

INSPECTION REPORT

THE RIDGEWAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Farnham

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125471

Headteacher: Maureen Hattey

Reporting inspector: Linda C Rhead
11624

Dates of inspection: 28th January – 1st February 2002

Inspection number: 197305

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
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	14 Frensham Road Farnham Surrey
Postcode:	GU9 8HB
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Cyril Trust
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

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9219	Anne Ferguson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
12261	Eugenie Adams	Team inspector	English	How well pupils are taught
17171	Mary Last	Team inspector	Art Music French Foundation Stage	
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	History Physical education Religious education Equal opportunities	
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Science Design and technology	
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Special educational needs	How good the curricular opportunities are

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Ridgeway Community School is a special school catering for pupils aged two to nineteen, who have severe learning difficulties. There are 82 pupils on roll, of whom a comparatively high proportion have profound and multiple difficulties. The school is increasingly catering for pupils who, in addition to their learning difficulties, also have an autistic spectrum disorder. Only 6 per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none is at an early stage of acquiring English. Just over 10 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. All pupils have very low attainments on entry to the school. The school has recently opened an inclusive nursery, based in a local primary school, and a further education base in the local sixth form college.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Ridgeway School is an improving school with many strengths. It has improved significantly since the inspection carried out in 1997 and has maintained the good progress since the HMI inspection in 1998. The school has just moved into new, purpose built accommodation. Teaching and learning are good and the head, staff and governors have a clear vision for the future. Behaviour is very good. The school is now ready to put all its energies into making the best use of the specialist facilities and developing the curriculum. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and relationships throughout the school are very good.
- The inclusive provision for nursery pupils and students over 16 is good and the school has good relationships with the nursery and further education college where these are sited.
- Provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The new accommodation and the opportunities it provides for learning are very good.
- Financial management is exemplary.

What could be improved

- Monitoring of teaching and learning and the curriculum and the regular reporting by staff with management responsibilities.
- Procedures for assessment and the use of assessment to inform planning, so that pupils' progress can be clearly seen.
- The provision of appropriate activities and full involvement in lessons of all groups of pupils, particularly those with autism and some with physical disabilities.

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

The strengths of the school outweigh the weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The inspection in March 1997 indicated that the school was likely to fail to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. That is no longer the case, as confirmed in the HMI inspection of 1998. The school has improved in many aspects. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. Leadership and management have improved and are now satisfactory, with some good features. Improved provision is being made in mainstream settings for nursery pupils and further education students. The direction in which the school is developing has been clearly articulated in the school mission statement, aims and vision. The new school building has a good range of high quality specialist facilities. Morale is high and the school is poised to continue to improve.

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 very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
Speaking and listening	B	C	B	A	
Reading	B	C	B	A	
Writing	B	C	B	A	
Mathematics	B	C	B	A	
Personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

School targets are based on the national performance levels for pupils with learning difficulties. Targets set are specific, measurable and achievable and pupils make good progress against their individual targets, except for a small number of pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2. Individual targets are set in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, physical skills and behaviour. The youngest pupils are given a very good start in the inclusive nursery and make good progress. The progress made in preparation for students leaving school is very good and a strength of the school. Pupils do particularly well in the creative arts, swimming and personal development. Progress in history, geography and information and communication technology is unsatisfactory because too little time is given to these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like coming to school. They are happy there and have very good attitudes to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and on outings.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst pupils and staff are very good and pupils are considerate and kind to each other. Pupils respond well to opportunities for responsibility such as serving in the coffee bar, taking registers and clearing up in lessons.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. It was higher in the last year than during the previous inspection. There is a very low level of unauthorised absence.

The school is very successful in promoting pupils' well being and supporting their personal development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	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 in English, mathematics, science, physical education and in personal, social and health education are good. A very high proportion of the teaching seen was very good. Teachers know their pupils very well and plan carefully to meet the pupils' very special needs. Teaching in the Foundation Stage and for students in further education was good. Literacy and numeracy are well taught, helped by the structure of the national strategies. Teaching in information and communication technology is often good, but there are inconsistencies in the time provided to teach it and some teachers are less confident and need further training to teach the subject well. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all the lessons seen, with teaching in three out of four lessons good and in one out of four, very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, with an emphasis on creative and performing arts, and on personal development. The further education curriculum prepares students well for life after school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Some opportunities are lost to promote spiritual development in the school's assemblies. Provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is good, with particularly good examples in the creative arts. Provision for social education is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teaching, support staff and on-site health professionals know pupils very well, treat each as an individual and take good care of them. The nursery based in Pilgrim's Way school, and the Ridgeway unit in Farnham college give pupils very good opportunities for inclusion in mainstream activities. The school provides a safe and secure environment which, although still a little unfamiliar to pupils, is giving them the opportunities to develop the confidence to learn.

The majority of parents value the close contact they have with the school, the communication using the home-school books and the response they get when they approach the school for any reason. The school provides rich opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence in drama and musical performance. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the whole school community well in establishing a clear direction for the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is effective in carrying out its responsibilities and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not monitor teaching and learning or the curriculum rigorously enough.
The strategic use of resources	The school is very successful in planning for, developing and making use of appropriate resources.

The school staff are well matched to the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. The purpose built nursery accommodation at a local primary school, the recently completed school building and the further education base in the local college provide very good accommodation and specialist facilities. Learning resources are adequate but there are still too few artefacts to support history and religious education.

The school has a clear sense of direction and staff work together well. However, the lack of monitoring has meant that weaknesses in the curriculum have not been identified and addressed. The school has a good understanding and applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A happy, caring environment with strong emphasis on addressing the needs of individual pupils. • The new school buildings. • Recognition of pupils' achievements through the use of certificates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of playground space and time spent on physical activities. • More time spent on reading, writing and numeracy. • Consistency in the amount of homework provided. • Provision for children with autism. • Outside activities and holiday provision for younger children. • Provision of parent support groups. • Safety for pupils walking down the school drive.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made about the school. The team did not find evidence to support those areas parents would like to see improved, with the following exceptions. The school's homework policy is comparatively new and is not yet being consistently applied. Provision for pupils with autism, whilst improving, does not yet ensure that these pupils get full access to all areas of the curriculum. Safe provision should be made for pedestrians walking down the school drive.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' achievements have improved since the last inspection in most areas of the curriculum. The greatest improvements have been in English and information and communication technology. History and geography show too little improvement.
2. The successful adaptation of the national literacy strategy has led to well structured lessons in which pupils achieve highly in English, particularly in reading. At every level in the school, pupils enjoy books. They are given good support with symbols, both for reading and writing, where this is appropriate. High expectations lead to pupils showing interest and understanding of classical literature. Careful observation by all the staff for pupils with profound and complex difficulties has led to the production of 'communication passports', which provide a detailed and respectful analysis of all the pupil's preferences and favoured responses. These books can be used by staff in school and by those caring for the pupils at home to give consistency and to maximise the pupil's chance of communicating effectively.
3. The national numeracy strategy has provided a structure which has supported improvements in the teaching of mathematics and led to pupils making good progress and achieving higher standards than at the time of the last inspection. Small steps in progress are now being measured with greater accuracy in mathematics, with the application of national performance levels, leading to national curriculum levels of achievement.
4. Achievements in science have improved, particularly in the area of investigation, which was weak at the time of the last inspection. Pupils make good progress because teachers have better knowledge of science and they provide interesting lessons which capture pupils' attention.
5. Improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) has been good since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well in most parts of the school, with the exception of Key Stage 1, where pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to ICT and achievements are unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievements in Key Stage 4 are good. Increasing use of the new ICT suite and the gradual acquisition of a wider range of switches is providing pupils with better access to the available technology.
6. Good standards have been maintained in physical education but there has been significant improvement in standards in swimming. The least improvement has been made in history and geography. In these subjects, too little guidance is given to teachers, with decisions on what to teach and how much time to spend on the subjects left to individual teachers. This has led to inconsistent provision in the subjects and records which are not detailed enough to show what pupils have achieved over time. Work has started on the analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils but this has yet to be acted upon.
7. Great improvements in provision in the inclusive nursery have resulted in pupils making very good progress in language, communication, physical and personal development. Pupils are making consistently good progress in all other areas of learning. The very good management of the nursery enables the pupils with learning difficulties to benefit from working with their mainstream peers.
8. Standards for students at the further education base in the local college have improved significantly. The transition from Key Stage 4 is well managed and students have made good use of opportunities to follow accredited courses, based on good, practical learning opportunities which are preparing them well for life beyond school.

