

INSPECTION REPORT

CHERRY TREES SCHOOL

Wombourne

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124516

Headteacher: Mrs. J Allman

Reporting inspector: Ms. V. Wilkinson
18461

Dates of inspection: 25.9.2000 – 27.9.2000

Inspection number: 223682

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
School category:	Community Special School
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Giggety Lane Wombourne Wolverhampton West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	Staffordshire Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. A. Ryding
Date of previous inspection:	30.3.1998 – 2.4.1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
V. Wilkinson 18461	Registered inspector	English. History. Music.	The characteristics of the school. How well do pupils and students achieve? How well are pupils and students taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students? How well is the school led and managed? The provision for children under five and students over sixteen.
S. Walsh 13786	Lay inspector	Personal, social and health education.	How well does the school care for pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
M. Holohan 1769	Team inspector	Mathematics. Information and communication technology. Geography.	Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development.
G. Davies 19871	Team inspector	Science. Art. Design and technology. Physical education. Religious education. Special educational needs. Equal opportunities.	

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Inspection Quality Division
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cherry Trees provides education for pupils with severe learning difficulties aged 3 to 19 years. There are 23 pupils on roll. This is significantly more than at the time of the last inspection. Over the last 5 years there have been some uncertainties about the school's viability and the age range and type of provision it should plan for. These have now been resolved. The Local Education Authority has confirmed that the school will continue to provide education for pupils with severe learning difficulties over the full age range. Pupils recently admitted to the school are of primary age. There are currently 9 pupils between the ages of 5 and 7. The majority of these pupils have autism. There is a very unbalanced distribution of pupils across the other key stages. There are 3 children under 5; 3 pupils aged 7 to 11; 3 aged 11 to 14; 2 aged 14 to 16 and 3 students over 16. There are only 4 classes in the school. Pupils aged 7 to 11 and those of secondary age and over 16 are in mixed age classes. Because there are very small numbers of pupils aged 7 to 11 and students over 16 it would be inappropriate to make judgements about their achievement but the report does comment on the quality of the provision made for them. The school serves a large and generally rural area. This has a direct impact on numbers and is reflected in the small number on roll. A few pupils travel a considerable distance and a minority are placed at the school by other authorities. There are currently no pupils from ethnic minorities. The school has an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. They have been in post for the last five years. The governing body has advertised the headteacher's post twice during this period but have felt unable to make an appointment. The post is currently being advertised again and it is hoped that a permanent headteacher will be appointed by the end of this term.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school was last inspected in March 1998. It has made good progress since then. The acting headteacher has led the school effectively, enabling staff to improve standards and to address the key issues identified. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school provides good curricular opportunities for its pupils and improvements to assessment procedures ensure that pupils achieve well. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good overall. Teachers' planning is good and assessment is used effectively enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is very good.
- Good opportunities for moral and social development and very effective systems for managing inappropriate behaviour support pupils' personal development.
- The curriculum is good. It provides a clear framework which guides teachers' planning, ensuring that pupils have relevant learning opportunities. The school uses the local community very effectively to enhance the curriculum and extend the range of experiences offered to pupils.
- The provision for spiritual and cultural development is good. Teachers plan experiences which support the development of pupils' awareness across all the subjects of the curriculum.
- The school cares for its pupils well. It has implemented good procedures to monitor pupils' academic and personal development and these enable them to make progress and to become mature young adults.

What could be improved

- Health and safety procedures are not being monitored effectively and risk assessments have not been carried out.
- The governors have not effectively supported or guided the school to establish a strategic plan. A clear educational direction for the school has not been established and staff are not fully involved in development planning.
- The governing body is not fully meeting its responsibilities because it does not sufficiently involve the acting headteacher in setting the budget and it has not sufficiently monitored the work of the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its inspection in 1998. All the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed. The Local Education Authority has now confirmed that the school is to remain an all aged special school, for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Teaching for pupils aged 5 to 11 has improved significantly and the school has introduced appropriate strategies to meet the needs of pupils with communication difficulties. There is improved understanding of the needs of autistic pupils and further training is planned. Teachers have also improved their subject knowledge in information and communication technology and the school has recently appointed a temporary teacher with specific skills in physical education. This is having a positive impact on planning. Good policies for English and communication have been implemented. These, along with the introduction of a symbol communication system, have resulted in an effective whole school approach to addressing pupils' communication difficulties. The curriculum has been improved. Commercial modules of work have been implemented for a significant number of subjects; these along with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies provide a good framework for planning and help ensure that pupils make progress. The curriculum for students over 16 has also been improved. A commercial programme of work, specifically developed for students with severe learning difficulties has been implemented and ensures that students have discrete and age appropriate learning opportunities. Pupils aged 11 to 14 now have opportunities to study a modern foreign language. There have been significant improvements to assessment procedures, nationally recognised materials have been introduced and these are used effectively to measure achievement and to monitor progress. The outcomes of assessment are used effectively to inform parents of how their child is doing. The role of the subject co-ordinator has been developed to include good procedures for monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents now contain all the recommended information.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	By age 7
Speaking and listening	B
Reading	B
Writing	B
Mathematics	B
Personal, social and health education	B
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B

Key	
Very good	A
Good	B
Satisfactory	C
Unsatisfactory	D
Poor	E

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

Pupils make good progress in relation to the targets set for them in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Their progress is satisfactory in all the other subjects of the curriculum.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils participate enthusiastically in activities and maintain their concentration well. They take pride in their work and are keen to demonstrate what they have achieved.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons, around the school and on visits. Pupils' behaviour makes a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere in the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good; Pupils respond well to the responsibilities they are given. They work and play well together, despite the wide range of ages and abilities.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and attend on a regular basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5	Aged 5-11	Aged 11-16	Aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	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 was good overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In 4 out of 10 lessons teaching was good and in just over 3 out of 10 it was very good. Very good teaching was seen in English, mathematics, personal and social education and music. Teaching was consistently good for children under five, and pupils in Year 1 and for older secondary age pupils and students over sixteen.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils experience a wide range of subjects and have good opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum for children under five and students over 16 is good. The amount of teaching time available in the day is below that recommended for pupils aged 7 to 16 but the school makes good use of lunchtimes to support the development of pupils' personal and social skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Assemblies and religious education effectively support the development of spiritual awareness. The personal, social and health education programme, as well as teachers' expectations of pupils, effectively promote moral and social development. A good range of cultural experiences are planned.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares for pupils well by providing a supportive learning environment. Assessment is good. Teachers know exactly what pupils can and cannot do. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good.
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The school works very well with parents. It provides them with very good information about their children's progress and what is happening in school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in decisions about their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The acting headteacher and staff have worked hard to maintain and improve standards and to address the issues from the last inspection. There have been significant improvements to some areas of the school's work but a clear direction for future development has not been established. Long-term priorities have not been identified but short-term targets are satisfactory. These have enabled the school to improve but there are no goals to guide work in the future. Subjects are well managed, teachers' plans and pupils' work are monitored effectively but co-ordinators have not established subject development plans to guide improvements.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body does not fully meet its responsibilities. It has, by careful questioning, ensured that issues from the last inspection have been addressed. It has not worked effectively with the acting headteacher to establish a clear direction for the school's future and has not sufficiently involved the acting headteacher in setting the budget. Satisfactory procedures to monitor some aspects of the school's work have been implemented but the governing body does not monitor sufficiently to identify strengths and weaknesses. The school's health and safety procedures are not being monitored and risk assessments have not been undertaken.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There are good procedures to monitor teaching and pupils' work. These along with assessment provided good information about the effectiveness of teaching. The school uses this information to address areas of weakness and to improve its practice. However, it cannot evaluate new initiatives because they are not planned over the long-term and success criteria have not been identified.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Specific grants, and resources such as staffing, accommodation and learning resources are used well to support pupils' progress but the school does not have a suitable plan for the strategic use of resources to support future developments.

