

INSPECTION REPORT

CATCOTE SCHOOL

Hartlepool

LEA area: Hartlepool

Unique reference number: 111784

Head teacher: Mr R Campbell

Reporting inspector: Mr M H Whitaker
1424

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 September 2001

Inspection number: 230096

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Catcote Road Hartlepool
Postcode:	TS25 4EZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Rowntree
Date of previous inspection:	November 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1424	Mr M H Whitaker	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and pupils' achievements?
				How well are pupils taught
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
13462	Mrs R Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22466	Mrs D Pearson	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
			English	
			Modern foreign language	
16722	Mrs N Buckingham	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	
			Science	
			History	
7615	Mr P Hall	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Physical education	
10760	Mrs P Clark	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
			Religious education	
10782	Mr H Moreton	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			Mathematics	
			Music	
18819	Mr J Atkinson	Team inspector	Art and design	
			Geography	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Catcote School is a Special School for girls and boys aged between 11 and 19 years. All pupils have statements of special educational needs identifying moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently 94 on the roll of the school, 60 boys and 34 girls. In the 11-16 age group there are relatively few pupils with profound and multiple difficulties. Over half the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage and at the time of the inspection only one pupil came from a minority ethnic group. This largely reflects the composition of the local community. Because of their special educational needs pupils' attainment when they enter the school is well below national averages and it is inappropriate to compare their attainment with the levels.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Catcote School is a good school. Pupils with a wide range of special educational needs achieve good and often very good standards in the subjects of the curriculum, building on their attainment as they move through the school. They make good progress and effective learning occurs. This is the result of the consistently good teaching across the school and the effective leadership and management. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achieves high standards in English, information and communication technology and art and design.
- Achieves very good standards in literacy and effectively promotes this in all subject.
- Provides a strong careers and vocational education programme and effective links with the community.
- Has very good assessment procedures and plans lessons effectively to enable pupils to make progress.
- Monitors and evaluates the effect of teaching on learning and uses this information to raise standard.
- Has very good procedures to improve attendance which are proving effective.

What could be improved

- The curriculum for design and technology and physical education.
- The amount of teaching time available each week.
- The use of the lesson at the end of each day.
- The range of accredited courses provided in Key Stage 4.

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 improvements since it was last inspected in November 1999, building on the considerable improvements made following its initial inspection in May 1998.

Clear procedures have been established with the Local Education Authority concerning the referral and admission of pupils and this has led to a better understanding of the range of special educational needs to be managed by the school.

The curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 4 has been developed to ensure access to the range of National Curriculum subjects in Year 11 and the range of accredited courses for Post 16 students has been extended. The school recognises the need to extend this to Key Stage 4 pupils.

The staff and governors have a clear focus on raising pupils' achievements and effective monitoring, evaluating and target setting strategies have been further developed. This has had a positive impact on pupil's achievements.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
reading	B	A	good	B
writing	B	A	satisfactory	C
mathematics	C	C	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

The school achieves very good standards in relation to pupils earlier learning in all aspects of English, in personal, social and health education and in relation to pupils individual targets by the time pupils reach the age of 19. This is the result of consistently good and sometimes very good teaching and effective leadership and management. By the age of 16 pupils have made very good progress in speaking and listening and good progress in reading and writing. Very good progress is made in personal, social and health education in relation to individual targets. The school has achieved its targets. An increasing number of pupils succeed in externally accredited courses at the end of the post 16 provision. In mathematics pupils of all ages achieve appropriate standards and make satisfactory progress. In the other subjects of the curriculum pupils of all ages achieve very well in information and communication technology, art and design, geography and food technology. In other aspects of design and technology achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is good in religious education and history and satisfactory in music, French and physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils of all ages and with a wide range of special educational needs have positive attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Misbehaviour is generally appropriately managed and is largely ignored by other pupils. As pupils get older they behave with increasing maturity.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students take on a range of responsibilities, for example, in the coffee shop. They develop well personally and take on increasing responsibilities, for example when working with young children.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are in line with similar schools.