9. In most lessons where pupils achieve highly, it is linked to teachers taking care to match the planning to individual pupil's needs. This is essential given the wide range of needs in each class. This leads to good progress being made for pupils with profound and complex needs, because learning outcomes are specified for each pupil. However, in a small number of lessons, pupils with physical disabilities and pupils with autism were not adequately catered for, leading to unsatisfactory progress being made by these pupils. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls or of any other groups than those identified here.
10. In almost all cases, pupils make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. Targets are specific and measurable, but not always dated. Occasionally, the continuity from the pupil's statement of special educational needs, through long term targets set at annual reviews to the short term targets in individual education and lesson plans, is not clear and the progress the pupil has made is not clearly identified and recorded. Whole school targets are challenging and have not been entirely met. The accuracy of target setting has been impaired by variations in teachers' application of national assessments, so that the progress pupils have made appears to be erratic. The school has identified this and is addressing it.
11. Overall, pupils' achievements are good and effective steps are being taken to continue to improve and allow each pupil to make as much progress as they can.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The attitudes, values and personal development of pupils are strengths as they were at the time of the last inspection. Parents consider that pupils like coming to school and are happy there. This was confirmed during the inspection where pupils' attitudes to work were very good, for example, in a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson where pupils with minimal movement showed interest and pleasure by the keen tracking of their eyes and facial expressions as they eagerly anticipated the arrival of a ball being pushed towards them.
13. Pupils respond well to opportunities for responsibility such as serving in the coffee bar, taking registers to the office and clearing up in lessons. Good self and peer evaluation of progress was seen in a Key Stage 3 'Targets' session where pupils were considering whether they were on track to meet the week's target. In the nursery, pupils respond enthusiastically to the learning opportunities provided and to other pupils in the mainstream setting. Those attending the college have the confidence to integrate well into social activities, such as the dance, are represented on the Student Council and are valued members of the Leisure and Recreation course, with whom they will be going on a residential journey.
14. The good behaviour in lessons, around the school and on outings, described by parents, was seen throughout the week of inspection. For example, in a Key Stage 2 food technology lesson, all pupils, including one on a behaviour programme, behaved well and waited patiently for their turns to use the blender, despite the temptations of grated chocolate and cocoa powder spread out before them. There has been one temporary and one permanent exclusion of a pupil in each of the current and previous school years.
15. Relationships amongst pupils and staff are very good and pupils are considerate and kind to each other. For example, a Key Stage 4 pupil in the coffee bar who spontaneously and politely introduced himself to me and later introduced his two friends to another adult. Bullying has not been an issue within the school or at the college.
16. Attendance is satisfactory. It was higher in the last year than during the previous inspection. The majority of authorised absences relate to illness or medical treatment or occasional family holidays. There is a very low level of unauthorised absence due, for example, to parents agreeing holidays in term time with their child's residential home without seeking permission from the school. During inspection week, attendance was lower than usual due to illness.

17. Most pupils travel to school on transport arranged by the Local Education Authority. This generally arrives punctually at the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection in line with teachers' improved command of their subject and improvements in the level and quality of learning resources. It was satisfactory or better in all of the lessons and was good or very good in three out of four lessons. At Key Stage 1 teaching is good. It is always at least satisfactory at Key Stage 2 with half of the lessons being good or very good. Teaching is nearly always good at Key Stage 3 and it is very good at Key Stage 4. Little teaching was observed at Post 16 as one of the teachers was leading a party of pupils on a skiing trip. Of the small number of lessons seen, all were good with detailed planning to take account of pupils' individual learning needs.
19. In the best lessons, teachers plan and prepare lessons with care to ensure that pupils' individual learning needs are met and they make progressive gains in their skills and knowledge. Lessons are lively and encourage fun in learning. Teachers use a range of activities and resources to engage the pupils, the pace of lessons is brisk and pupils make very good progress. When teachers share learning objectives with learning support staff and provide them with guidance, they make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning process. Teachers are generally careful to use language levels appropriate to the level of the pupils' understanding supported by non-verbal prompts and symbols to aid communication. Where this does not happen pupils make more limited progress and pupils with autism are unable to attend and understand what the teacher wants them to do.
20. In a small number of otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers were not clear about what they wanted pupils to learn and chose unsatisfactory activities in which some pupils could not participate. Where pupils' responses were not carefully assessed, pupils made slower progress.
21. Overall the quality of teaching in English is good. Teachers have gained greater confidence in methods of teaching reading, speaking and listening skills brought about by the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do has been raised significantly. The school has identified that they now need to develop pupils' writing skills. The teaching of mathematics is good. The impact of the National Numeracy Strategy has provided structure to the teaching of mathematics and widened the range of mathematical skills taught. Teachers' improved confidence and use of a wider range of resources has resulted in improvements in the teaching of mathematics.
22. In science and design and technology the teaching is good with careful planning and preparation and good management of pupils' behaviour. In science, learning tasks facilitate pupils' use of observation and promote their ability to apply their scientific knowledge. In design and technology, careful attention is paid to the individual learning needs of pupils. The use of communication aids and effective deployment of staff enable teachers to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress. Teachers make good use of information technology to enhance pupils' learning and promote independent access to the curriculum. Pupils are taught to use information technology in most lessons for writing simple sentences using a symbols programme. Teachers make particularly good use of switches in food technology. In music, pupils are taught to use electronic keyboards and an electronic drum kit, enhancing their enjoyment and achievements.
23. The teaching in history and religious education is satisfactory and good use is made of pupils' literacy and communication skills to support their oral work and promote their understanding. Sometimes the approaches teachers use are not suitable for all the pupils and this results in a slowing of the pace of the lesson. The quality of teaching in geography is good, although only a small number of lessons was seen. Teaching in personal, social and health education is good. Pupils are helped to develop increasing independence as they move through the school. The teaching in art ranges from very good to satisfactory. The new art facilities greatly enhance the range of learning opportunities that teachers plan for pupils, but limitations in some teachers' subject knowledge limits the progress pupils make in those lessons. Teaching is good in physical

education with very good use made of demonstration and modelling tasks to help pupils improve their performance. The teaching of swimming is very good and leads to pupils acquiring very good skills. The teaching in music and performing arts is a strength of the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and a good grasp of the subject that is used to elicit excellent responses from the pupils. Lessons are fun, challenging and make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and self-esteem.

24. Teachers generally use the targets in pupils' individual education plans when planning lessons and a careful record is made of the progress made. Where teachers use assessment information effectively to plan the next step in learning for each subject, there is a positive impact on the progress pupils' make. However, teachers do not always assess the progress pupils have made in lessons. Records of pupils' progress are not consistent.
25. Considerable improvements have been made to the accommodation and learning resources since the last inspection. This has had a beneficial effect on the learning opportunities teachers are providing for pupils and has significantly contributed to the rise in the standards across the school. Good use is made of resources within the community to enhance the richness of learning, particularly for many pupils at post 16 who use the local college and work places in Farnham to develop skills in preparation for adult life.

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

26. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is a good emphasis on creative and performing arts and on personal development and sex and drugs education and careers are included.
27. Although older students with profound and multiple difficulties do not have access to the further education provision at the college, they receive a curriculum appropriate for their needs.
28. The youngest children in the nursery and reception classes get a very good foundation in language and numeracy, learning about the world and how to work and play alongside others.
29. The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils from Year 1 to Year 9. Pupils have lessons in English, mathematics, science, geography or history at any one time, religious education, music, design and technology, art and design and physical education. Some classes have drama. For some classes, separate lessons on computers are provided; for others it is included within other subjects, as happens with personal, social and health education.
30. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. They study citizenship, in addition to the subjects studied in Year 9 and more emphasis is placed on their working independently. They run the senior school coffee bar as a mini-enterprise as part of their timetable. They have a separate personal, social and health education lesson. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 leads to the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge' accreditation, providing good links with further education.
31. A weakness in the curriculum provision is the result of insufficient guidance being given to teachers on how much time should be allocated for each subject. Timetables do not follow a consistent pattern. In some classes, science, information and communication technology, geography and history have insufficient time to enable good progress to be made. During the inspection, lessons did not always follow the published timetable; some were inserted and others deleted. The headteacher monitors lessons but not all subject leaders are monitoring the curriculum or teaching in their subject.
32. The curriculum covers pupils' social development very well. While there are no personal, social and health education lessons before Year 7, social education is implicit in much of what the school does. Provision for pupils' moral development is good, partly through the good example given by adults and, where necessary, through individual behaviour programmes. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good with a range of activities focused on the arts, both in and out

of school. The diversity of cultures are represented in the curriculum to a limited degree, for example in work on religions around the world, and in numeracy in Years 3 and 4 using African jewellery to study pattern. The short amount of time spent on geography limits some pupils' knowledge of the wider world. The school promotes spiritual development satisfactorily. Assemblies take place but have little spiritual content and opportunities are missed to plan activities in which pupils will experience awe or wonder.

33. The curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. The pupils experience a wide range of subjects interwoven with a range of therapies. Younger pupils have literacy, numeracy, science, music, humanities, art, religious education, personal, social and health education, as well as swimming, and movement/dance. The older pupils also learn about the world of work including visits outside school. The curriculum is geared to providing multi-sensory experiences and responses and progress are recorded well. Communication using objects, symbols and signing to supplement language allows pupils to have an enriching experience. Some pupils benefit from spending part of the day with classes of a similar age in the main school.
34. Students in the further education unit, based in the local college, have a very good curriculum leading to the ASDAN award 'Towards Independence'. The introduction of these courses is a significant improvement since the last inspection, providing a range of skills and experiences that are a very good preparation for the next stage of their lives. The focus is on independent life skills, basic numeracy and literacy and work experience in a range of settings.
35. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities despite the constraints of transport at the end of the day. There have been visits to theatre and dance events, to watch and to take part. Older pupils visit local shops as part of learning about the world of work. Pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, have the chance to take part in residential and adventure trips, to ski or abseil. There are well-attended lunchtime clubs for French, computers and drama for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Visitors come into school, for example to talk about their jobs, or to put on a performance. All these opportunities add richness to the curriculum.
36. Therapy is well integrated into the school curriculum, although some pupils miss their only lesson in a subject because of the timing of therapy. The school works well with a range of health professionals.
37. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection in that it now meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for the youngest in the inclusive nursery and the oldest in the age appropriate setting of the college, is very much improved.
38. Provision for equal opportunities is unsatisfactory. Not enough effort has been made to ensure that all pupils have equality of access to the range of opportunities on offer to others of the same age. For example, in classes where there is a very wide age-range across three key stages, content is inappropriate in some lessons for all pupils to access. Pupils with a physical disability are unable to join in some activities, particularly in physical education, having to watch while others play. Pupils with autism are not able to join in all the activities, because their needs are not fully understood and activities do not always match their learning needs. Many examples of good inclusion were observed during the inspection, but, overall, equality of opportunity is weak.
39. The school has good links with the community in many aspects, through participation in art, dance and drama and sports, through collaboration with other educational institutions and with a variety of charities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. Personal support and guidance for pupils are very good. Child protection procedures are good. The school continues to care well for its pupils, as it did at the time of the last inspection. Teaching, support staff and on-site health professionals know pupils very well, treat them as individuals and take good care of them. The school provides a safe and secure environment which,

although still a little unfamiliar to pupils, is giving them the opportunities to develop the confidence to learn.