There are sufficient teachers and support staff to meet the needs of pupils and the current demands of the curriculum. However, there are not enough support staff to implement the teaching methods planned for pupils with autism or to support the re-establishment of opportunities for inclusion, college links and work experience. The accommodation is satisfactory but there are no specialist facilities to enable more age appropriate learning for older secondary age pupils and students over 16.

The school currently has a budget underspend, which is over 10%. This money has been appropriately allocated to support further development of the outside play areas and to repair the swimming pool roof. There are sufficient suitable resources to support teaching and learning in all subject areas except information and communication technology. This is to be addressed through the National Grid for Learning grant.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • That teaching is good and that their children make good progress. • That they are well informed about the progress their children make. • They are well supported by staff and are comfortable to ask questions. • That the school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities offered to children outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by parents, although the leadership and management of the school was judged to be satisfactory overall. Transport arrangements restrict the opportunities that the school can offer outside lessons and the inspection team felt that the school made satisfactory provision in this area.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Standards of achievement have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory in English, mathematics and science. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, as well as a symbol communication system have been effectively implemented across the school and pupils now use their numeracy and literacy skills effectively to help them with their learning in other subjects. Across the school pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are now good. Standards have improved because assessment now provides good information about pupils' learning. Pupils' individual education plans are of good quality, with precise and realistic targets for learning. These enable teachers to plan work more effectively and pupils make good progress because they build on their achievements and practise their skills.
- 2 The achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good. Because there are so few pupils in each of the other year groups it is inappropriate to make judgements about their achievement by the age of 11 and 16. However, inspection findings indicate that the majority of pupils achieve standards that are as good as those achieved by pupils aged between 5 and 7 years. Because the targets in pupils' individual education plans are precise and take good account of what has already been learned, pupils of all abilities make the same progress and there are no differences between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils build successfully on what they have learned and records indicate that their progress is good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education and it is satisfactory in the other subjects of the curriculum. All pupils have been assessed using the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's 'P' level assessment materials. The outcomes of these assessments have been used effectively to establish learning targets for each pupil but the school has not yet established whole school targets for the improvement of standards in subjects.
- 3 Children under 5 achieve well and make good progress towards the early learning goals. The curriculum ensures that they experience a good range of learning opportunities through which they develop basic skills. Children make good progress because teachers are meeting the needs of individual children effectively. Work is well matched to their abilities and takes good account of what they have already achieved. Although children share in a good range of experiences teachers clearly identify what the learning will be for each individual. This ensures that they make good progress. By the time they are 5 children are well prepared for experiencing learning that is planned from the National Curriculum.
- 4 Records indicate that students over 16 achieve well and make good progress in relation to their past learning and the targets set for them. Because there are only three of them they learn alongside secondary age pupils. They have good opportunities to make progress because the teacher ensures that work is closely matched to their abilities. Comprehensive records of students' achievements and the evaluation of lessons enable teachers to provide them with work that is challenging.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 5 Pupils' attitudes to school are good. Parents feel that their children are enthusiastic about school and the inspection findings support this view. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their keen participation in activities and by the confidence they show in a range of lessons. Pupils maintain their interest and concentration in a range of situations, for example, primary age pupils use computers confidently during mathematics to practice number skills and use their communication symbols effectively to participate in an English lesson. Secondary age pupils work quietly and concentrate well, they use books with great concentration and maintain their attention even when there are late arrivals to the lesson. Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to show it to visitors. In art, a primary age pupil was very pleased with his picture and anxious for it to be admired and in a mathematics lesson a secondary age pupil was keen to demonstrate his work on the computer.
- 6 Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in their very good behaviour in lessons, at break times and when they are on visits. Parents notice an improvement in their children's behaviour and their social development. It is significant that there have been no exclusions in the past year. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and staff are a reflection of pupils' positive behaviour. These relationships contribute to the very good atmosphere in the school and are particularly evident at lunch times when pupils and staff eat together in a very pleasant atmosphere.
- 7 Pupils' personal development is good. They demonstrate a range of social skills, such as using symbols to indicate their needs and they are learning how to have a conversation. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, such as fetching registers or putting out the tables for lunch. It is noteworthy that pupils work and play together well despite the wide range of ages and abilities that are present in each class. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' personal development since the last inspection. Pupils continue to demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour, such as the good relationships, but their independence and aspects of their personal development have improved.
- 8 Attendance is very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend on a very regular basis. Attendance rates have improved since the previous inspection. The school includes pupils who are under statutory school age and those who are over 16 in its published attendance figures. As these groups contain the pupils who have the most absence for unavoidable medical reasons, these figures do not fully reflect the good attendance of those pupils aged 5 to 16.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 9 Teaching is good overall. During the inspection it was good in 4 out of 10 lessons and very good in just over 3. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection when almost 2 out of 10 lessons were unsatisfactory. Judgements are based on teachers' plans and records as well as the teaching seen in English and mathematics and the limited teaching observed in other subjects. During the inspection teaching was consistently good for children under 5, pupils in Year 1, and for older secondary age pupils and students over 16. Very good teaching was seen in English, mathematics, personal and social education and music. Examples of good teaching were seen in all classes and in a range of curriculum subjects.
- 10 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection because there have been significant improvements to the curriculum and to assessment. The implementation of good curriculum plans for all subjects; and the consistent monitoring of teaching by the acting headteacher; as well as the monitoring of teachers' planning by subject co-ordinators, has ensured that teachers receive support to improve their

practice. Teachers now plan work that enables pupils to make progress. Improved assessment procedures have resulted in information, which ensures that teachers' expectations of learning are appropriate and that they plan activities designed to support pupils' achievement and provide them with opportunities to practise their skills.

- 11 During lessons pupils are engaged in activities, which they find interesting, and this helps them to concentrate and persevere. Teachers use resources effectively to maintain pupils' interest. For example, glove puppets were used well during a mathematics lesson for older pupils to reinforce their recognition of individual numbers and number order. Activities are planned so that pupils experience different ways of learning and this encourages them to concentrate in a range of situations. There are good opportunities for pupils to work independently, for example, using the computer during English and mathematics lessons, and for them to work in pairs supported by an adult. Pupils in Year 2 learn to take turns using the mouse or 'touch screen' when they share the computer during an English lesson. Art lessons are used effectively to provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on different projects. There are also well planned activities that enable pupils to learn as a class, particularly in English and mathematics where teachers have implemented the lesson format recommended by the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to good effect.
- 12 Lessons are well planned with reference to the curriculum. Learning outcomes are clearly identified and take into account the wide range of needs in each class. Teachers have developed their subject knowledge well and this is reflected in the good range of tasks and activities they provide to support learning. There is now an appropriate and consistent emphasis on developing pupils' communication and language skills across the curriculum, which supports pupils well.
- 13 Adults work well together and support assistants make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make. They understand their roles within the classroom and effectively support the teacher with activities. Their interventions are positive and this encourages pupils to participate and behave. Adults use praise and encouragement well to help pupils identify their achievements. A pupil in Year 3 clearly understood from the teacher's praise that he had done well counting the number of spots, legs and antenna on the imaginary creature he created using the computer.
- 14 Teachers with mixed age classes, particularly those for older pupils, are very aware of the need to ensure that activities are 'age appropriate'. They plan activities and work that take these into account and they create a more adult atmosphere in the classroom. Students are given responsibilities that reflect their age such as acting as the host when there are visitors to the school. Teachers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to follow discrete modules of work.
- 15 In lessons where teaching was less effective and judged to be satisfactory, teachers did not manage the behaviour of a small minority of pupils. On a small number of occasions their inappropriate behaviour interrupted learning for others in the class. When pupils' inappropriate behaviour is a reflection of their severe learning difficulties or autism, teachers generally employ a range of effective strategies. These support pupils by providing them with the structure they need; this enables them to behave and participate appropriately in activities. However, teachers do not always have the skills to manage pupils with emotional and behavioural problems and these pupils sometimes require considerable support from adults. This has an impact on the level of support offered to other pupils in the class. The symbol communication system and symbol timetables are used consistently; however, there are a small number of occasions when teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively by referring back to the symbol cues. This sometimes leads to frustration. Pupils clearly understand that these timetables provide them with information about the day; when activities are