Pupils are proud of their school; they enjoy it and are keen to get down to work when they arrive each day. They enjoy representing their school, for example on the Great North Run or when attending the local college.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	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.

The quality of teaching is good in all key stages. In English teaching is very good in Key Stage 4 and for Post 16 students and good in Key Stage 3. As a result very effective learning has taken place by the time pupils are sixteen and nineteen. The teachers of English have excellent knowledge of their subject which ensures a comprehensive approach to planning. There is excellent teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants. Teaching in mathematics is sound overall. In most lessons it is satisfactory and sometimes it is very good. Where it is very good the consistent management of pupils is a big factor, however where control is less secure disruption occurs. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound although some lessons are repetitive and can be boring. In contrast some lessons offer a wide range of opportunities to support and stimulate pupils. Teaching in science is always at least good and often very good. There are very clear expectations and the teacher provides a good range of activities to stimulate and motivate pupils. Teaching in personal, social and health education is good overall but the period at the end of each day is not used consistently enough. Literacy skills are very well promoted and taught throughout the school whilst numeracy is satisfactory. The school successfully meets the wide range of special educational needs present in the school, including those of pupils with more profound and complex difficulties. As a result all pupils learn effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. In Key Stage 4 and for Post 16 students where the curriculum is enriched through the careers and vocational education programmes and links with the community, it is particularly good. There are weaknesses in the curriculum however such as the overall teaching time.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils moral and social development is well developed. It is satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and have been effective. Assessing progress of pupils is also very good.

The school has very effective links with parents and provides good quality information to them about their children's progress. The curriculum is good in Key Stage 4 and for Post 16 students. It has a very good careers and vocational programme. There is some imbalance in the provision for design and technology and physical education; the overall teaching time is below that recommended nationally; the range of accredited courses at Key Stage 4 is not broad enough and the time at the end of each day is not consistently used.

The school cares well for its pupils. Procedures for assessing their achievements and progress are very good and procedure for monitoring and improving attendance are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. There has been a clear impact on standards as a result of the head teacher and key staff developing monitoring and evaluation systems and ensuring that all staff have clear areas of responsibilities.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very Good. The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. It is fully involved in the management of the school and has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Since its initial inspection the school has developed thorough systems for analysing its performance and taking effective action to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staff are appropriately deployed and contingency arrangements have been made where necessary, for example in music and physical education.

The availability of suitably qualified teaching staff is satisfactory generally. However, physical education is currently taught by an unqualified teacher and music is taught by a peripatetic service. Provision is satisfactory. Non-teaching support staff are well deployed and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Accommodation is good and is used effectively to support learning. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory overall. They are very good for English.

The leadership and management of the school have been effective in raising standards, and improving the quality of education provided. Particular features have been the improvement in planning and in monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved and taking effective action to develop principles of best value are applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff work hard to work closely with parents. • They can approach the school and talk to staff. • Their children are well taught. • The school is well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given. • The range of activities outside school time. • The provision of speech therapy.

Inspection evidence support the positive views of the parents. Links with parents are effective and the school is approachable and welcoming. Teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. Inspectors felt that the provision of homework is satisfactory and the range of extra curricular activities is good. Although the amount of direct speech therapy is limited, programmes are being delivered by school staff and, as a result, there is no significant detrimental effect on pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 It is inappropriate to compare the school's results with national averages and expectations because of the special educational needs of the pupils. However, the introduction of a broader range of externally accredited courses for Post 16 students has enabled them to achieve external recognition for their achievements. The school recognises the need to provide these opportunities to 16-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 4.

2 As a result of the good leadership and management and the good teaching, pupils achieve well overall and make good progress in most subjects. This is a significant improvement since the initial inspection and continues to build on the improvements recognised in the subsequent report in November 1999. This is the case for all pupils, including those with more profound and multiple learning difficulties, who make the same progress as other pupils. They have access to all provision and are fully included.