41. The school staff and governors have a good awareness of both health and safety and child protection issues and appropriate policies, procedures and training are in place. Regular fire practices and risk assessments are undertaken.
42. There are very good links with health and social services agencies, especially with the team of health professionals located in the school. The school nurse is constantly on hand and visits classes each morning, to check on pupils' medical condition when they arrive for the day. There are well-managed links between therapists and learning support staff who may carry out therapist-planned programmes of exercises with pupils or are involved in feeding them. Good links are maintained with carers of 'looked after' children, including the Heads of Care of the nursing homes in which some pupils live.
43. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development continue to be good. There are adequate procedures currently in place for monitoring and promoting good, and eliminating oppressive, behaviour, including some well implemented individual behaviour management plans. Correct procedures are followed with respect to exclusions. However, there is inconsistency between classes in the use of targets and rewards which could lead to confusion for some pupils. Comprehensive work is currently underway to review the behaviour policy, taking into account current good practice and the particular needs of different groups of pupils such as those with autism or Down's syndrome. It is hoped for the new code to be in place by the summer term.
44. Since the last inspection report, the assessment policy has been reviewed and a more formal approach to subject assessment has been undertaken by the school, with the use of performance scales in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education to measure attainment and set targets. The school collaborates with Durham University on a national project using these scales, allowing pupils' performance to be compared with that of similar schools. Whereas assessment of pupils' progress and its use in planning was considered to be good in the last inspection report, it is currently unsatisfactory because in several subjects there are no procedures in place and in others, such as science, there is still a need for staff to agree exactly what each level means. Mathematics is the area of best practice, the same methods are in use across the school and a start has been made on agreeing achievement levels with staff attending in-service training with staff of similar schools. At present, the school recognises that the levels are interpreted differently, so that some pupils appear to lose skills, rather than make progress.
45. Individual education plans (IEPs) are detailed and draw on the joint assessment of teachers and other professional staff such as therapists. Targets are clear and monitored on a daily basis but there are lapses in the failure to identify where targets from previous annual reviews have not been achieved. Although targets are measurable and specific they are not always dated, making a review of progress difficult to assess.
46. There are sound measures in place to record, monitor and report attendance and registers are generally completed correctly and returned to the office by 9.30, usually taken by a pupil. However, as in the last inspection, lateness is not consistently marked due to a rather loose approach to when registers are completed. The school has a good knowledge of pupils' home circumstances and reasons for individual absences and have easy access to the Educational Welfare Service if required.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. As in the last inspection, partnership with parents is good and thus supportive of pupils' learning. Parent governors chair two of the key governors' committees.
48. Parents continue to have a very high opinion of the school. They particularly value the happy, caring environment with its strong emphasis on addressing the needs of individual pupils and recognising pupils' achievements at whatever level, exemplified by the good progress and gain in

social confidence of a pupil with very severe learning difficulties who was presented with a number of certificates in the previous end-of-year assembly.

49. Building work curtailed many activities, such as the programme of curriculum evenings and attendance at fund raising events, because of the difficulties of having the school rebuilt on the same site and the constant moving that this entailed. Now that the building is almost complete, the school will be able to reinstate these activities. The 2001 Victorian-themed Christmas fair, organised by the Friends of Ridgeway, was one of the most successful ever. Funds raised are used, for example, in the purchase of brass instruments, enabling pupils to practise at home and school.
50. Home-school contact books, referred to in the last inspection report, are still well maintained by the school and appreciated by parents as a means of keeping in touch about everything from activities undertaken at home or school to reports of minor illnesses or incidents. These help staff to know quickly of issues which may affect the behaviour of pupils in lessons. Parental concerns, where raised, are addressed efficiently. Some parents also praised the support they had received from the school in carrying out work at home to complement schoolwork. However, inconsistencies still remain in the application of the school's homework policy.
51. Parents consider that they get good information about their children's progress from teachers and other agencies involved in their children's care, such as therapists. Pupils' reports and Annual Review reports show clear knowledge of pupils by staff and provide detailed descriptions of what pupils are achieving across all subjects and in therapy sessions. Some parents are confused about how to interpret performance levels, in the school statistics provided for parents, which are sent out without an accompanying explanation. However, written information about the levels is being provided prior to individual Annual Reviews and explained at these sessions, which are well attended by parents. The school brochure and the Governors' Annual Report are missing some minor items which the school is required to provide.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when leadership and management were poor. The headteacher provides good leadership, but some key staff do not carry out their role in monitoring teaching and learning and the curriculum across the school.
53. The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school by involving the whole school community, including governors, in determining the school's mission statement, aims and visions. These are clearly articulated and underpin the school's three-year improvement plan. The priorities for development outlined in the plan are appropriate. The plan is costed, responsibilities allocated and timescales set. The school's targets are based on the national performance scale, designed for pupils with learning difficulties. The targets set in the last year were challenging and have not been entirely met. Further training will ensure that assessments are applied objectively and that teachers fully appreciate the interface between the performance scales and the national curriculum assessment levels.
54. Monitoring by the headteacher has identified that pupils with physical impairments and those with autistic spectrum disorders do not have full access to learning opportunities in all lessons. This is being addressed in the school's improvement plan. Delegation to and the contribution made by other staff with management responsibilities are unsatisfactory. Although responsibilities have been outlined, staff have not consistently fulfilled their responsibilities, resulting in inconsistent practice in monitoring and assessment. Because of unsatisfactory monitoring, weaknesses in curriculum coverage and co-ordination have not been identified and addressed. Although the overall quality of teaching is good, the school's monitoring is not sufficiently developed to identify inconsistencies in teaching. The school has recently established a wider leadership group so that all areas of the school are represented. This wider group has the capacity to improve the effectiveness of delegation and ensure that all staff fulfil their responsibilities, particularly those for monitoring the curriculum, teaching and assessment. There is a strong commitment in the school

to improve. This is shown in the strong improvement since the last inspection and the enormous efforts made by the whole school in dealing with the problems presented by the rebuilding of the school and the determination to continue to provide well for the pupils despite the difficulties.

55. The governing body is effective in carrying out its responsibilities and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is a great improvement since the last inspection. The governors seek advice on fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, but are not always provided with accurate information, so that some statutory requirements are omitted from key documents, for example, the Annual Report to Parents. The headteacher and chair of governors work closely together and governors are involved in all aspects of the work of the school. For example, some governors joined staff in looking at the national performance scales. Governors are represented on each of the working groups taking forward the school's six 'visions'. Through these working groups, the school's aims and values are disseminated to others, so that they are reflected in the work of the school. Clear communication of the work of these groups will allow all elements within the school community, including parents, to understand and contribute to the development of the school.
56. The school's strategy for performance management is effective. All teachers have had their objectives set for the current year. Appraisal for support staff is also in place. Induction for new staff is good. A very useful induction pack has been introduced since the last inspection, with staff having a 'buddy' allocated, in addition to their line manager. The school has satisfactory arrangements for staff training. However, training is not yet linked closely enough to the priorities in the school improvement plan.
57. The school's business manager provides excellent information and support to the school and the governors. Financial management and control are exemplary and action has been taken, by the school and governors, to ensure that financial planning is very closely linked to the school improvement plan priorities and curriculum requirements. The school uses grants efficiently for the purpose intended and is diligent in seeking additional funding wherever possible. The school is aware of the principles of best value and applies them effectively in securing resources and services.
58. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the pupils throughout the school. Teachers have sufficient knowledge of their subjects to provide a good range of activities, which enable pupils to move through the pathways planned for them in the school's schemes of work. The co-ordinators of English, mathematics and science hold specific qualifications in these subjects. Some other subject coordinators, although not so trained, have a good level of knowledge in their subjects which enables them to advise other staff and to manage the day-to-day organisation of their subjects effectively, for example in art. Overall, the expertise of the co-ordinators is a strength and helps staff to improve their understanding and coverage of topics within the schemes of work. This is an improvement since the 1997 inspection.
59. Despite these strengths, many subject co-ordinators are newly delegated to their responsibilities and are not clear about the wider role of monitoring effectiveness of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Assessment is not consistently monitored so that pupils' records include more details of experience than achievements which can be measured or quantified.
60. The work of the classroom assistants is a strength in those lessons where they are deployed well and understand precisely how to support the pupils. In these lessons, the support staff use their initiative and interact well with pupils. However, in some lessons support assistants' time is not well used, for example, when they sit with the pupils as part of a listening group without intervening appropriately. Some do not use their initiative to engage the pupils in appropriate conversation. Some teachers do not consistently brief their assistants ahead of time so that they are prepared for the support work needed. Several support staff have received or are currently undertaking specialist training.
61. The school's newly built accommodation, including the purpose-built inclusive nursery and further education base, is very good and represents a significant improvement on the previous inspection.

The school now has specialist accommodation for science, art, information and communication technology and food technology, together with a light room and soft play room. These provide very good facilities for the delivery of the whole curriculum, relevant to pupils' needs.

