills by making choices. For example, they chose whether to use treacle or chocolate for their crispy cakes before mixing them together in a bowl with a spoon. Good quality support allowed the pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties to participate in the lesson by assisting her to feel, taste, smell and mix the ingredients together. In another good lesson, eleven-year old pupils made and designed faces on pizzas for Red Nose Day. Good teaching gave them the opportunity to work towards independence by weighing ingredients such as flour and margarine. They greased the cooking tray and listened carefully to the demonstration about using a knife. This helped them to work with confidence when cutting and slicing tomatoes, peppers, ham and cheese. Pupils continue to develop their skills as they move through the school. By the age of 14, under careful supervision, they switch the cooker rings onto a medium heat and heat up and prepare the ingredients for couscous. In another lesson they fried and boiled potatoes. When working in the food technology room the classroom assistants ensure that the rules of hygiene are carefully observed when handling food.

111. By the age of 16, pupils are studying for the Northern Examination and Assessment Board (NEAB) examination in design and technology. They are engaged in projects to design and make money and jewel boxes. Their folders show good exploded drawings of different corner joints, cutting lists and the types of materials and finish to be used. In this lesson they marked out their work, but required assistance from the teacher to do this accurately. They applied previously learned skills well; for example, holding the timber correctly and cutting on the waste side of the line with a tenon saw. In another class, Post 16 students enjoyed their lesson making a fuse tester from acrylic and medium density fibreboard (MDF). Their folders show that they are making good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to disassembly, design and construction. They use files and saws sensibly and, under the close supervision of the teacher, solder two wires together to complete a circuit. The teacher has good skills and is able to give good demonstrations of filing, sawing and soldering. This helps the students to develop their skills and gives them confidence, knowing that he is there to assist them if they run into any difficulties.

112. Pupils enjoy design and technology. They respond well to their teachers and work co-operatively. Some are able to concentrate for long periods of time; their behaviour is good and they can be trusted to use the equipment sensibly. All staff take care to ensure that pupils wear appropriate protective clothing and are careful to observe safety guidelines when using tools.

113. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Of the seven lessons observed, it was very good in one lesson, good in five and satisfactory in the other. The best features of teaching are the planning and secure subject knowledge of the teachers and classroom assistants. Learning objectives are very clear and the modules of work are carefully structured to develop pupils' skills, and their knowledge and understanding of design. The design aspect of the work has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, insufficient thought has been given to the use of information and communication technology and the school is aware that this is an area that requires further development. There are good links with other subjects. For example, the making of chapatis and couscous in food technology supports pupils' learning about major cultures and faiths studied in religious education. The wiring of circuits for the fuse boxes uses their scientific knowledge in a practical way, and their mathematical skills are used when weighing and measuring ingredients.

114. The accommodation for food technology is unsatisfactory. There are no adjustable sinks, cookers or tables to accommodate wheelchairs. The room has no extraction facilities; the flooring is unsuitable and some of the cupboards are unsuitable for storing food.

HUMANITIES:

115. Pupils' achievement in humanities is good. They make good and occasionally very good progress in lessons throughout the school. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection.

116. The youngest pupils make good progress in learning to identify their surroundings, beginning to locate parts of the school. This is because they learn in small steps, building on their knowledge of parts of the school to increase familiarity with the plan. As pupils become older, they continue to build upon map-reading by studying the local area. Pupils succeed well because the school makes good use of the local environment to enable them to recognise features near to school, such as shops and churches. Pupils develop an understanding of time through regular opportunities to know the order of lessons on the timetable. Teachers promote a greater understanding of the passage of time through pupils' awareness of photographs of themselves and others when they were younger. Pupils have good opportunities to develop a greater knowledge of history as part of class topics. They follow the topic of clothing, for instance, studying the apparel of the 1960's at the local museum. The topic of buildings enabled pupils to make good progress developing knowledge of structures in the past, taking advantage of a visit to Kendal Castle.