introduced that do not appear on these timetables pupils become confused and behave inappropriately. This has an impact on the progress they make.

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

- 16 The curriculum is good overall and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school has reviewed the long-term plans for all subjects and the provision made for English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history and music is now good. The provision in all other subjects is satisfactory.
- 17 The curriculum for children under 5 and students over 16 is good. The early years curriculum is appropriately planned from the areas of learning recommended for young children and takes into account the early learning goals. By the time they are 5, children have had a good range of learning experiences, which have prepared them well for learning planned from the National Curriculum. Students over 16 learn alongside pupils aged 11 to 16. Although some of their learning is planned using the National Curriculum programmes of study the class teacher carefully takes into account their past studies and careful planning ensures that students have good opportunities to experience new learning. In addition students study externally accredited modules of work from a commercial scheme. Through good planning the school ensures that the curriculum provided for students is sufficiently different to that offered to secondary age pupils. The small number of students, the wide range of needs and abilities and the level of classroom support do; however, restrict the range of activities offered. Although the curriculum is good and well matched to students' individual learning needs, they do not currently have the social opportunities or wider learning experiences that college links would provide. The school has good links with the careers service and students study a module on the world of work. However, they are not involved in work experience and do not have the learning opportunities that a work placement would provide in preparing them for life after school. The school has arranged successful college links and work experience in the past but these are not currently being offered because they are not suitable for a significant number of pupils and students. In addition the school does not have sufficient staff available to provide the high levels of support, which would be needed for the small number of pupils and students for whom these opportunities would be appropriate.
- 18 All pupils have equal access to the planned curriculum. However, there is a lack of specialist facilities for subjects such as science, design and technology and art for pupils aged 14 to 16 and students over 16. The school, within the limits imposed by the accommodation, ensures that these pupils have good experiences and access to age appropriate learning. Currently there are no pupils experiencing learning within a mainstream school environment although there are a small number of pupils who would benefit from this opportunity. The school has had successful links with mainstream schools in the past but these opportunities are not currently being offered because of staff changes at the local primary schools.
- 19 The curriculum for pupils of all ages is good and meets statutory requirements. Pupils aged 11 to 14 now have appropriate opportunities to study a modern foreign language and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The school has implemented the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's modules of work for a significant number of subjects and has developed suitable long-term plans for others. This ensures appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum and enables teachers to plan work so that pupils make progress during their time at the school. These long-term plans,

supported by good monitoring procedures have been effective in improving the quality of teachers' planning and the range of learning opportunities offered to pupils.

- 20 Overall the school makes good provision for personal, social and health education. It is particularly good for children under 5 and younger primary age pupils because it pervades the whole curriculum. The school has responded appropriately to criticisms in the last inspection report and has introduced a discrete programme. The school is aware that there are currently inconsistencies in the way it is taught and that there is an over emphasis on health education. This area has been appropriately identified for further development and the school is currently looking at a number of commercial schemes, which would meet pupils' needs more closely. The personal and social education that occurs informally at drinks times and at lunchtime is very well matched to pupils needs and enables them to make good progress.
- 21 The teaching time available is below that recommended for pupils aged 7 to 16. The school compensates for this by making good use of the lunchtime to develop pupils personal and social skills, but there is an impact on the amount of time that can be allocated to subjects such as design and technology. The school is very aware of this issue and has tried to address it. The times that pupils are dropped off and pick by transport has been altered and some time has been gained but it is not enough.
- 22 The provision of extra curricular activities is restricted by transport arrangements but is satisfactory overall. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting events with local mainstream and special schools and there are visits to places of interest such as Chester Zoo. Successful residential trips have been organised in the past.
- 23 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a wide range of cultural experiences through art and music and by celebrating the festivals of different cultures. Regular assemblies and religious education effectively support the development of pupils' spiritual awareness. The school's personal, social and health education programme, the expectations teachers have of pupils and the role models they provide effectively promote moral and social development. Teachers plan opportunities across all the subjects of the curriculum. They use stories effectively to promote spiritual reflection and to support the teaching and discussion of moral issues. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together, for example, when they write a joint story based on the book 'Not now Bernard; there are visits from poets and stories from other cultures. Opportunities are also effectively linked to different subjects, for example, teachers emphasise the spiritual elements of mathematics by looking at the different shapes that can be found in temples and churches.
- 24 The school makes very good use of visits. These make subjects come alive and have some relevance to pupils. Links with the community, identified as good at the time of the last inspection continue to be very strong. Pupils and teachers are often out and about in the village. For example, older pupils undertook a survey to find out if the local high street should be closed to traffic. They carried out a traffic survey and compared the village centre with a shopping centre in Wolverhampton. Many displays around the school feature the locality and show how it has been used to support learning in geography and history. Local people and organisations visit the school and the rotary club provides valuable help with riding lessons. During the inspection a member of the local community, who has had links with the school for many years, brought her guide dog to school. The pupils were fascinated to see how clever and obedient the dog was.
- 25 The school has good links with other local schools and is an active member of a small schools group. Pupils are involved in a small schools sports day and participate in a non-denominational church service. Teachers have been actively involved in training

sessions with other mainstream and special schools and the school welcomes a professional dialogue with schools who are in a similar situation to themselves. In the past there have been some successful opportunities for pupils to spend some of their time at local mainstream primary schools. Unfortunately these opportunities are not being offered at the moment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 26 The school provides a very cheerful and welcoming environment where pupils are well supported. There are very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Teachers and support staff are very caring and committed and they value all pupils equally. Parents are right to feel confident that their children are happy and content. Procedures for child protection are good and staff are concerned to meet the needs of all pupils. The family atmosphere is ideal for primary school children; however, there is a lack of age appropriate facilities for older pupils, which makes it difficult to meet their social needs. For example, there is no common room for students over 16 and they still go out to play with the other pupils.
- 27 There have been very significant improvements to assessment procedures since the last inspection. A thorough assessment of pupils is now completed when they enter school. The outcomes of regular assessment effectively inform teachers about what a pupil can and cannot do. Consequently, targets in individual education plans are now very focused and realistic. Teaching in the classroom reflects these targets and this ensures that pupils have good opportunities to make progress. Targets are reviewed on a regular basis and the monitoring of academic progress and personal development, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is now good.
- 28 The school has very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Staff consider very carefully what triggers unacceptable behaviour and very good behaviour management plans are developed. These include clear, well considered strategies designed to address unacceptable behaviour. These plans are available to all staff and to parents and a consistent approach to the management of inappropriate behaviour is achieved. The school finds it more difficult to cope with the deliberately obstructive behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- 29 The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Parents are very conscientious and contact the school in the morning if their children are going to be absent. If parents forget, the school contacts them before the end of the morning session. Records of attendance are very well kept and fully meet legal requirements. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- 30 An informal approach to health and safety has resulted in the school becoming 'comfortable' with situations that may be hazardous. For example, when children are getting out of their taxis, cars going to the social services centre next door often pass uncomfortably close. The school is not undertaking any form of risk assessment and governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring health and safety. This includes risk assessment, fire procedures, the recording of accidents and the storage of medicines.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 31 Since the last inspection the school has continued to improve its partnership with parents. This is now very good. Parents are very supportive of the school, they appreciate the warm family atmosphere and the hard work of staff. There is an active Parent Teacher Association whose fund raising activities are very well supported.