62. Not enough improvement has been made in developing the school's resources for learning since the previous inspection. Overall, resources are adequate, although there are some significant deficiencies. This is partially linked to the re-organisation that has recently taken place at the school, but in some subjects, there has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection, particularly within humanities. The best resources are seen in information and communication technology and in food technology, where they are good. Very good use is made of different information and communication technology packages to support many other subjects, such as English or mathematics. There is also a good range of resources for physical education, art and music and these are helping to raise standards across the school. Resources for the study of English, mathematics and science are satisfactory and good use is made of those available. The range of reading materials has improved significantly since the previous inspection. However, there are insufficient resources to teach the content of history, geography and religious education. There are too few artefacts to promote greater understanding in these areas of learning or to develop pupils' skills further.
63. Resources are well stored and easily accessible by staff and pupils alike. The new storage facilities are a strength and ensure that teachers can quickly find what they need. Accessible furniture, linked to the needs of pupils and staff, is of a very high quality.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the teaching, learning and achievement of pupils, the governors, headteacher and senior management team should:

- (1) Clarify the responsibilities of senior staff for monitoring the curriculum and teaching and learning on a whole school basis, and ensure that a programme of consistent monitoring is carried out. Use the monitoring system to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement to all subjects and that sufficient time is devoted to each subject.

(Paragraphs 31, 54, 59, 93, 100, 112, 117, 122, 133, 146 and 161)

- (2) Improve the quality of assessment, so that all teachers have a common understanding of the application of the national performance levels and lower levels of the national curriculum, and interpret them consistently, by ensuring that teachers:

- moderate each others' assessments;
- actively agree what the levels mean when applied to pupils' work;
- apply the levels consistently;
- use the results to inform planning.

(Paragraphs 10, 44, 53, 78, 100, 112, 121, 137, 138, 146 and 150)

- (3) Plan and provide appropriate activities in lessons to give access to the curriculum for all groups of pupils, particularly those with autism and some with physical disabilities.

(Paragraphs 9, 20, 38, 54, 78, 89, 133 and 150)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	26	48	26	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	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	82
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

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	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	9.0	School data	0.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	58
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	7.5

Education support staff: YN – Y14

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	883

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	1140060
Total expenditure	941467
Expenditure per pupil	14052
Balance brought forward from previous year	105354
Balance carried forward to next year	303947

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	78
Number of questionnaires returned	22

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	17	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	50	41	5	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	48	0	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	50	10	15	5
The teaching is good.	39	52	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	41	5	9	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	13	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	48	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	35	13	9	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	45	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	5	5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	45	17	4	9

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

64. Since the last inspection the Nursery provision for children under five has improved significantly. Children with learning difficulties now learn alongside their mainstream peers. The improved accommodation has allowed the staff to provide a richer curriculum with very good facilities for individual work. A sensory approach makes learning effective for children with more complex needs. Opportunities for meeting parents and for working closely with mainstream staff have improved.
65. The unit is very well run by a teacher from The Ridgeway School, in collaboration with a nursery teacher from the mainstream school. The teaching team is well managed and staff provide a high quality curriculum. The quality of teaching is good. The assessment system is sound and staff are able to demonstrate the good progress children make in all areas of early learning.
66. Reception children are taught on the main school site. By this time they have increased their social skills with some able to communicate using speech. They make good progress in activities such as circle time where they explore things together and communicate with staff. Higher attaining children demonstrate their progress by using more defined signs or speech. Lower attaining children are still at the very early stages of development and are highly reliant on adult support. In language, communication and personal development these children make very good progress. The Early Years co-ordinator oversees the reception class but has not yet established a programme for monitoring the quality of the education provided.
67. Parents speak very highly of the work of the nursery and the progress made by their children. They value the time and support given to them by the staff. Parents and carers play an important part in the life of the nursery, getting involved in the nursery activities. The provision for children under five is consistently good and enables all children to make good progress in their very first steps of learning and socialisation.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. The provision and teaching in this important area of the curriculum is very good. Opportunities for children to develop their personal, social and emotional development underpin the whole curriculum and children make very good progress in their personal development and self-confidence. The ethos of the nursery successfully encourages all children to work together whatever their needs or achievement. Children enter the nursery with poor personal and social skills as a result of their learning difficulties and underdeveloped communication. However, they soon learn what is expected of them, for example, that they have to take turns with others. They understand that they must wear an apron when painting or sit quietly on the carpet when listening to a story. These clear routines help the children to feel secure, safe and to understand the nursery procedures and activities. They settle very quickly and enjoy working in groups on the very wide range of activities provided. The children's positive relationships with their mainstream peers are evident in all activities as they paint, play or work together.

Communication, language and literacy

69. All the staff are highly skilled in developing children's communication whether through speech, sign or gesture and children make good progress. Teachers and assistants take every opportunity to promote the children's use of language and communication within all activities. They make good use of stories and ensure that children understand by using interesting resources. For example, in one story about cold weather, the teacher showed the children a half knitted scarf, complete with knitting needles. Although they were not familiar with the craft of knitting, they were able to see and understand its purpose. Children's use of language ranges from the earliest emerging communication through sign or gesture to the use of sentences. Teachers build on this range of

language very effectively by extending the children's understanding through questioning or by supporting lower attaining children with the use of signs and symbols. For children in the early stages of communication, this emphasis on the richness of language is highly beneficial, particularly when they work in mixed groups and hear good spoken models of language from adults and other children. In these mixed groups, children are very accepting of each other's achievements. In one group, very good teaching provided opportunities for all children to take part as the teacher used a recording device with a large switch to ensure that they could all greet each other. All the children enjoyed this task whether they needed to use the switch or not. There is good provision for the children's specific development in communication through the work of the speech and language therapist. As a result of this very good integrated provision, all children make good progress in their communication skills.

Mathematical development

70. On entry to the nursery all children are at the very earliest stages of mathematical development but as a result of a wide range of stimulating activities and good teaching they make good progress in recognising shape and colour and in counting up to five, with the teacher. The staff make good provision for early number skills and provide many activities for sorting articles by size and colour. All adults make very good connections between the use and appearance of numbers, numeracy skills and other activities within the unit. For example, in stories, the children count characters and in sorting activities they count and sort by colour and size. Children are beginning to match objects and most can differentiate between the 'same' and 'different'. They are beginning to enjoy construction by putting shapes together so that, by the time they reach the reception class, they explore the use of shape in more detail.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Children make good progress in developing their knowledge of the world around them as a result of well-planned experiences which encourage exploration and problem solving. The children are well motivated and interested in their work. As they enter the room at the beginning of a session they are greeted by a wealth of opportunity to explore and experiment, for example, assorted trays of materials to investigate, sticking and pasting activities and construction and movable toys. Staff interact with the children and stimulate play skills by helping them to link pieces together or match colours. Children play with materials which change such as foam representing snow which, after a few moments rubbing through their fingers, changes to a slimy texture. Children notice this change very quickly showing their hands to the staff. They understand that they then need to wash the slime away. Children develop a good sense of geography within the building and understand where to hang their coats, where to enter the classroom and where to go for the toilet, soft play or quiet room. They make good progress in technology by using a computer with a touch screen to reconstruct the colours of the rainbow and ,through careful questioning from the staff, understand that a rainbow sometimes follows rain and that it is in the sky. Most children are aware of established routines within the nursery. With help, they understand the passage of time, so that as one session neared its end, they began to look towards the door knowing that it was time to go home.

Physical development

72. Children make very good progress in developing and using their skills of movement and co-ordination because there are challenging opportunities for them to try hard and use their physical skills. Where children have specific problems with movement, the physiotherapist is very effective in identifying programmes for support at school and at home. Regular weekly activities include physical education outside, use of the external play equipment and opportunities for swimming and, where necessary, hydrotherapy. Within the classroom, children are encouraged to move appropriately and as independently as they can. Some are so keen, on arrival, that they race up the corridor to the door despite the physical difficulties involved in doing so.

Creative development

73. Children enjoy and make good progress in their creative work because the staff provide good opportunities for constructing, exploring and responding to a range of materials. For example, children enjoyed drawing around another child and dressing him in a collage of furry, warm materials to protect him from the cold weather. They understood that his two boots should be of the same colour. With support, they built and stuck rainbow coloured arcs on paper. Children benefit from good levels of guidance from staff, who show children alternative ways of working such as using a paintbrush or printing with paint on paper. Children in the reception class understand that fruit such as a melon or pineapple have different textures on the outside and the inside. They feel and smell both, later using the cut surfaces to make prints with paint. Music plays an important part in the children's learning and they enjoy joining in with songs, many singing in accompaniment. On a few occasions however, tape recorded music is used inappropriately as a background to activities when children are not listening to it.

ENGLISH

74. Overall, pupils' achievements in English are good. Standards of reading, in particular, have improved since the last inspection. All pupils show a real interest in reading books. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons in Key Stage 1. By the age of 7, pupils can communicate their thoughts and wishes and can build and read simple three and four word sentences with the aid of symbols. The older Key Stage 1 pupils tell the staff what they want by making simple requests such as 'I want a biscuit please' using symbols on a communication board. They can all remember events or characters from the story of The Dancing Hen and the older pupils could explain what happened next. In Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and by the age of 11, the higher attaining pupils can read familiar text without the aid of symbols and make reasonable attempts to sound out unfamiliar words. They can build and write simple three letter words such as 'hat' and 'fat' and complete sentences by filling in missing words from a small range of known words. Lower attaining pupils identify objects from pictures and select the correct symbols for the object.
75. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in lessons. Lower attaining pupils build simple sentences to make requests such as 'crayons please' using symbols and sentence strips. Higher attaining pupils can compose simple sentences in answer to questions about the text. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils read simple familiar texts from the Wellington Square series and write simple sentences independently. They make good use of their literacy skills in other lessons. Pupils were observed reading information and instructions in science when they identified and categorised materials according to their strength and recorded their findings in chart form. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) respond to pictures and sensory stimulation by eye pointing and gesture when following a sensory poem. They make white marks on black paper with their hands and paint in contribution to a display illustrating the poem they are studying, 'Snowing, Snowing, Snowing' by Olive Dove.
76. In Key Stage 4, pupils make very good progress. By the age of 16, the higher attaining pupils can recall events of a story and make comparisons with other books they have read. One pupil could explain what made the author frightened in Wordsworth's 'Prelude' while another referred to the dead plants in the Prelude and the death of a person in the Sword in the Stone that they read the term before. The pupils had contributed to a wall display about the poem which included neatly written information about the author and where he lived. The lower attaining pupils listen to stories showing interest and pleasure. A class of pupils with PMLD showed excellent anticipation of the events when dramatising the fighting at the barricades and the dance in the wedding scene in 'Les Miserables'.
77. Progress made by the post 16 students is very good. The higher attaining pupils use reading, writing and communication when completing the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Modules. Literacy and communication is an integral element of all the modules. Students record what they have done in their logbook using writing and symbols. They prepare by making lists, writing statements about themselves and producing simple action plans. Their oral skills are good. They introduce themselves with confidence and freely converse with one another or with known adults. They use the telephone and undertake interviews for work

experience. They are more reticent with strangers, for example in a supermarket when going through the checkout, but manage to make themselves understood. Lower attaining pupils communicate using PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and communication books and pupils with PMLD express preferences through gesture and directing their gaze. By the end of their time in school, they achieve the ASDAN Award 'Towards Independence'.