117. Pupils up to the age of 14 make very good progress studying recycling through very effective teaching. Planning is exceptional to promote pupils' learning of language. The teacher uses very effective methods to encourage pupils to remember. This means that pupils can provide the teacher with important words for recycling such as 'recycle, reuse and reduce' because they remember the '3 R's'. Relationships are excellent and the teacher manages behaviour very well, enabling pupils to take turns in sharing equipment when they convert old newspapers into recycled paper. Pupils are delighted with the imaginative plan to add pressed garden flowers to the pulp to create mother's day cards.

118. Although most pupils between 14 and 16 do not receive discrete humanities lessons, they have good opportunities to learn within units of their ASDAN work for accreditation. The assignments on routes and transport in the area make a good contribution to preparing pupils for taking more responsibility for finding their way around the town. They learn more about the weather in the region when they create class friezes. This is evident in the current display of wintry conditions in the Lake District. Pupils who have complex special educational needs make the same progress as others because tasks match their needs and they receive very good support. For instance, the oldest pupils make good progress in developing responses to materials such as sand, as they create a tactile map to increase their understanding of the geography of Australia.

119. The co-ordinator has a good influence on subject development. This includes ensuring that there is consistency in planning. Although there has been appropriate training in monitoring and supporting teaching, lesson observation has not commenced to improve the monitoring of standards. The provision of teaching assistants is very good and they make a strong contribution to promoting pupils' learning. There are very good links to other subjects through the topic approach. Lessons in science promote more understanding of recycling, when pupils sort waste into different materials such as paper and aluminium at the recycling depot. This also promotes responsibility for the environment. Resources for information technology have improved but are not used enough to promote pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

120. Progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory overall across the school. However, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in lessons. Progress is limited because resources for the subject have been poor until relatively recently. The new resources are now helping to improve standards, and recent teacher training in the subject has helped teachers to gain confidence and skill. Hence pupils make satisfactory gains in learning about the skills and knowledge of information and communication technology during lessons, but they have not had sufficient time to catch up, or to use the subject to help them learn in other curriculum areas. Because of the new resources and training, provision for the subject has improved since the last inspection.

121. By the age of seven, there are too few examples of pupils using computers or other forms of communication technology during lessons. There is a current focus on learning switch control skills for the new computer systems. Pupils are able to touch or press a switch or screen to cause something to happen. They understand the effect they are having and are learning to take some control whenever they have a turn at the computer. They use listening centres with enthusiasm and work hard on the given task. However, they do not have sufficient time to practise because there is only one system for all pupils. The lack of access time limits the amount of practice that pupils have. Consequently, although they achieve appropriately at each task, progress in the subject remains unsatisfactory.

122. By the age of 11, pupils are also trying to catch up with skills that they have missed due to poor resources in the past. They are learning to make simple choices, use word processing to write their names, and practise their mouse control skills through appropriate games. Recent records

show that almost all pupils of varying abilities are now making gains in learning about the use of information and communication technology. But they rarely use computers to support learning or information gathering in other subjects and this restricts the amount of progress that they make. They work closely with adults to improve their skills. In lessons they work on an individual basis with support, and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment during their time at the computer. However, because this is too small due to lack of resources, progress remains unsatisfactory.

123. By the age of 14 a similar picture emerges. Pupils begin to develop their skills in data handling by creating simple charts. They follow instructions appropriately. A few higher attaining pupils are able to identify the difference between text and graphics and are starting to use appropriate technical vocabulary. Many pupils choose the correct option from a simple menu. Lower attaining pupils develop their switch skills through practise and through good quality support in lessons. They make good gains in learning during their time at the computer. However, they do not use computers to support learning in other subjects. Also, they have missed opportunities in the past due to lack of resources; hence their progress overall remains unsatisfactory.

124. By 16 and at Post 16, pupils also practise hard and achieve appropriately during information and technology sessions. They are learning to use switches and simple programmes that help them to learn about control and making choices. They also benefit from effective individual support that ensures each pupil receives the help that they need. They make gains in knowledge and understanding of what the computer can do. But they do not have enough opportunity to use computers on a daily basis to help them to communicate, or to support their learning in other subjects. Because of this they are not catching up fast enough and progress over time remains unsatisfactory.