Parents find the school very easy to approach when they have problems and staff respond very well, offering effective support when 'the going gets tough'. For instance, if feeding is a problem the school will provide advice about how to improve the situation.

- 32 The school provides very good information for parents. Pupils' annual reports have been improved significantly since the last inspection and they now give parents a clear picture of what their children can do and the progress they have made. All pupils have weekly diaries that give parents very detailed information about what their children will be doing during the forthcoming week. Additional comments are added, which tell parents what their child has achieved. For younger pupils this diary is supplemented by a home/school book. These give parents daily details about welfare issues such as behaviour. Many parents come into school on a regular basis and they are made to feel very welcome. Although the prospectus contains all the information required by law it does not adequately reflect all the good work that goes on in the school.
- 33 Links between home and school make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Parents are very aware of the targets that are set for their children. They are also informed about any programmes designed to improve their child's behaviour and are encouraged to work closely with the school. Workshops for parents have occurred in the past but none has been organised recently. The school is aware that there is a need to provide information and support for parents in the use of the symbol communication system.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 34 The leadership and management of the school are now satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked hard to maintain and improve standards and to successfully address the issues from the last inspection. They have been well supported by staff who have worked together to significantly improve the curriculum and assessment. The acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher have been in post for 5 years. This is unsatisfactory and has in part contributed to the lack of strategic planning. A clear educational direction for the school has not been established. The school development plan does not identify development priorities over the long-term although it does identify suitable short-term targets. These have enabled the school to improve in a short space of time but now that the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed the school does not have common goals to guide its work in the future
- 35 The governing body does not fully meet its responsibilities. Since the last inspection it has acted effectively as a critical friend by questioning the school's progress towards the key issues. It has not, however, worked with the acting headteacher to establish a clear direction for the school's future and it has not sufficiently involved the acting headteacher in setting the budget. Over the last five years there have been uncertainties about the type of provision made by the school and its viability. This has resulted in confusion and a lack of vision. Outcomes of the Local Authority's special needs review has now confirmed that the school is to continue with the provision it has always made but this has not yet resulted in the governing body establishing a plan for the school's future.
- 36 The governing body has implemented satisfactory procedures to monitor the school's policies and it invites members of staff to make presentations on new initiatives. A small number of governors are actively involved in the daily life of the school as parents but they do not formally monitor what they see. Overall the governing body has not implemented sufficient monitoring procedures to provide it with independent information about the school's strengths and weaknesses. It does not have sufficient information to

guide school planning or to contribute effectively to evaluation. The governing body does not monitor the school's health and safety procedures or its practice and it has not ensured that risk assessments have been undertaken.

- 37 Curriculum subjects are managed well within the responsibilities delegated. Teachers' plans and pupils' work are monitored effectively by subject co-ordinators. However, they have not been required to establish subject development plans that outline future developments and guide the school to implement, monitor and evaluate improvements. Co-ordinators are not allocated a budget for their subject and do not identify the resources that will be needed to support development over a longer period.
- 38 The school's evaluation of its performance is satisfactory. There are good procedures to monitor teaching and pupils' work. These, along with improved assessment procedures, provided the school with a good range of information about the effectiveness of teaching in terms of pupils' achievements and the progress they make. The school uses this information effectively to address areas of weakness and to improve its practice. However, it cannot evaluate long-term initiatives such as the introduction of the symbol communication system because its implementation is not supported by a long-term plan of what will be done and when, and there are no success criteria to help the school evaluate its effectiveness over time.
- 39 The finance committee currently sets the budget and the acting headteacher has very little to do with the process; this is unsatisfactory. The budget appropriately reflects the costs incurred during the previous year and any short-term priorities identified by the school. Because there is no long-term plan for development, priorities are often identified during the year and funding is not always available to support them. This is unsatisfactory. Subject co-ordinators are not given responsibility for a budget. Developments within subjects are not costed and budgets are not allocated to ensure that initiatives are supported. Subject co-ordinators do not make a sufficient contribution to the school's long-term financial planning.
- 40 The school buys in a full range of financial support from the local authority who ensure that the principles of best value are applied effectively to the purchase of goods and improvements to the building. In addition, good use is made of the available staff to ensure that appropriate support is provided for pupils. However, the school does not evaluate the impact that any initiatives have on standards or the quality of education provided. Day to day administration is good and the school office is operated efficiently. There are good procedures for recording day to day expenditure and good records are maintained. The school secretary uses information technology well to maintain budgetary records and produce reports for governors. The school is appropriately seeking to extend its use of new technology through funding derived from the National Grid for Learning initiative. It has prepared a good quality action plan to support this development.
- 41 The school had a large budget surplus at the time of the last inspection and currently has an underspend, which is over 10%. The budget surplus has been appropriately reduced through well-targeted expenditure on maintenance and development of the school's building. The remaining money has been allocated appropriately to support further development of the outdoor play areas and to repair the swimming pool roof. Other grants from the Department for Education and Employment have been used effectively to support the introduction of the Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, both of which have had a positive effect on the quality of provision in these subjects. The use of the building has also been improved. Criticisms in the previous report about the limited use of the swimming pool have been addressed and some use is now made of the pool for hydrotherapy. Similarly, a room has been designated for use to work

individually with pupils who have communication problems. This facility is helping pupils to make good progress.