78. The school has used a number of different commercial materials for assessing pupils' progress and this has resulted in difficulties in tracking pupils' progress over time. The lack of moderation of teachers' assessments has resulted in pupils' progress over the last three years appearing to be erratic. Progress made by pupils with autism and those with physical difficulties is particularly erratic and compares unfavourably with pupils in similar schools nationally. The school has identified this as an area for concern.
79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2. Good use is made of augmentative communication systems to support pupils' understanding, promote their speaking and listening skills and focus on developing pupils' early literacy skills. In Key Stage 2, lessons are carefully planned and pupils' targets in their individual education plans are incorporated into the group activity sessions in the literacy hour. At Key Stages 3 and 4, imaginative use of sensory stories enable pupils with complex learning difficulties to access challenging literature such as the poetry of Wordsworth and classics such as *The Sword in the Stone*, *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo and the plays of Shakespeare. These texts are successfully used as a stimulus for developing pupils' reading and writing skills and promoting their speaking and listening. The quality of teaching is consistently good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and makes a significant contribution to the very good progress pupils make in reading and writing as they move through the upper school. During the week of the inspection, only a limited amount of teaching was seen and that was very good. Pupils were provided with age appropriate learning experiences that challenged and engaged them enabling them to communicate their interest and pleasure at a level appropriate to their ability. Very good use is made of drama at Key Stage 4 and Post 16 to enhance pupils' ability to express their feelings and explore ideas. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
80. The school has successfully built upon the high quality work in drama by using role play and drama in many lessons to enable pupils to express themselves and communicate their feelings. Drama throughout the school is of a very high standard.
81. The best lessons are carefully planned and prepared, combining clear learning objectives and pupils' individual targets with effective implementation of the structure of the literacy hour. Lessons are lively and use a range of activities and resources to maintain concentration. Where lessons are only satisfactory, teachers do not always follow their plans and the lessons lose their sense of direction, resulting in pupils spending time on low level activities or waiting for alternative tasks. This is particularly evident for pupils with autism or those with physical difficulties.
82. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy throughout the school has had a positive impact upon the development of pupils' reading skills. They can now anticipate what comes next and the independent learning skills of the higher attaining pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 have improved. For all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4, it has raised teachers' expectations of pupils by providing a framework to develop pupils literacy skills systematically, using a small steps approach. However, there remain few opportunities for pupils to work together on tasks except under the direction of an adult.
83. The curriculum plans clearly set out the literature to be covered across the Key Stages and the intended learning outcome for pupils as they progress through the school. The selection of literature allows pupils to progress across a range of stimulating and challenging texts. However, little guidance is given to teachers on what approaches they might use to teach reading and writing and how augmentative communication systems and ICT can be incorporated into English activities. Opportunities are missed in some classes at Key Stages 2 and 3 for pupils to use symbols to create simple sentences independently in literacy lessons. Pupils are not offered sufficiently challenging writing activities when using the computer. Too frequently, they are asked to copy sentences from their reading book using Writing with Symbols rather than composing their

own sentences using a personal word bank and a simple writing frame. This inhibits pupils' progress in developing independent writing skills.

MATHEMATICS

84. Overall, pupils' achievements in mathematics are good and have improved since the last inspection. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress. By the age of 7, higher attaining pupils count on their fingers or count objects to ten and can name simple shapes. They sort objects, pictures, symbols and shapes by size and colour. Lower attaining pupils trace number shapes in sand or on paper, make approximations of numbers and do simple sorting. Much of the work in Key Stage 1 is successfully reinforcing early learning of number and shape. Pupils read the whole hours on a clock but not half hours. Pupils are beginning to sequence from left to right. Most can put pictures into a sequence. Although a range of activities is used to address the range of needs in the class, opportunities to provide challenging work for higher attaining pupils, including mathematics related computer programs, are sometimes missed.
85. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. By the age of 11, higher attaining pupils can fill in the missing numbers in a sequence up to 10 and can understand 'tallest' and 'shortest'. All pupils can count to twenty and add one to any number up to twenty. They are highly motivated by the interesting materials that the teacher produces to support their learning, for example, a book showing 'mathematics around the world' is complemented by a necklace from Africa with a similar repeating pattern as the one in the book. Pupils were then given the opportunity to make their own repeating patterns. Pupils at all levels of ability are provided with appropriate resources and activities, for example, different sized materials and a range of bangles for a lower attaining pupil to use with support. Pupils are beginning to handle money but still have difficulty counting different denominations of coins.
86. In Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils are able to produce very well presented work despite obvious difficulties forming some shapes. They work out the missing numbers in magic squares where all the rows and columns add up to the same number. They count in tens, but need prompting to add up in fives. Initially, most pupils still confuse adding on and taking away, but manage this with good intervention from their teacher. Lower attaining pupils count up to 10 and find missing numbers in a sequence, but need the support of concrete objects in order to do so.
87. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have extended their knowledge to using real money in the coffee bar that they run for other pupils at break-time. Pupils' work in mathematics is part of the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge' for which the students gain accreditation. By the time they are ready to leave school, pupils are planning their daily spending, budgeting, shopping for themselves in the local supermarket and cooking their own lunches. There is lots of reinforcement of adding, subtracting and, to a lesser extent, multiplication and division in a real context. This prepares them well for the wider world and leads to further ASDAN accreditation 'Towards Independence'.
88. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to make choices and indicate this by a variety of methods, for example using a switch, making a sign or eye-pointing. They explore objects for shape and size and texture and learn to anticipate movement. In a lesson following on from work about space and planets, they anticipated the movement to and fro of a large ball and explored its size and shape.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Staff use a wide range of resources to help pupils learn new concepts in different ways. For example, triangles, circles and squares are found in puzzles, bricks, games, the playground and the architecture of the classroom. Children sing number rhymes and play counting games or use the computer to see numbers animated. They have a number washing line and the story of Noah helps them to match pairs and begin counting in twos. Key Stage 1 lessons are well planned for the majority of the class, and the timing of different activities is aimed at them and suits them. However, for a small number of more able pupils or pupils with autism, planned activities fail to involve pupils enough.

However, there is a good range of activities in lessons and the majority of pupils learn well. The use of computers to reinforce mathematical ideas is limited.

90. Key Stage 2 pupils clearly enjoyed the opening activity in a lesson involving counting down and adding on and responded well to the teacher's warm and positive manner. However, the range of work produced in the two classes shows inconsistency. One class has covered a greater variety of mathematical work including using computers but the other has had more emphasis on number work. Mathematics is used well in other subjects, including literacy. The quality of record keeping varies from class to class.
91. Teaching in Key Stage 3, 4 and post-16 is good and support staff give valuable help to pupils, enhancing their learning in mathematics. For example, support staff in the coffee bar gave pupils helpful prompts with counting and working out bills. They provided appropriate reminders about prices to a non-verbal pupil and helped her to work out her options for shopping and lunch, encouraging independence. Some pupils who have difficulty writing numbers get round this by using number stamps. The teachers offer a wide range of real objects to help with number work, but activities are increasingly focused on trying to get pupils to do simple number work 'in their heads'. Record keeping is good. Lessons are well planned and include references to information and communication technology. Lesson planning builds on previous knowledge and is related to real life experiences
92. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught very well. The staff teams co-ordinate their work well and provide plenty of time, together with their very good knowledge of the pupils, to allow responses, sometimes very small, to be made. They have very good strategies to engage the pupils in activities.
93. The National Numeracy Strategy, adapted to meet pupils' needs, has had a good effect on the pace and structure of lessons. The school's resources have improved but computers are still under-used in the older classes, for example for data handling. Assessment has improved now that a system has been introduced that shows very small stages of improvement and there has been training for staff in applying the national system of assessment for pupils with learning difficulties consistently. The subject leader has good knowledge of mathematics, particularly for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and the skill of passing on techniques to support staff. However, monitoring of the curriculum and teaching and learning is inadequate. Opportunities for pupils to reinforce their learning through homework are very limited. Some data handling was seen in science but there are comparatively few examples of numeracy being used in other subjects or of the use of computers to support mathematics.

SCIENCE

94. Pupils' achievements in science are good. Since the last inspection, a new subject co-ordinator has introduced a scheme of work that now makes sure that teachers cover all aspects of the science curriculum, including investigation. Teachers generally now have a secure knowledge of science. This is an improvement on the situation in the last inspection when the school was criticised for not offering enough opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate and for deficiencies in teachers' subject knowledge.
95. By the age of seven, most pupils are making good progress in developing an awareness of themselves and the world about them. They are exploring the differences between hard and soft, wet and furry objects. They are beginning to use words to describe the feel of things. A number are able to answer questions about their reactions using a limited range of words. They listened well to a story that the teacher used to illustrate a lesson using materials of different textures for pupils to feel. The pupils learnt new words to describe the textures.
96. Between the ages of seven and eleven, pupils are making good progress. They identified body parts of a skeleton and then related them to their own bodies. Higher attaining pupils can list a number of parts such as arm, leg and head. Lower attaining pupils can touch parts such as the head when asked to do so. They can point to some of the body parts on a skeleton or in a mirror.