125. The quality of teaching in information and communication technology is satisfactory in lessons, but unsatisfactory in its use across the curriculum. Teachers have recently received training in the use of the new systems and this has increased their knowledge, skill and understanding. Because of this they are able to teach specific skills well, and during individual sessions pupils make appropriate gains in learning. However, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the use of information technology throughout the day. This results in many systems being underused, and sometimes not used at all. This is unsatisfactory and leads to unsatisfactory progress. Also, planning for the use of computers to support learning in other subjects is weak. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to search for information, explore data handling, develop keyboard and word processing skills, or to learn about making choices. There are still too few systems in place and this leads to difficulties, with pupils waiting for turns.

126. The use of information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection. This is due to new systems, and increased teacher knowledge and confidence. Some new digital cameras are being well used to help pupils record their work, and the implementation of the 'light-room' is having a positive impact on learning, particularly for lower attaining pupils. However, expertise in the appropriate use of this room is limited. It is not always used to improve skills, and the link between 'cause and effect' is not secure. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory and there is good awareness of the weaknesses. Plans are rightly in place to further improve the amount of resources, and the quality of adult skills and knowledge.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

127. At the time of the last inspection French was a developing subject. It is now well established on the school curriculum. French is now taught at Key Stages 3 and 4, and Post 16. A new teacher/co-ordinator has been appointed, although on a temporary contact. The policy has been rewritten and the scheme of work revised. External accreditation has been introduced and this May the first pupils and students will receive their 'Certificate of Achievement' in French. Very good progress has been made.

128. Because of small numbers, Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils are taught together, and Key Stage 4 and Post 16 students are taught together. This works well. The teaching and learning in French is very good. A significant strength of the teaching is the use of the target language. From the moment the pupils enter the room, only French is spoken. Very good use is made of mime, physical clues, body language and humour to extend pupils' knowledge and use of French.

129. By the age of 14, pupils greet each other, and join in conversations about the weather. They discuss freely with the teacher and each other. They use number well for counting and money matters. They discuss their age and where they live, as well as giving the time and date. Pupils increase their literacy and numeracy skills during French lessons by listening attentively and speaking clearly when improving their accents, and by counting and the practical use of time and money.

130. Older pupils up to 16 and Post 16 students set up a class boutique. They take turns at being the 'vendeur' or 'vendeuse' or the 'client' or 'cliente'. They greet each other, ask for the garment they require, using size and colour, and say who they are shopping for, such as themselves, a brother or sister or mother or father. They skilfully use their number knowledge when counting, pricing and paying for the articles.

131. The teacher uses an innovative way of allowing the pupils to speak English if they need a word or phrase. They must ask in French, "Je voudrais le drapeau". When they hold the Union flag, they can then speak in English to clarify or ask for the words they need.

132. High quality work cards are produced by the teacher, matched to individual pupils' needs. This ensures that all pupils fully participate to the best of their ability. For example, two students on the autistic disorder spectrum, successfully join in with their peers and are making appropriate progress in French. This is attributable to the extra support they receive.

133. Pupils use their French as they move through the school during breaks and lunch times, greeting staff, peers and visitors as they go.

134. Pupils' attitudes to French, and their behaviour in lessons, are very good. They are prepared to attempt new words and phrases, building upon existing knowledge, extending their vocabulary, and practising and improving their accents, and so enhancing self-esteem and confidence. In the lesson where there are learning support assistants, their contribution is

good. They are effectively planned into lessons and are appropriately targeted at those pupils with most need. Their teamwork with teachers is very good, and they use their experience and detailed knowledge of the pupils to pre-empt situations arising, thus preventing small incidents becoming major ones. They do this very unobtrusively and enhance the quality of the lesson.

135. French makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Good staff role models add to their moral development. Pupils take turns in role play, support and encourage each other, and are quick to celebrate each other's successes, which enhances their social development, and pupils discuss and compare French and English customs and traditions.

MUSIC

136. Progress in music is very good across the school and pupils in all classes achieve very well in lessons. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

137. By the age of seven, pupils show good awareness of different sounds. They listen, watch and copy adults well as they try hard to join in with all aspects of music making. They benefit from some very well planned activities that are appropriate to their age and ability. For example, they enjoy hiding under a Sari as they listen to music from different cultures. They improve their interactive music skills as they work closely together. They ask for 'more' during multi-sensory music activities in which they reach out to choose, touch and play simple un-tuned percussion instruments. They develop their musical abilities very well as they practise hard and improve their singing and playing skills.