- 42 There are sufficient teachers for the number of pupils in the school. However, the teaching methods being developed to meet the needs of autistic pupils will require additional classroom support and the school will need to provide additional support for pupils and students if inclusion, college links and work experience are to be re-established. Staff are well supported to develop skills, which they need to carry out their responsibilities. For example, a member of the support staff has been trained as an " intervenor" to support a pupil with visual and hearing impairment. Adults are well deployed and there are very good working relationships between support staff and teachers.
- 43 The school does not have a formal policy for the induction of new staff. However, informal arrangements are good and new staff are effectively supported through the staff handbook, formal discussions with subject co-ordinators and regular monitoring and support by the acting head teacher. Good quality curriculum plans were highly valued by the most recently appointed member of staff who felt they contributed positively to the informal induction process. The school is currently considering the development of an induction checklist for teaching and support staff that will provide a framework for the good practice that already exists.
- 44 The accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms have their own hard and soft play areas and very good use has been made of available space to create a specific outdoor area for pupils aged 14 to 16 and students over 16. This ensures that they have opportunities to participate in activities that are more age appropriate. A distraction-free room is effectively used for teachers to work with individual pupils and there is a well-designed sensory room, which contributes to pupils' sensory experiences and the development of their communication skills. There is also a swimming pool, which is used by all classes on a regular basis. The Local Education Authority has identified the need to remove asbestos from the roof of this building and the roof has leaked over recent years. It now requires urgent attention before it becomes a health and safety hazard. The multi- purpose hall remains too small for teaching physical education to secondary age pupils and students over 16. The school does not have specialist facilities for science, design and technology and art but staff work hard to ensure that these subjects are taught in an age appropriate way. There is also a lack of space for use by the visiting specialists who support the school. Often the distraction-free room or the library have to be used and this restricts their availability. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements made to the accommodation.
- 45 Since the previous inspection the quality and range of resources available to support teaching and learning have been improved across all areas of the curriculum. They are now good in English, science and mathematics and satisfactory in all other subjects. The resources for information and communication technology are unsatisfactory but the school has good plans for the National Grid for Learning initiative, which will significantly improve resources in this area.
- 46 The unit cost per pupil is high when compared to schools of similar type but this is a result of the local education authority funding the school at a higher level than the actual number of pupils on roll. Good efforts have been made to address the issues identified in the previous report and there are effective procedures for monitoring pupils' progress. In addition a great deal of attention has been paid to developing staff expertise and this has resulted in improved teaching. Consequently the school provides satisfactory value for money. This marks a substantial improvement since the last inspection when the school's value for money was judged to be poor.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- The governing body should, with some urgency, ensure that it fully meets statutory requirements by carrying out risk assessments and implementing procedures to monitor health and safety. (paragraphs 30,36)

In order to maintain standards and improve the provision made by the school the governing body, acting headteacher and staff should:

- Establish a clear educational direction for the school by:

ensuring that the governing body, headteacher and staff work towards common goals. This will include:

- i. establishing a school development plan. It should be prioritised so that it fully reflects the school's development needs and will include success criteria and strategies for monitoring progress towards the goals identified. The school's progress will need to be monitored regularly and procedures should be implemented which will enable the school to evaluate the impact that developments have on the quality of provision. (paragraphs 34,35)
- ii. developing monitoring procedures, which will enable the governing body to have a clear and accurate overview of the work of the school. This should include regular, formal visits to the school by members of the governing body and will include individual governors taking on responsibilities for aspects of the school's provision. (paragraph 36)
- iii. ensuring that the headteacher is more actively involved in setting the budget. The governing body and in particular the finance committee will need to respond to the development priorities identified for the school over the longer term by directing funds to support them. (paragraphs 35,39)
- iv. further developing the role of subject co-ordinators so that they contribute to the school development plan and long-term financial planning. This will include establishing subject development plans and managing a budget to support the priorities they have identified for their subjects. (paragraphs 37,39)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	35	40	25	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	23
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	5

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: EYs – Post 16

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4:1
Average class size	5

Education support staff: EYs– Post 16

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999 – 2000
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	£
Total income	249264:00
Total expenditure	237361:00
Expenditure per pupil	11303:00
Balance brought forward from previous year	29810:00
Balance carried forward to next year	31156:00

The current budget surplus has been appropriately allocated to support further development of the outdoor play areas and to address repairs to the swimming pool roof.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	23
Number of questionnaires returned	14

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	85	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	21	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	43	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	50	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	78	21	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	78	21	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	14	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	43	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	21	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	29	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	21	36	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

At the parent meeting a minority of parents expressed concerns about the transport arrangements for their children. These had been addressed by the time the inspection took place. A significant number of parents did not feel that the school provided pupils with a good range of activities outside lessons. Activities after school are restricted because of transport arrangements and the inspection team felt that the school made satisfactory provision in this area.

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

ENGLISH

- 47 Achievement is good. This is a direct result of the good quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' of all ages and students over 16 achieve well and make good progress. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been effective in improving teachers' planning and this, supported by significant improvements to the school's assessment procedures, now ensure that teachers plan work so that pupils build successfully on what they have already learned. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 48 Pupils of all ages make good progress in speaking and listening (communication) because of the consistent implementation of a communication system, which uses symbols, and the opportunities teachers provide for pupils to contribute to discussions or to talk about their work. The symbol communication system also provides additional opportunities for the development of pre- reading skills because pupils learn that pictures and symbols give and provide information. Progress is good in reading because a suitable reading scheme has been introduced across the school and this provides a clear structure for teaching. Teachers ensure that there is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of writing and pupils have good opportunities to reinforce their skills when they record their work in other subjects.
- 49 By the age of 7 pupils talk confidently about the weather and the teacher effectively links their discussion to the story 'Whatever the weather'. Pupils capable of higher attainment suggest simple sentences to describe what they see in the picture. Good use of questioning and prompts enables other pupils to contribute effectively, demonstrating their understanding. The teacher appropriately builds on this discussion through a writing activity. Pupils record the weather for the week; those capable of higher attainment write simple sentences and confidently use wordbooks to help them with their work. They demonstrate good, emerging handwriting skills and they form letters correctly, using capital letters accurately in some sentences. Other pupils copy over words and simple sentences written by the teacher or make deliberate marks on paper. Pupils capable of higher attainment read familiar words and simple sentences. The majority of pupils recognise different letters and confidently point out the letter 'o' in the story book text. Pupils make good progress because teachers carefully plan lessons so that there are sufficient opportunities to develop and reinforce skills in each area of learning. The youngest pupils listen carefully to the teacher and respond well to questions such as 'what do you want to do next' using the symbol communication system confidently to choose activities. They respond well to instructions and this enables them to make progress. For example responding to 'use the pointer on the screen' enables the pupil to use the computer more effectively and to be independent.
- 50 Older primary age pupils answer questions about the story 'The big bad wolf', they anticipate what will happen next and are generally accurate. Pupils capable of higher attainment know the title of the book and when asked, find the author's name. They match objects to letter sounds and know the difference between upper and lower case letters. The oldest pupils and students find pictures of objects beginning with the letter 't' and those capable of higher attainment use a dictionary confidently to find words beginning with 't' and 'f'.
- 51 Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers use assessment well to plan work for groups and individual pupils. They ask good questions, which test pupils' understanding and extend their participation in activities. Questions about the story

'Whatever the weather' enabled pupils to contribute more information about the story and demonstrate their wider understanding about weather. Activities are planned effectively so that pupils of all abilities can achieve. Teachers use the outcome of assessments to establish learning targets for each pupil during the lesson. Pupils respond well to activities and their attitudes to learning are good. Teachers use praise well and pupils are developing an understanding of their own learning. They are clearly pleased when they get something right and their success helps them to persevere. Pupils work independently on some tasks and are confident to ask for support if they need it. The teacher and the classroom support staff work effectively together to provide a good level of support for pupils and this helps them to be successful.

- 52 The symbol communication system is implemented consistently across the school and this is resulting in good spontaneous use by pupils to indicate their needs, for example asking for a drink when thirsty. Teachers have developed appropriate strategies to meet the needs of pupils with autism, providing them with symbol timetables and low distraction areas in which to work. These are effectively supporting pupils to concentrate and the symbol timetables help teachers to manage behaviour because pupils have a better understanding of what will happen next. Pupils are beginning to understand that they must complete work before they can play.
- 53 The subject is well led and managed. The English policy provides useful information and guidance for teachers. As the use of the symbol communication system develops, the communication policy will need to be reviewed to ensure that it fully reflects the school's approaches and expectations. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been effectively monitored through lesson observations, teachers' planning and pupils' work. The outcomes of this monitoring successfully identify areas that need further development. These are appropriately addressed through staff training and support, for example, the teaching of 'model lessons' by the subject co-ordinator. These strategies have helped to improve teaching and learning. The introduction of the symbol communication system has also been managed well but the subject co-ordinator has not been required to establish a subject development plan to identify how English and in particular communication will be developed or resourced in the future.
- 54 Resources to support teaching and learning are good. The school has a small but adequate library and book stocks have been improved since the last inspection through effective use of the National Literacy funding.