Most pupils can make a torch work and know that batteries are needed and that they run out and need replacing.

97. By the age of fourteen, pupils achieve well. They can classify materials in several different ways. They are learning to predict how materials will react when they are tested for properties such as strength or waterproofing. Individual pupils are able to record their findings. Pupils with little or no speech are able to use symbols to communicate their findings. Most understand words such as strong and weak. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 learn to sort familiar metal and wood objects by weight and by touch.
98. By the age of sixteen, lower attaining pupils are responding to different plants and, with support, are able to express preferences, communicating some likes and dislikes. They explore scent, texture and appearance. Higher attaining pupils know that water can achieve different states such as ice and steam. They know too some of the dangers associated with boiling water in a kettle.
99. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lesson plans are detailed and carefully thought-out. This leads to purposeful lessons that provide opportunities for all pupils to make appropriate progress. Teachers plan and provide more activities to encourage investigation. This approach stimulates pupils' interest and promotes learning. Certainly pupils enjoy science. Teachers demonstrate good organizational skills that provide meaningful learning opportunities for pupils, including those with profound and complex learning difficulties. This was evident during the inspection when, for example, one lower attaining class was taken to a local garden centre to explore the characteristics of different plants. Pupils were provided with a good range of stimuli and teachers and their assistants used question and answer well to engage and challenge pupils as well as to test understanding. Their questions are well designed to get pupils to think more deeply about the world about them. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils. Teachers actively encourage pupils to work together and to help each other to learn.
100. The subject is well co-ordinated. The new co-ordinator has introduced a scheme of work which gives a good range of opportunities for pupils to find out more about their world and to develop the ways in which they describe and record what they find. Units of work now have clear learning objectives and assessment opportunities that are matched against recognised levels of attainment. However, there is inconsistency in the application of the assessment levels to the standards pupils achieve. The co-ordinator recognises the need for the training of teachers in agreement of standards. There is no process of monitoring and evaluating teaching through classroom observations, therefore existing weaknesses have not been identified.

ART AND DESIGN

101. The improvement in accommodation since the last inspection has enabled the school to broaden its approach to art and to provide a broad and challenging curriculum in a specialist room. The increased space has allowed the co-ordinator room to develop portfolios of pupils' work and these show that they are covering a range of techniques and improving their work at a steady rate. The art co-ordinator is aware that current assessment does not routinely identify pupils' progress in terms of skills developed and has plans to improve these procedures imminently.
102. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Lower attaining pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were unable to complete the task set successfully because it was not well matched to their physical abilities. Whilst they were interested and clearly enjoyed studying the silhouettes that had been made in a previous lesson, the task of painting the shadows made by catkins required much finer motor control than they were able to give. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 make good progress in using a wide range of materials and skills such as cutting, colouring, painting, printing and sticking. This wide range of activities was a direct result of skilled and knowledgeable planning by the teacher, who provided good support to individual pupils so that all could achieve appropriately.
103. In the very best teaching, with Year 10 pupils, the teacher made an excellent link between batik work and the artistic heritage of South East Asia by providing examples of authentic designs,

which helped pupils model their work successfully. As a result, they produced futuristic designs with eyes, mouth and nose and showed good observational skills. Older pupils and students are also studying modern art and showed their increased independence by selecting suitable materials such as stencils, paint and paper. These pupils were able to complete their work with only minimum support and guidance of the teacher.

104. The art co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject and is skilled in teaching and providing for the pupils' wide range of abilities. As a result, pupils are clearly improving their skills. This improvement is shown in the pupils' portfolios and in their records of achievement. Other teachers, however, are not so specifically skilled or knowledgeable in art techniques, rely more heavily on painting and drawing and do not always provide work matched to pupils' needs. However, the school has only just acquired the use of its specialist room and the co-ordinator plans to increase teachers' awareness of the range offered by the subject. Opportunities are lost to display a comprehensive range of pupils' work. The curriculum provides good opportunities for a range of activities to broaden the pupils' understanding and experience, including visits to local galleries, art workshops and occasional visits from professional artists. Overall, provision is at least satisfactory and many pupils make good progress in using a wide range of skills and tools in their art work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. Pupils' achievements in design and technology are good and this is an improvement from the time of the last inspection when, for most students, they were satisfactory. The new food technology room has made a substantial difference to teaching and learning in design and technology by providing very good facilities, which can be adapted to the needs of all pupils, including those who use wheelchairs. A new co-ordinator for non-food technology elements of design and technology has introduced a scheme of work which presents pupils with more challenging work.
106. By the age of eleven, pupils are able to follow a pictorial recipe to make a chocolate drink, developing their food preparation skills and making good progress. They are aware of the need to wash their hands before they prepare food and most can name the ingredients they intend to use. Most use the electric blender to mix their drink and all are involved in clearing up afterwards.
107. Year 7 pupils respond well to the task they are given to design a CD carrier. They make choices of materials from a given range and discuss the suitability of the materials they choose. With help, most are able to suggest ways of joining the materials they use. Some of the pupils are drawing their designs and add handles when these are suggested. Pupils with profound learning difficulties are given the opportunity to smell, taste and feel bread and cheese and some can follow the process of making cheese on toast. The use of a modified switch enables the pupils with the greatest learning difficulties to turn the food processor on and off and thus get involved in making. Other Year 7 pupils are given the chance to develop their communication skills using aids such as picture cards, for example, to communicate 'I want toast'. Higher attaining pupils in this group made an omelette having chosen, with help, the correct implements and utensils. They are able to set the table for the meal. All the pupils in this group were carefully and progressively coaxed towards greater independence in a range of tasks that they are likely to have to do for themselves as they mature.
108. By the age of fourteen, pupils can choose what to make, linked to their own interests, and design and make it, for example, a bag to hold a CD or a collection of pencils. With support, pupils draw and colour designs after looking at a range of exotic examples brought in by the classroom assistant from her travels in India. They discuss how best to assemble their bags and with help they make holes to take threaded wool. Several are able to thread large needles and they use them to join the material. They know they must leave a hole at the top of their bag for objects to fit in and they choose the tools they will use in their making from the range offered.
109. Pupils with profound learning difficulties in Year 11 were able to express preferences when they are exposed to the sight, smell and feel of ingredients for a Chinese dish that is made for them. Some are able to switch electrical appliances on and off using a specially designed switch. They

learn that attention must be paid to hygiene when food is being prepared. Year 10 pupils make good progress when they tackle the task of making a frame for a photograph. They draw and colour their designs and investigate a number of existing products. They identify some of the materials used and discuss what they will use when they make their own frame.

110. Post-16 students follow units of work designed to help them to become more independent. Students with complex learning difficulties achieve well in making a fruit salad as part of one unit. The teacher and a classroom assistant provided well-judged interventions to encourage students to gain the confidence to work more independently. Students learn what each implement and utensil is for. Preparation for the lesson included a visit to a local supermarket and learning to recognize the symbols for various fruits.
111. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils find lessons enjoyable and stimulating. Teachers and assistants have developed very good relationships with pupils and little time is lost in dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Planning for lessons is good, although the challenge is variable in lessons where teachers or assistants' subject knowledge is limited. Opportunities in these lessons are sometimes lost to give pupils more opportunities to consider the design of what they are making. Teachers have clear ideas about what they expect from pupils and plan their lessons to meet individual needs. They give just enough guidance to keep pupils on task while encouraging them to think for themselves. This encourages the development of independent learning very well. Teachers are skilful at finding out which communication aids will produce results and these are well suited to pupils' needs. They use praise well to keep pupils on task. Teachers review the work of previous sessions to make sure that learning builds on previous gains. Teachers conclude lessons by helping pupils to realise what progress they have made during the lesson and to anticipate the next steps. There is a high standard of care in the supervision of pupils using tools and equipment. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge; they use question and answer well to challenge understanding and to draw out pupils' thinking. Where appropriate they use signing, cards and photographs to back this process up.
112. The school has a satisfactory curriculum, with a strong focus on the teaching of food technology. There is little use of information and communication technology in the subject. Planning gives due emphasis to assessment opportunities at the end of each unit of work and teachers keep good records of the progress pupils make. However, teachers apply assessments using the recently introduced national assessment scheme inconsistently. The co-ordinators for design and technology monitor planning as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. Time allocated to the monitoring of teaching and learning is not used well.

GEOGRAPHY

113. Little geography was seen during the inspection. It is taught until the end of Year 9, but alternates with history. Records provide too little evidence to show pupils' progress over time. There is little continuity in learning about geography, due to the fact that it is taught alternately with history. Lessons were observed in Year 1 and 2, Year 9 and in the junior class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
114. Pupils' achievements in Key Stage 1 are good. By the age of seven, pupils can identify different types of weather and what sort of clothing is appropriate. They learn about familiar places like home and school and this sequence of lessons ends with a visit to a building site. Lessons involving sorting and locating objects and pictures into different rooms are a useful start to working on abstract plans and maps.
115. Pupils' achievements in Key Stages 2 and 3 are unsatisfactory. Although planning and teaching in lessons is good, too little time is spent on geography and progress over time is weak because the subject lacks continuity. By the age of eleven, pupils have visited the local town and can describe what buildings there are. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learned how water sounds, feels and reacts with other materials, for example oil. By the end of Year 9 pupils can find their way around the school and, with help, relate this to a plan with symbols on it.