3 In English, by the age of 16 all pupils have made good progress in their reading and writing skills and very good progress in speaking and listening. By the age of 19 students have made very good progress in all areas of English and this enables them to achieve success in accredited courses. Literacy is very well promoted throughout the school and this has a very positive impact on the standards achieved. The use of key words in subjects, dictionaries and spelling books support reading and writing throughout the curriculum. Pupils with more complex needs successfully follow individual language development programmes which are appropriately supported by speech and language therapists. As a result they make good progress in their communication skills. Speaking and listening skills for all pupils are promoted in all lessons with teaching support assistants providing excellent teamwork to ensure the involvement of all pupils. As a result again, progress is very good and pupils achieve very well.

4 Pupils' achievements in mathematics are satisfactory by the age of 16. This is largely due to some very effective teaching, supported by good planning ensuring coverage of all aspects of the subject. The teacher responsible for mathematics has worked very hard to achieve these results and progress is only slowed because the other teachers of mathematics are new to the school and are not yet fully familiar with the needs of the pupils and the planned curriculum. As a result some higher attaining pupils find the work too easy and do not achieve as much as they should in some lessons. However, by the age of 16 many pupils have developed to have secure mental recall of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables, and higher attaining pupils are familiar with the 6, 7, 8 and 9 times tables.

5 In science all pupils achieve well and make good progress. In Key Stage 3 for example pupils develop their understanding of forces when investigating how the size of surface area and shape can change the rate of fall. In Key Stage 4 they learn about reproduction in humans and as a result of the very effective teaching develop very mature attitudes. Achievement and progress are good because teaching is always good and often very good.

6 Achievement and progress are very good in information and communication technology, food technology, art and design, and geography as a result of the very effective teaching and management of the subjects. Achievement and progress in other aspects of design and technology are only satisfactory because they are not as well planned or taught.

7 Achievement and progress in religious education and history are good and in music, French and physical education they are satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8 Pupil's attitudes to school are generally good. They enjoy coming to school. Staff supervising the gathering of pupils in the school entrance at the beginning of the school day, are besieged by pupils wanting to get started in lessons, to meet their friends and to communicate with them. They are proud to represent their school, for example a class of pupils with multiple learning and physical needs, recently completed the Great North Run on behalf of the school. On an occasion when students from the Post 16 provision needed to go to college dressed formally for a lesson on presentation skills, every student came into school dressed smartly as required in order 'Not to let down Catcotes'. Nearly all the pupils aged from eleven to sixteen wear, as a matter of choice, and also as they designed it, the school uniform.

9 Pupils identify closely with the whole school. Several times when walking along corridors pupils were overheard to say 'I hope those visitors like our school'. In most lessons, pupils start their work quickly. For example in a food technology lesson after listening to their teacher's objectives for the lesson, students were confident enough to straight away set out equipment for themselves, work out the amount of ingredients they needed from the recipes provided, wash their hands and start the task with enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to volunteer for tasks. For example taking registers back to the office, helping to distribute notices in their break time, looking after visitors, taking photographs for the display purposes, or even staying behind after school has finished to organise and run a children's party in the coffee shop. Pupils enjoy learning and show pleasure when introduced to new aspects of a subject. For example in an art and design lesson creating a seascape, pupils with more profound learning needs enjoyed the sensory aspects of the water and beads involved, and responded well to the sensation and touch of seaweed and silk. Pupils can work well together, as for example in a geography lesson when all the pupils responded to a question and answer session to find features in a picture of a country scene, but some have difficulty in maintaining their focus on a task, as for example when the pupils in this class then moved onto individual worksheets, they needed much more input from their teacher to keep on task.

10 Pupils' behaviour is good for most of the time, both in and out of school. In the last year there have been twelve pupils who have shared twenty-five fixed term exclusions, but as half of these pupils have now left the school, the atmosphere and ethos of the school is now generally orderly. Pupils are tolerant when they see a fellow pupil displaying poor behaviour, and do not respond to it by imitating their behaviour. For example in a mathematics lesson when one pupil began demanding attention by trying to shout out and disrupt proceedings, the others affected a bored disdain, and got on with their own work. Finally the disaffected pupil decided the best thing was to get on and finish his work, as he wanted to keep up his reward points. On a few occasions, such as for example in a football-coaching lesson where boys and girls were playing together, the boys can attempt to intimidate the girls. Occasionally pupils frustration at their inability to get what they want, go where they want to go or do what they want to do, can lead to verbal aggression against others. It is noticeable however that as the pupils progress in age through the school, their skills at handling their own behaviour and outbursts improve.