MATHEMATICS

- 55 Teaching and learning are good. The Numeracy Strategy has been effectively implemented and this, combined with staff training, has been effective in bringing about an improvement in the standard of teaching since the last inspection. Across the school pupils' progress is now secure, particularly in the development and application of number skills because a good range of interesting activities are provided. For example during a lesson for younger primary age pupils these included playing a matching shape game and practising counting through the use of songs such as "Ten Green Bottles." By the age of 7 pupils achievements are good. They match and sequence shapes and colours and pupils capable of higher attainment name basic shapes such as a circle and a square. Pupils confidently sort objects by size. They are aware of time and of 'telling the time' and correctly sequence the days of the week. The structure of the school day and week is used well to reinforce these concepts. The provision for mathematics is good for pupils of all ages and students over 16. Older primary age pupils have the opportunity to develop number skills through the effective use of rhymes. They use the number line to help them name and identify numbers. Good

opportunities are provided for the learning of comparative weights through the use of computers.

- 56 Teachers' planning is good and is made effective through the identification of clear learning targets for each pupil. The effective use of support staff enables pupils to experience small group and individual work, which addresses their individual needs. Support staff work well with pupils, for example in a lesson for younger secondary age pupils the support assistant worked with a small group on number skills. This enabled them to concentrate on their work and to change activities without fuss. Younger secondary age pupils complete a range of number sequencing exercises. They put numbers into value order and count accurately. During similar activities pupils recognise sets of objects upto 5. Older secondary age pupils have good skills in calculation and they understand simple addition and subtraction. A significant feature of pupils' achievement is their development of mathematical vocabulary. Pupils and students understand words such as up, down, bigger and smaller. Assessment procedures are used effectively to monitor progress and to plan appropriate tasks. The introduction of published assessment materials has been effective in identifying the progress made by individual pupils, as well as providing a baseline by which teachers can identify the needs of pupils new to the school. Questioning is used well and pupils contribute confidently to lessons. Pupils' responses illustrate the positive attitude they have towards mathematics. Good opportunities are made for older secondary age pupils to apply their skills in a practical exercise, such as a local traffic survey. They record numbers in tally charts, draw graphs and reach conclusions on the collected data.
- 57 Teachers effectively incorporate opportunities for pupils to reinforce their numeracy skills into a range of lessons and other activities. This helps pupils to practise and develop their skills. In religious education, for example, shapes are identified and named when looking at religious buildings, in English, key mathematical words are taught to enhance pupils' vocabulary and pupils have good opportunities to practise counting and money values when using the school tuckshop.
- 58 The acting headteacher, who is currently the subject co-ordinator, has worked hard to introduce the Numeracy Strategy and an improved system of assessment. Resources have been appropriately developed to meet the demands of the Numeracy Strategy and the use of computers to develop number and shape skills has been improved. The use of information technology now forms a regular part of each lesson.
- 59 The last report was critical of several aspects of the provision for mathematics and progress was judged to be unsatisfactory due to low expectations, inappropriate tasks and poor quality planning. Links with other subjects were also identified as being under developed and the use of computers and other resources very limited. Energetic leadership by the acting headteacher, much effort by the staff and the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy has effectively addressed these weaknesses and the provision of mathematics has made good progress.

SCIENCE

- 60 The provision made for science is good. Lesson observations were limited but a scrutiny of teachers' records, pupils' targets and their past work shows that pupils of all ages and students over 16 achieve well and make good progress. The youngest pupils develop a good understanding of basic forces as they push and pull a variety of objects. Careful grouping and good levels of support ensure that all pupils are actively involved and have appropriate opportunities to succeed. Younger pupils respond particularly well to practical activities and older pupils enjoy discussion, prompted effectively by the adult's questions. Pupils capable of higher attainment demonstrate

that they can work independently and older pupils and students worked well together when in a small group. There is good teamwork between teachers and support assistants and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning and their enjoyment of the subject. Pupils are beginning to understand the principles of cause and effect as they use switches to work a variety of battery operated toys. They learn to investigate when they taste different flavoured crisps, trying to match the taste to the colour of the packet. When they investigate noises they identify a tap dripping and a dog barking. Activities such as this are effectively used by teachers to support the development of pupils' listening skills and their attention and concentration. There are good opportunities for whole class, group and individual activities and this organisation contributes to the pace of lessons and helps to maintain pupils' concentration. Pupils aged 7 to 11 extend their understanding of forces. They investigate 'friction' by pushing and pulling large objects over different surfaces and investigate evaporation, producing salt crystals from a saltwater solution. Pupils understood that evaporation happened faster in a warm room. Pupils made a filter to remove the sediment from some muddy water. This experiment made a significant contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual awareness. They watched in amazement as the clear water dripped through the filter.

- 61 Secondary age pupils extend their investigations and observed more confidently. They were encouraged to discuss relevant moral issues and simple work on plant growth was linked to environmental issues. Pupils clearly understood the need for soil, water and light and the need for a clean environment. Older secondary age pupils responded well to questions when they investigate the changes between ice, water and steam. Teachers ensured, through careful planning, that science activities for older pupils contributed effectively to their work in food technology. For example when they study 'themselves' they have good opportunities to discuss healthy foods. Teaching and learning are good, lessons are well planned and learning outcomes are clearly identified.
- 62 The subject is well managed. There are good curriculum plans, which provide enough information for teachers to produce detailed lesson plans. Assessments and records of what pupils have done are now being used effectively to identify progress. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and the co-ordinator recognises the need to improve the range of reference books and age appropriate resources to encourage scientific enquiry.
- 63 There have been good improvements in the subject since the last inspection. Teaching has been improved for the youngest pupils and curriculum plans now contain clear information about each unit of work. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress have also been improved. There continues to be a lack of specialist accommodation for secondary age pupils and they do not have opportunities to learn in an age appropriate environment.

ART

- 64 Although no art lessons were observed during the inspection, the provision made for pupils of all ages and for students over 16 is good. Pupils have suitable opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding and examples of their work indicate that their achievements are at least satisfactory and sometimes good.
- 65 Pupils aged 5 to 7 are provided with suitable opportunities to develop skills within a well planned curriculum. During topics, such as shapes, water and myself pupils have suitable opportunities to make progress. They develop basic skills using pencils, crayons and paintbrushes and they are involved in activities, which enable them to develop skills such as cutting and gluing. Pupils confidently work with different

materials and they use their skills to produce deliberate marks on paper or to paint simple representations of real life. Pupils look at the work of Picasso and create simple still life pictures in a similar style. Teachers effectively introduce printing techniques through the use of shaped sponges and they provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to do three-dimensional work.