116. The limited teaching seen in geography was good. Only a few simple resources were used but two of the lessons were planned to reinforce language well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils responded with enthusiasm, but more able pupils were not challenged enough. In Year 9, pupils responded with interest, walking round the school and practising directions. The activity was practical and useful. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties had a well planned lesson following the design and technology scheme of work on materials (water) which was largely relevant to geography and taught in an appropriate way aimed at stimulating all their senses.
117. Since the last inspection, the teaching of geography has deteriorated. Insufficient time is spent on geography and the lack of continuity has had an adverse effect on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The school's scheme of work is a list of topics for each year but this does not suit the organisation of the school, nor does it give any guidance on how to teach the topics or what resources are available. Resources are unsatisfactory with not enough artefacts, visual material or use of the internet to explore the excitement of the subject. There is no monitoring of teaching by the subject co-ordinator. Provision for geography is unsatisfactory, although teaching of individual lessons was good.

HISTORY

118. Pupils' achievements in history are just satisfactory across the key stages, but there has not been sufficient improvement since the previous inspection. There is too little evidence of what pupils have learned over time and insufficient resources within the curriculum to support pupils' learning.
119. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils learn about their own history. There is some limited photographic evidence of pupils looking at their own baby clothes and toys and learning about the passage of time. As they move through the primary department, they learn about some of the famous people in history and about different periods. For example, in Years 3 and 4, pupils have practised writing with quills on parchment as part of their study of medieval castles. They enjoy dressing up in character and pretending to be the Lords and Ladies of the castle. They show some understanding of differences between then and now and that people wore different clothes long ago. They benefit from good interactive and multi-sensory resources to enhance their learning. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 learn about Florence Nightingale. Their earlier understanding of the passing of time is fostered through comparisons with a present-day nurse. The use of drama and literacy skills help them to understand how things have changed since Florence Nightingale's time.
120. In Key Stage 3, there is evidence that pupils have studied the Victorians and that they have some understanding and curiosity about differences between then and now. They have benefited from a visit to a Victorian museum and also from a visitor to the school who brought Victorian clothes for them to try on. They have created their own historical drama.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of multi-sensory approaches so that pupils can learn about times gone by in an active way. Appropriate questioning helps pupils to think carefully about changes. Not enough use is made of resources and artefacts however, to ensure that skills are consolidated. There are too few systems in place to assess and monitor what pupils know in order to plan the most appropriate next stage of learning. Not enough evidence of past work is available to show coverage of the curriculum.
122. Provision for history is satisfactory overall, but there are weaknesses. There are discrepancies in time allocations for the subject between classes so that pupils do not receive equal access to learning in history. Opportunities for learning are lost because there are too few visits to places of historical interest. Management of the subject is weak. There is too little evidence of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and not enough evaluation of the subject's performance to ensure that standards rise significantly.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. Overall, pupils' achievements in information and communication technology are satisfactory, but there are inconsistencies. Pupils' achievements in Key Stage 2 and 4 are good. Elsewhere, pupils make satisfactory progress, except in Key Stage 1 where there is too little teaching of information and communication technology for pupils to make satisfactory progress.
124. By the age of eleven, pupils use a touchscreen, a switch or, increasingly, a mouse. Lower attaining pupils are using a variety of cause and effect programs, sometimes on the Internet, and software to help with literacy and sequencing. They can use a switch to create a simple sentence. Higher attaining pupils are using talking books, following instructions from the program accurately, and then reading their text to the teacher. This reinforces their literacy very well. Higher attaining pupils can make a simple program to instruct the Roamer, a floor robot, to move in given directions.
125. By the age of fourteen, higher attaining pupils use a keyboard and symbol software to make records of their work across a number of subjects to put into their progress files. Lower attaining pupils can type their name and address but cannot open programs for themselves. Secondary pupils enthusiastically attend ICT club one lunchtime a week to use the Internet and to reinforce their skills with word processing and painting.
126. By the age of sixteen, pupils are using computers with increasing independence. Higher attaining pupils still need the web address written down to copy, but they can start the computer, open programs, print and save to disk independently. They can rotate a graphic, copy an object and change the style size and position of text. They are aware that the Internet can be used to find information and to send e-mails. They concentrate well and enjoy exploring websites. Lower attaining pupils are concentrating well on using a switch to make choices and see the effects of their actions.
127. By the time they leave school, pupils use symbol software to write short accounts. They use symbols widely in class and have some knowledge of ICT in the wider world. They use equipment such as microwaves and see how ICT is used in their work placements. However, they do not have Internet access and this contributes to only slow progress in ICT skills.
128. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use single switches or two switches to control electrical equipment, toys and simple computer programs.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Key Stage 4. Elsewhere, it is satisfactory except in Key Stage 1 where pupils have little opportunity to maintain the progress they made at the start of school. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is good and a range of aspects of ICT is taught, for example controlling a robot, and pupils' skills are broadened well. ICT is used well to promote literacy. In Key Stage 3, where ICT was identified as an option for the tutor period at the start of the day, there was no teaching of skills. Records were inadequate to show pupils' emerging skills.
130. In Key Stage 4, pupils are given tasks that suit their age, interests and abilities and link with other subjects. For example, one pupil was using the internet to research who the local Member of Parliament is, while another used an entertaining cause-and-effect switch program on the internet. The teacher's subject knowledge is good. Planning includes intended outcomes for each pupil and there is evaluation of each pupil's work. Skills are recorded and dated to show progress. The adults work well as a team and support staff are adept at knowing when a pupil needs a reward activity rather than a task. This maintains pupils' interest.
131. Post-16 students use symbol software effectively for the timetable, worksheets and communication books. Pupils are encouraged to use the computer and electrical equipment independently. However, the lack of Internet access limits the teaching of ICT.
132. The teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. The teacher's subject knowledge is good and there are good records of pupils' equipment and preferences so that information can be shared. Switches are used to enable pupils to control their environment, for

example to mix ingredients. The newly installed light room is used well to assess pupils' perceptions and skills, as well as for relaxation.

133. Pupils were making unsatisfactory progress at the last inspection. Since then, resources for ICT have improved significantly. Where teachers are confident, pupils' progress is good, but there are a number of areas for development. The positioning of equipment is generally unsuited to the size of pupils. The computers in the ICT suite are not set up for switch users and this means that these pupils are rarely included in lessons but stay in a classroom and do separate work with support staff, thereby not providing equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. The school has had no success in recruiting a technician and have devised an alternative strategy to train a member of staff as a technician. The lack of technical support inhibits less confident teachers in preparing lessons. There is no whole school monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and records of pupils' ICT skills are patchy through the school. The scheme of work is good but individual teachers decide how much ICT to teach and this leads to inconsistencies and inequalities of access for pupils. Too little ICT is used to support other subjects. ICT is used well for administration in school. Resources, both equipment and software, are good, much improved since the last inspection, but the ICT suite is underused by lower school classes.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

134. Due to staff illness it was not possible to observe any lessons in French but observation of a lunchtime French club showed that pupils have made satisfactory progress, could remember simple greetings and speak to each other and adults with confidence. Pupils from Year 9 and 10 gather together for this activity and were able to ask each other their names in French and answer with a little prompting. The support assistant leading the session translates the questions and answers correctly and many pupils know their ages in French, even those that have just had their birthdays. Higher attaining pupils can count up to 10. Teachers' records show that pupils are making good progress overall and their learning is supported by a good and appropriate range of resources. The school has maintained the effective provision found at the last inspection.

MUSIC

135. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision for music by providing instrumental tuition in brass instruments and increasing its focus on the performing arts. During the inspection, it was possible to see only one music lesson but observations were made of instrumental tuition and practice, the work of the music therapist, an assembly and a rehearsal of the performing arts group.
136. Recorded music and singing are frequently used during lessons to illustrate stories, or to signal the end of a session for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Observations show that pupils make satisfactory progress overall and are able to enjoy playing a range of untuned percussion instruments while listening and responding to the changing tempo of the music. Some pupils with particular skills in music are able to sing perfectly in tune, others can maintain a steady pace throughout a song. The music curriculum provides a good range of activities to improve pupils' skills in listening, playing, singing and movement. Teaching in classes is satisfactory but for pupils taking instrumental tuition it is very good. The music co-ordinator, a brass player, works well in co-operation with the instrumental tutor to provide guided practice between his weekly sessions. Together their combined skills in modelling good brass playing and their interest and skills in developing the pupils' techniques are resulting in pupils making steady progress. For example, the highest attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 can play several open notes on the euphonium or cornet and are beginning to use the valves appropriately. They are learning to listen to each other to produce a harmonious sound and have begun to march with their instruments. This opportunity for the more musical pupils in the school to develop their talents also

boosts their self-esteem and confidence and they are able to perform solo to the group and visitors.