138. Pupils, by the age of 11 make good progress in music and achieve very well in lessons. The highest attaining pupils are able to hum, and clap in time to the music that they hear. All pupils try hard to succeed. They sing songs with enthusiasm. They develop their playing skills well through good, structured activities in which they play percussion instruments to different beats. They keep in time very well. The vast majority stop and start on cue, and improve their performance by hard work and practice. They are beginning to compose simple tunes to fit in with a class composition and many show good awareness of rhythm and develop their independence skills well through their music.

139. By the age of 14, pupils make very good progress and also achieve very well in lessons. They benefit from some good activities that guide them through a range of musical tasks to improve their skills. They enjoy some very good musical experiences, and these help to improve their abilities. For example, in one lesson pupils practised hard. This helped them to achieve high quality singing in a 'round'. They showed awareness of inaccuracies in the singing and worked well together to achieve the end result. They show great pride in their music. They compose sounds as they tell the story of 'Treasure Island' in music. Full inclusion for pupils of all ability is ensured by the use of resources appropriate to all ability ranges. This ensures that all pupils, including those with more complex needs and those with additional special needs, are able to influence the finished production.

140. By 16 and at Post 16, pupils and students work hard to consolidate and improve on prior learning and also achieve very well. They listen very well to multi-cultural sounds such as African drum music. This promotes excitement and pupils use their own drums accurately to keep time with the music that they hear. Clear records show that very good progress is made over time. High quality support in lessons helps to improve pupils' skills. They quickly learn new tasks. They show good awareness of changes in speed, pulse and rhythm, and tap their hands and feet to different types of sound.

141. The quality of teaching and learning in music is very good. The music teacher is very experienced and plans lessons very well to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met. There is a good team approach in lessons that ensures effective support for pupils of all abilities. Because lessons are well organised, the best possible use of time is made. The very good range of resources that are used helps to promote interest and skill. Pupils enjoy music because of the very positive relationships and because they have fun. Pupils in the older classes wanted lessons to continue longer. They were disappointed when the lessons ended. Pupils are encouraged to practise and develop their skills in singing and playing so that they produce the best possible performance. They work hard because they want to succeed.

142. The good music curriculum fosters a broad and balanced range of experiences for all pupils. Some very good music therapy is also available, although procedures for assessing pupils' needs and abilities have not been established. Older pupils benefit from a good accredited course. All pupils in the school have the opportunity to hear live music frequently. They also undertake performances such as those at the local music festival. Because of the wealth of musical experiences offered at the school, the subject has a high profile. This helps to develop the social and cultural awareness of all pupils. Effective leadership promotes the subject and helps to keep achievements high.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. Throughout the school, pupils of all ages, students at Post 16, and at all levels of attainment make good progress in their physical education. Pupils and students make very good progress in swimming. Parental involvement in swimming enhances the progress pupils and students make. The high quality of planning and teaching, which challenges pupils, coupled with their very positive attitudes, promotes the effective development of physical educational. This shows good improvement since the last inspection.

144. By the age of seven, lower attaining pupils make good progress during their movement (linked with physiotherapy) sessions in their positioning, stretching, standing and moving. Staff communicate well with pupils, enhancing their listening skills and where possible improving their signing, or speech. The care taken when pupils are being handled, moved or positioned is of the highest quality. In their swimming sessions, pupils make very good progress in building up their water confidence, moving through the water, some with help, others almost independently. One particular pupil, whose learning difficulties are on the autistic disorder spectrum, made very good progress moving from the class room situation to

the hydro therapy pool to change for swimming. This was a big step forward for this pupil to move environments, change and enter the water. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress in their swimming. Pupils wear armbands, make independent entry into the pool, walk and propel themselves across the pool, some developing strokes. They increase their water confidence by playing games in the pool, passing and receiving balls. Part of the teaching strategy is to allow pupils to choose aids from the poolside to play with in the water.