- 66 Examples of pupils' work indicate that older primary age pupils build on previous skills. They use scissors and glue with more precision and create more complex collages and they react with more imagination to the work of other artists, as demonstrated by their response to Egyptian wall paintings. Teachers make sure that pupils have good opportunities to compare the work of different artists such as Lowry and Monet. Secondary age pupils and students over 16 apply their skills effectively when they create a large piece of work about Queen Victoria. Pupils confidently make models and masks out of paper mache and demonstrate control when they use different tools. Teachers plan interesting opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. Pupils' work, based on discussions and a drama activity about "The Tahitians" by Gauguin, was of good quality. Pupils' collage about the life cycle of a caterpillar demonstrated how teachers effectively use art to support pupils' learning in other areas of the curriculum.
- 67 There is a good scheme of work, which enables teachers to plan their lessons in detail and helps to ensure that pupils build successfully on past experiences. Resources for art are satisfactory at the moment but they have been appropriately identified for further development. There is no specialist area for teaching art to secondary age pupils and this does have an effect on the range of activities that can be offered. The time allocated to the teaching of art is satisfactory because teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to reinforce their skills during other subjects. Art is used effectively as an activity to enhance and reinforce learning. For example when pupils study the Egyptians in history.
- 68 There has been good improvement to the subject since the last inspection. Improvements to the curriculum now ensure that pupils develop their understanding and techniques during their time at school. The curriculum also ensures that pupils are provided with opportunities to work with a wider range of materials than in the past.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 69 Only one design and technology lesson was observed during the inspection; examples of pupils' work show that achievement is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers' plans and evidence of pupils' past work indicates that the provision made for pupils of all ages and for students over 16 is satisfactory. Pupils have suitable opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 70 The youngest pupils are taught one lesson of design and technology a week. There are no discrete lessons taught to older primary age pupils. At present the curriculum is not covered fully. Secondary age pupils and students over 16 have lessons on alternate weeks or teachers plan lessons so that art and design and technology activities take place at the same time. This pattern of provision reflects the lack of teaching time available during the school day. Teachers, however, plan very carefully to ensure that pupils have enough suitable learning opportunities and there is good evidence of design and technology being used effectively to support other subjects.
- 71 The youngest pupils use tearing and cutting skills to make a range of artefacts. For example, they make kites and flowers out of tissue and use simple geometric templates to create patterns. A visit to a farm provides opportunities for them to extend their understanding of textures in a real life setting. Simple work on investigating how a house is planned supports the development of design skills and a visit to a playground

prepares pupils well for their work on designing a new school play area. Older primary age pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise and improve their basic skills of marking and cutting with scissors. They use tools and gluing techniques with more precision. Pupils work on projects, which are more demanding of their designing and making skills such as the production of model pyramids. Opportunities to taste different food and fruits are effectively developed into food technology. Pupils cut rolls and spread them with a variety of fillings; pupils capable of higher attainment demonstrate precise cutting skills.

- 72 Secondary aged pupils and students over 16 demonstrate improved designing and making skills. They make a variety of rolling toys and simple musical instruments. Their work supports the creation of a classroom sensory garden for use by one of the pupils. Pupils use a wider range of textures and materials in their projects, for example they make a twister toy using card and string, colouring it using a variety of different techniques. Many good opportunities are planned for pupils to use their skills to support learning in other subjects. There is an increasing and appropriate focus upon food technology for older pupils. This supports the development of their personal and social skills, for example, when they lay the table using the correct cutlery and when they demonstrate precise skills cutting food to prepare simple snacks. The food technology room is well resourced to support these activities. However, the absence of a specialist area for other aspects of the subject restricts the opportunities that older pupils have for working with a wider range of resistant and semi-resistant material such as clay.
- 73 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons have clear objectives, which build on previous work and activities provided an appropriate challenge for pupils. Pupils' communication skills are enhanced effectively during the lesson because teachers and the support assistants work well together to encourage pupils to answer questions and talk about what they are doing. In the one lesson observed the teacher's explanations about the activities were clear and pupils understood what the outcome of the lesson was going to be. This enabled them to respond well to the design and making elements and encouraged them to tackle the tasks with interest and perseverance. Teachers' planning indicates that design and technology makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. Across all key stages pupils are involved in collaborative projects, such as the sensory garden project undertaken by older pupils. There are also well planned opportunities to enhance pupils' cultural development when they have opportunities to look at artefacts such as the stained glass window in a local church.
- 74 The subject is appropriately managed. There is a satisfactory curriculum plan, which provides sufficient information for lesson planning. It includes appropriate information about strategies for using design and technology in other subjects. The curriculum plan ensures that pupils learn progressively during their time at the school. The school has made satisfactory improvements to design and technology since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

- 75 The provision made for geography is good. No geography lessons were observed during the inspection; however, scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that the school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to achieve. Pupils have geography targets in their individual education plans and teachers address these targets carefully so that pupils build successfully on their past achievement. Teachers' records indicate that pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Younger pupils begin by exploring their classroom and marking objects, such as a teddy bear on a simple classroom plan. They develop these skills further when they explore the school environment. Teachers provide a series of well-planned activities, which include outings. Details of these trips are recorded through photographs, which are used effectively to develop language and communication skills. Comparing their

own community with others such as an Indian village develops pupils' knowledge of the wider world and appropriately contributes to the development of their cultural awareness. Pupils of secondary age and students over 16 use pictures from newspapers to help develop a sense of location and their study of weather symbols helps them to understand about the climate. Teachers plan a good range of work to help develop pupils enquiry and research skills. They consider why settlers choose a particular location and explore the factors involved in their decision making. This type of work is well developed for older pupils who confidently use their observation skills when they collect data for a study about the traffic flow in the village. They use the skills they have acquired in mathematics effectively, carefully observing the amount of traffic and recording their results as tally charts and graphs.

- 76 There have been good improvements to the subject since the last inspection. The amount of time allocated to geography is still restricted because there is insufficient taught time available during the week. However, teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop understanding and skills because geography is now appropriately timetabled. Effective links have now been formed with other subjects in the curriculum and this enhances pupils' learning opportunities. The school, through careful planning now makes good use of the local environment for a range of fieldwork activities. Scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrates clear evidence of their achievements.

HISTORY

- 77 No history lessons were observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of teachers' plans and evidence of pupils' work indicates that the provision made for pupils of all ages and for students over 16 is good. Pupils have suitable opportunities to develop understanding and examples of their work indicate that their achievements are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The quality of provision made for history has been improved since the last inspection. The implementation of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's modules of work for history ensures that pupils learn by building on their past experiences. Pupils have a wide range of learning opportunities, such as drama activities that provide experience of life in the Second World War; they investigate invasion and settlement and discover what life was like for children in the Victorian times. Records indicate that pupils can identify and name a Viking longboat from a selection of boats, and know that Henry V111 was a king. The subject is managed effectively and there are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning. The amount of time allocated to the subject is restricted by the amount of taught time available during the week but teachers plan effectively to ensure that pupils have sufficient learning experiences and appropriate opportunities to make progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 78 Pupils of all ages achieve well. Teachers provide pupils with a suitable range of learning opportunities, which enable them to make progress. By the age of 7 pupils' achievements are good. They confidently operate the computer; they switch it on, load a CD and use the mouse to access its contents or to select a program. Pupils know the procedure for shutting down the computer safely. Older primary age pupils develop their use of the mouse further and confidently access programs to support their learning in literacy and numeracy. Younger secondary age pupils use specialist programs, such as 'My First Amazing Dictionary' and pupils capable of higher attainment have good opportunities to develop word processing skills by copying text. Older secondary age pupils use their computer skills for practical purposes such as finding information and printing a copy to support their work. Across the school teachers ensure that pupils are provided with challenging tasks and pupils capable of higher attainment demonstrate that they can use the mouse in sophisticated ways, for

example, dragging icons to other places on the screen. Teachers make good use of computers in subjects, such as English and mathematics and planning indicates that teachers appropriately match tasks to pupils' abilities. Support staff are used to good effect and in a mathematics lesson for younger secondary age pupils, they provided effective support and enabled pupils to use a counting program to reinforce their understanding of number. Pupils of all ages use computers confidently. This is illustrated by their ability to work independently and accurately, following the instructions from the computer program. The learning targets identified for each pupil are of good quality and effectively support teachers to plan suitable learning.