137. The incidental use of music in assembly and in classes is not consistently effective. Opportunities are missed to direct pupils' attention to the sound of the music being played and in some classes staff and pupils speak or even sing other songs over the top of the recording. Good support for communication through music is provided by the music therapist. The subject co-ordinator is not a specialist music teacher, but is a skilled brass player and has been successful in promoting the development of instrumental tuition and in furthering opportunities for the pupils to take part in functions in the community, for example they have performed at the Maltings, at local workshops and in the cathedral, and have joined other special schools for music festivals. During the inspection the school was taking part in a performing arts project with a professional company. The work was highly effective in improving pupils' skills of movement and dance and they worked co-operatively as members of the group. Their interpretation of the music was good and they benefited from the guidance of the company members. These opportunities effectively promote pupils' social and cultural understanding as they mix and perform with others. Music is also used to contribute to celebrations of festivals such as Christmas, the Chinese New Year and Eid. Pupils present concerts and Christmas shows for the parents and visitors. However, despite the worthwhile investment in brass instruments and the improved accommodation, the school does not yet provide sufficiently clear opportunities for pupils to progress through the scheme of work because assessment opportunities are only just developing.
138. Whilst the accommodation, resources and availability of tuition has been significantly enhanced since the last inspection, equality of access to music is weak and assessment procedures are inadequate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. Pupils across the school achieve well, especially in swimming. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the previous inspection.
140. In Key Stage 1, pupils achieve well, as they benefit from good teaching and very good accommodation for the subject. Almost all pupils can move individual parts of their body to music. They copy and improve their own movements. Good support is provided for pupils with physical disabilities so that they are fully included in the lessons. From the moment they enter the hall in dance lessons, for example, pupils are clearly focused on performing well. They enjoy the different ethnic music, toys and instruments as they practise and perfect their own sequences. In the swimming pool, they achieve very high standards. This is due to the very good pool facility, which enables them to have regular practise. Their confidence in the water is very high. The best swimmers can swim several strokes, dive under the water to retrieve a brick and float for several minutes. Lower attaining pupils can put their faces in the water and blow bubbles. They enjoy splashing and playing in the water.
141. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good gains in their physical skills. They achieve well in gymnastics as they use large and small apparatus safely. They practise and improve their rolling, jumping, running and stretching skills as they also benefit from the good hall accommodation and good teaching. Their personal development is successfully promoted as they are encouraged to help with equipment. They show that they know and understand the routines of their lessons and achieve good standards of listening and behaviour. In swimming they achieve very high standards. Several pupils swim independently and higher attaining pupils are in line to meet the required standard of 25 metres by the time they reach the end of Year 6. This represents very good achievement in relation to pupils' abilities. Many can swim a few strokes, dive for a brick and take part in simple races. Their enjoyment in the activity is evident for all to see and they work very hard to improve their performances. A few can swim on their backs, with a good recognised stroke.
142. Pupils in Key Stage 3 also achieve well and improve their physical skills in lessons. For example, in a swimming lesson during the inspection, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 worked with pupils of the same age from another school at the local community swimming pool. This activity very successfully raised standards as pupils benefited from good role models and resources. Many are

confident swimmers and can swim more than 25 metres using effective and recognised strokes. They work hard in the pool to improve their style and stamina and show good awareness of safety. They benefit from very skilled teaching and good quality support, which successfully enable all pupils to be involved.

143. In Key Stage 4, pupils build on prior skills and make good progress in physical education. They develop their hand-eye co-ordination through ball and racket games, such as badminton. However, in one lesson, the activity is unsuitable for pupils with physical difficulties and they do not have equal access to the lesson. Pupils enjoy swimming and work closely with adults to improve their water safety and confidence. They show good levels of independence in the water and benefit from the very good pool resources, which enable them to work on their own wherever possible.
144. Post-16 students were observed also developing their water skills and confidence in the pool. They achieved well in relation to their difficulties and showed high levels of enjoyment as they worked closely with adults. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties show that they can splash, blow bubbles, move their bodies and some can weight-bear in the water. They achieve good standards of water confidence and independence due to good support and the high quality accommodation and resources available.
145. The quality of teaching in physical education is good, with some very good teaching of swimming. Lessons are well planned and the best use is made of the very high quality accommodation available. Teachers provide good demonstrations and model tasks well so that pupils know what is expected. Skills are systematically improved through practise, so that pupils make good gains in learning during lessons. For example, in swimming, teachers show pupils how to make particular strokes and so improve their style. The main weakness within teaching is the lack of relevant documentation to show what pupils have learned and achieved. Hence, it is difficult to measure the amount and rate of progress over time. It is easier in the Key Stage 4 and Post-16 department, where accreditation successfully supports learning.
146. Good provision is made at the school for physical education. A broad range of activities is taught in all classes. Leadership overall is satisfactory. Good provision has been made for resources and the very good accommodation has a positive impact on standards. However, too little monitoring has taken place to ensure consistency. The planned curriculum is different from that practised and opportunities to assess what pupils have learned and monitoring of progress, are weak, except in the further education department for pupils over 16. In this area of the school, assessment is closely linked to published accreditation and this makes a good contribution to pupils' achievements. Swimming certificates are awarded for achievement, but assessment of other aspects of physical education is a weakness. Appropriate extra-curricular opportunities enhance the provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

147. Pupils' achievements in religious education are broadly satisfactory across the school. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection, when the subject did not meet requirements and when there was insufficient evidence to judge progress. The improvement is linked to the implementation of a good range of learning activities.
148. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils work hard and achieve appropriately in their lessons. They benefit from some good activities in which they learn through drama. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed high levels of excitement as they dressed in coats of many colours during a story about Joseph. They listened carefully to the story and showed understanding of differences and the need for 'fairness'. Religious education lessons contribute well to the development of pupils' moral and spiritual development. They learn about being kind and helpful. In Years 1 and 2, pupils enjoy the stories of Jesus. They take part in many different celebrations in the Christian calendar, and know that these are special times. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are beginning to understand that different faiths have different "special" books and festivals. They enjoy looking at artefacts from the Jewish religion and listen well to stories.

149. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to achieve satisfactory standards. They also learn about different faiths through drama, art and music. For example, during the week of the inspection, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were preparing for a whole-school assembly based on the Chinese New Year. They showed good understanding of differences and some higher attaining pupils were able to talk about the legend of The 12 Animals. They enjoyed finding out their own year, and linking it to the appropriate animal. They showed high levels of enjoyment as they decorated a 'tree of prosperity' using multi-sensory resources. The culmination of their work resulted in a large dragon, wending its way around the hall as all pupils watched. This activity was successful in promoting pupils' understanding of a different culture. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an accredited course in which they develop their understanding of what it means to belong to a group. They learn to take account of the needs of others and develop their personal skills through religious education lessons.
150. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The main strength is the range of approaches used to teach the subject. For example, pupils learn about other faiths and cultures through discussion, questioning and drama. Lessons are well planned and managed and effective attention is given to helping pupils understand about 'special' times. Too little attention is given to assessing what pupils know, however, and thus it is difficult to measure how well pupils are progressing. The lack of sufficient, good quality artefacts to illustrate the various aspects of different faiths is a weakness and impacts on how much pupils understand. Occasionally, approaches are not well linked to the needs and abilities of pupils. This is particularly true of pupils with autism. At these times, their equality of opportunity is not secure.
151. Leadership of religious education is satisfactory. A good start has been made in the implementation of a broad and balanced range of relevant activities but there are inconsistencies in the provision across the school. Time allocations are different across key stages and pupils do not all get the same time allocation to the subject. Lack of monitoring has led to the range of inconsistencies in practice. Assessment procedures are weak across the school and this has an impact on pupils' progress over time. Resources are unsatisfactory. There are not enough to deliver each module of work. There are missed opportunities to improve pupils' understanding of different faiths during assemblies. However, the subject contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. They benefit from the range of moral themes that have been introduced and are beginning to show understanding of differences in cultures because of their religious education lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

152. Pupils' achievements in personal, social and health education (PSHE) are good. From Year 10 onwards, they are very good. Until the age of eleven, PSHE is mainly taught through the routines at the start of the day, through lunchtimes and, for some classes, through circle time. This is effective. From Year 7, pupils have a separate PSHE lesson and in Year 10 and Year 11, they also have a lesson in citizenship.
153. By the age of seven, pupils have started to develop their self-help skills. All pupils are given guidance on acceptable behaviour. They learn the names of parts of the body and the principles of good hygiene. Higher attaining pupils can dress themselves.
154. By the age of eleven, many pupils choose and collect their own lunch, behave well at the table and conform to the school's expectations. Many pupils have a responsibility allocated for the registration period, such as helping with the weather chart or taking the register to the office.
155. By the age of fourteen, pupils have learned to behave acceptably in public and private. The vocabulary needed for this age-appropriate work is challenging for many pupils. They also discuss topics in the news and help to organise and take part in the Christmas party. At the start of the day they organise their coat and their locker key and arrive in the classroom unaccompanied. Each pupil has a specific task, for example, setting out the class timetable for the day. At the afternoon registration, the pupils evaluate their own and others' performance in the morning's lessons.

156. By the age of sixteen, pupils have been involved in mini-enterprises such as the coffee bar they run and in work-shadowing. They have learned about voting and the parliamentary system. By the time they leave school, higher attaining pupils are making their way independently to work experience. Every day, they discuss their targets and how they feel they have performed and plan their daily budget.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is very good from Year 7 onwards, and satisfactory elsewhere. From Year 2, teachers record pupils' self-help skills but these are not detailed enough for secondary teachers to build upon them. This is particularly so in relation to sex education. Individual targets are set for pupils to help them improve their skills at lunchtimes and during morning drinks. There is no clear guidance to teachers on what is to be taught and when.
158. In Year 9, lessons address topics such as drugs awareness and sex education. These separate lessons allow more time to be focused on specific topics and record keeping is good. Careers education and work experience is well planned. Teaching concentrates on promoting independence and on helping pupils identify their own targets and the progress they have made. Citizenship lessons based on pupils looking for information on the Internet is not easily accessible to pupils because the language is too difficult. More suitable resources are needed for this subject.
159. By the time they leave school, pupils are given as much independence as possible and teaching is aimed at helping them to evaluate their own performance wherever possible and building up their confidence. This is done very well.
160. At mid-morning break, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are given symbols, photographs and real objects to help them to anticipate what is going to happen. They indicate a preference by eye-pointing or touching. Where these pupils spend time in other classes, there are good examples of interaction, with pupils posing closed questions that could be answered with a sign.
161. The school is reviewing its scheme of work so that it has more structure. Teaching and learning are not monitored on a whole school basis. The subject contributes to pupils' very good social and good moral development.