145. By the age of 11, pupils warm up before exercise. The most able are aware of the effect that exercise has on their bodies. They can jump from a box and complete a forward roll on the mat. Pupils in the autistic disorder spectrum, complete a circuit of apparatus, with support, after having observed what is required of them. They are included well into physical education lessons and are able to join in with their peers and wait their turns patiently.

146. By the age of 14, pupils work hard on their mobility. They understand the need for personal fitness, agility, co-ordination, strength and stamina. They work hard individually, in pairs and small groups, in movement and small ball games. Swimming takes place at the local sports centre. All pupils from 11 to 19 go together as a mixed group. The organisation is impressive as lower attainers and those with additional learning difficulties are taught individually, middle ability are taught in small groups, and the highest attainers are taught to increase their swimming strokes and distance.

147. By the age of 16, pupils fully understand the need for exercise and are keen to participate. They increase their movement, mobility and personal fitness. They take part in small games and try to increase their personal targets in physical education. They successfully participate in swimming as a mixed group with pupils from age 11. This enhances their social and personal skills as they take responsibility for younger friends or those less able than themselves.

148. Ten lessons were seen during the inspection. Five lessons were good and five were very good, indicating the high quality of physical education in the school. Lessons are well planned and organised so no time is wasted. Pace is brisk and pupils challenged. Very good staff teamwork promotes effective learning and high standards, and ensures that all pupils participate to the best of their ability. Lessons are presented enthusiastically and all staff have high expectations of all pupils. Good use is made of photographs, certificates and other visual records to help pupils and students fully celebrate their physical and sporting successes.

149. The subject is well managed and co-ordinated. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is greatly enriched by activities outside the school, such as the local sports centre and swimming pool and the use of an LEA outdoor pursuits centre. Storage space has been improved, but the small hall restricts activities, particularly for older, bigger pupils and students, and could be dangerous if not strictly supervised by staff. All pupils and students change for physical activities, but there are no proper changing rooms for physical education and this is unsatisfactory. Learning resources have improved and are now satisfactory to meet the demands of the curriculum. However some lessons in the hall are disrupted because of the many interruptions caused by the number of people passing through the hall.

150. Pupils' achievements are appropriately reported to parents through school reports. Physical education makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

151. Religious education has made good improvement since the appointment of a temporary co-ordinator. She has produced a new development plan and revised the policy and the schemes of work. This has had a positive impact on teaching and the achievement of pupils.

152. The broad content of religious education (RE) is taken from the Cumbria Agreed Syllabus and is adapted to meet the needs of the pupils within the school. RE is taught as an integral part of topic and literacy sessions with Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils. It is taught as a separate subject to Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 pupils and to Post 16 students.

153. Pupils' achievement and progress are good at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and at Post 16, and are satisfactory at Key Stage 1. Key Stage 2 pupils can explain their feelings about day and night; one pupil said 'I feel happy when the light appears after darkness.' They can understand that Jesus is called the 'light of the world' by the Christian world. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post 16 are studying the Jewish festival of the Passover. As a predominantly Post 16 group of students with PMLD share a Jewish Passover meal, they experience the tastes and smells, explore a variety of religious artefacts while listening to a wide range of Jewish music.

154. Planning for the curriculum shows that it is broad and balanced and that due attention is paid to world religions. Pupils visit the local church and a religious group called 'Breakthrough' deliver an assembly at least every term. Pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 have studied different clothes for different faiths and they have dressed up and role-played Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Buddhists. Their illustrated written work about their experiences is attractively displayed in school.

155. Teaching overall is very good with a range from good to excellent. Teachers and support staff understand their pupils' needs and also have a very good understanding of the subject, which enables them to teach accordingly. They have very high expectations both for work and behaviour and teach pupils respect for other customs. There was a very strong cross-curricular approach in RE during a food technology lesson. Key Stage 3 pupils prepared a meal of Jewish couscous to be eaten at the Seder meal for Pesach (Passover). During the Key Stage 3 RE lesson, pupils role played the tradition of the youngest member of the group finding the special bread which is hidden away.

156. There has been a great improvement in the resources since the last inspection. They are now very good, with religious artefacts from the six main world religions represented for pupils and students to see and handle.

157. Religious education contributes strongly to the moral, social and cultural development within the school. However, it is less strong spiritually. The co-ordinator is aware that this needs to be addressed.