- 79 There has been good progress in the development of provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection when a range of weaknesses were identified. The provision made for information and communication technology is good. All of these issues have now been successfully addressed. The use of computers to support pupils' learning across the curriculum is now well established as part of teachers' planning and learning targets have been improved significantly. However, the school's computer resources are unsatisfactory because many of the machines are obsolete. The school has established a good resource development plan and the anticipated arrival of funding from the National Grid for Learning initiative will radically improve this situation. There are also appropriate plans to develop further the skills of staff so that they can make the best use of the new resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French.

- 80 Secondary age pupils now have the opportunity to study French. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and pupils make steady progress. Teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that pupils have opportunities to experience French culture through food and music and there are also appropriate opportunities for them to hear French being spoken. Records of pupils' achievement indicate that they respond well to words and simple phrases such as 'bonjour' and 'voila' and are aware that familiar objects are called something different in French. Activities contribute well to the development of pupils' cultural awareness. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and there are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning.

MUSIC

- 81 Only one music lesson and one music therapy session were observed during the inspection. Provision for music is good and is enhanced by opportunities for groups of pupils to work with the music therapist. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum for music was judged to be unsatisfactory. The long-term planning provides pupils with a good range of experiences. Records of pupils' responses, as well as photographic evidence indicate that the good progress seen at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Resources to support teaching and learning are good and the music therapist frequently brings a range of unusual instruments such as a harp into school. This enhances the range of experiences offered to pupils.
- 82 Pupils aged 5 to 7 learn the words for simple songs and are introduced to 'beat' through the effective use of a metronome, games and musical instruments. Pupils recognise fast and slow beats and say if the beat is suitable for their song about the rainbow. They crawl slowly like a tortoise and move quickly like a bee recognising which piece of music had been chosen to represent each animal. When given pictures of animals and transport, such as rowing boats and rockets pupils can place them in groups representing fast and slow. Pupils handle instruments with care and tap, bang or shake them appropriately, playing fast or slow when asked. They are not as

successful when they are asked to copy the beat of the metronome but they try hard. Pupils respond well to the teacher, listening carefully and following instructions well. The sessions with the therapist are used effectively to reinforce communication skills and the youngest pupils use their understanding of symbol communication to choose the instrument they want to play. The learning experiences planned for pupils contribute effectively to the development of their cultural and spiritual awareness.

- 83 The subject is managed appropriately; teachers' planning is monitored by the co-ordinator and this ensures that pupils have a suitable range of learning experiences and appropriate opportunities to make progress. A subject development plan has not been established and a budget has not been allocated to support developments. This means that the future development and resource needs of the subject cannot be adequately planned for.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 84 The provision made for pupils of all ages and for students over 16 is satisfactory. Pupils have suitable opportunities to develop skills and teachers' records as well as photographic evidence indicate that their achievements are satisfactory.
- 85 The youngest pupils have appropriate opportunities to acquire mobility skills such as walking, running, starting and stopping with control and they throw, kick and bounce a ball accurately. Pupils have good opportunities to experience moving in space when they work on the trampoline. Activities appropriately focus on developing pupils' abilities to throw and roll a ball more accurately and to hit a ball using a large tennis racket or cricket bat. Pupils' body awareness improves when they take part in activities such as crawling through tunnels. Older primary age pupils continue to develop and refine their skills through outdoor sports activities and gymnastics. They confidently jump, hop and roll during activities in the hall and there are good opportunities for them to work with a partner and as part of a team. The hall is too small to teach older pupils and students. However, teachers plan carefully to ensure that they use a wider range of apparatus and are aware of the need for safe practice. Activities are appropriately matched to pupils needs and help them to improve their balance and their spatial awareness.
- 86 Pupils of all ages have good opportunities to take part in weekly swimming lessons. Younger pupils develop water confidence and early swimming skills. As pupils get older they respond well to the greater demands that are made of them. They learn to swim without aids and develop different ways to propel themselves through the water. Activities are well matched to pupils' needs and teachers respond well to the wide range of abilities that are present in each class. Lessons have a clear structure and consistent routines, which ensures that all pupils have good opportunities to succeed in a safe environment. Pupils' successes in swimming are regularly celebrated through the presentation of the school's Swimming Award Certificate and additionally through the award of merit colours, which recognise their achievements at county standards.
- 87 Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. They learn to work together in pairs or in teams and they increasingly develop a sense of fair play. Pupils learn to accept the rules of the games they play. Additionally, pupils' communication and numeracy skills benefit as they listen carefully to instructions and keep score.
- 88 A recently appointed member of staff has responsibility for co-ordinating the subject and has already identified the need to improve the curriculum. There are plans to review the subject in the near future and local and national guidelines will be taken into account. This will result in fewer units of work for each term but these will be tackled in

greater detail. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the provision. The school has implemented a suitable curriculum plan, which recognises the need for pupils to build on their skills and to be offered a wide range of activities. However, the accommodation remains unsuitable for teaching physical education to older secondary age pupils and students over 16.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 89 Teachers' plans and evidence of past work indicate that the provision made for pupils of all ages and for students over 16 is satisfactory. Pupils have suitable opportunities to make progress and examples of their work indicate that their achievements are at least satisfactory.
- 90 Through well planned activities the youngest pupils begin to understand their place in a family, they know about special celebrations such as birthdays and they have appropriate opportunities to discuss things that are precious to them. Acknowledging the arrival of a new teacher broadens their understanding of celebration. Pupils participate in Harvest Festival and teachers ensure that each class has a distinct contribution to make. Stories from the Bible are used effectively to help pupils develop an understanding about the distinct nature of Christianity and celebration of the Festival of Light extends their understanding of other faiths. Pupils build on their understanding of celebrations when they look at other landmarks in life such as weddings and baptism. They have good opportunities to enact the baptism service. Teachers plan a wide range of appropriate activities to study the features and patterns of different worship. Pupils find out about Chinese festivals and the lifestyle and religion of a Hindu. In addition pupils are afforded opportunities to consider the role of symbols in different religions. Teachers use the Menorah as a good example of light and symbolism when pupils look at artefacts from a range of different faiths. The local environment is used well to enhance learning and includes visits to a local church to look at the textures of the materials in the building and to see the stained glass window. Visits such as these are linked effectively to learning in other subjects such as art and mathematics.
- 91 Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to look at and discuss artefacts belonging to Islam and Judaism. They use skills developed in history to produce a time line that represents The Creation. Christian festivals are celebrated with more meaning and the concept of care is extended to the whole environment. Work on appropriate personal behaviour is used effectively to support discussions about rules for living and the need to take responsibility. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development.
- 92 The subject is well led and managed. There is an appropriate policy, which reflects the aims of the school and reflects the guidance provided in the Local Education Authority's agreed syllabus. Curriculum plans provide sufficient detail to support lesson planning and ensure that pupils build on past learning. The resources are satisfactory and are effectively supplemented through loans of good quality artefacts from the religious education department of a local high school. No formal monitoring of the subject takes place but good informal support and guidance is provided by the co-ordinator. Since the last inspection the school has maintained the satisfactory quality of provision.