11 Pupil's personal development and the relationships that exist in the school are good. Post 16 students take on a range of responsibilities in the school coffee shop and the school's community playgroup. Students cope well with the demands of customers, handling money, and are expected to work to real lifetime restraints with food preparation and health and safety standards. Many students have had to overcome very personal worries over for example working with young children in the playgroup, but over time, have conquered their fears and found out for example that they are very capable puppeteers with a sock puppet. Pupils like lunchtime activities such as the school disco, where they can learn to socialise in a simulated leisure environment, and enjoy themselves dancing as well. Post 16 students appreciate the opportunity for the more sophisticated dining facilities of the coffee shop at lunchtime, and share in the responsibilities of clearing up after their meal. Representation on the school council gives pupils the opportunity to share their opinions and in addition to identifying a need for playground equipment, they have also decided to raise funds to help provide some. Pupils are active fundraisers for charity and during

the inspection were making flower arrangements to sell during a coffee morning for Macmillan Nurses. Post 16 students are very successful in the team enterprise company that they have set up. They enjoy the positions of responsibility that they hold within the company and have had notable successes in the past year when they won the Best Trade Stand at an event that included all the schools in the area. One student said when asked what he finally hoped to achieve for the company: 'to make money for the business and to see every body enjoys there selfs' (sic). Throughout the school pupils help and get on well with each other. A number of pupils go down at lunchtime to help and play with the pupils with more profound needs who may be staying in their classroom.

12 Pupils' attendance at the school is satisfactory and in line with attendance at schools of a similar type. As some of the pupils in the school have medical conditions that require time in hospital or away from school when they are ill, these absences affect the school's overall attendance rate. Pupils' punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils are in school for the start of the school day. Those students, who make their own way into school, are also generally on time for registration. Pupils are punctual to lessons and the school's recommended practice of staff accompanying pupils to their next lesson helps to make sure of this. Pupils who are taking messages between classes or who need to leave a class to go to the toilet, take a pass to authorise their time out of lessons. A number of pupils, with their parents' authority, go out of school at lunchtime, but they come back to school before the start of the afternoon's lessons. The school has strict guidelines on what is regarded as an unauthorised absence, and will not authorise absences for anything other than recognised, and approved reasons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13 The quality of teaching is good in all key stages. This has continued to improve since the last inspection and is a significant improvement since the initial inspection. It is a significant factor in the achievement and progress of pupils. During the inspection 83 lessons or part of lessons were observed. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons: it was excellent in six per cent, very good in 39 per cent and good in 35 per cent. It was less than satisfactory in only two lessons, one being very poor because pupils learned nothing because of poor management leading to inappropriate behaviour. Pupils with more complex needs are also taught well and are well supported by learning support staff.

14 A major strength in the teaching throughout the school is the very good planning of most lessons. In English planning is very comprehensive with clear objectives for all pupils. As a result they make very good progress achieving well or very well as they progress through the school. Planning in English ensures that work is well related to the needs of all pupils. For example, those with more complex difficulties have very clear individual language programmes planned to their needs and are well supported by speech and language therapists and learning support assistants. In mathematics planning is very thorough and this is supporting two teachers new to the school enabling them to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Where the lessons are taught by teachers who know the materials and pupils well achievement and progress are at least good and often very good. Where work is not well matched lessons can become boring and behavioural problems can follow.

15 The subject knowledge and understanding of teachers are significant factors in many subjects. In English both teachers have an excellent understanding of their subject which they use very effectively in planning and in lessons. For example, an insistence on using correct terminology enables pupils to develop their understanding about capital letters and vowels and a focus on key words means that pupils can give words beginning with 'J' and 'S' and identify vowel sounds. Subject knowledge is also a key factor in the high quality of teaching in art and design, food technology and information and communication technology.

16 In art and design the teacher has very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. He uses his knowledge well to encourage pupils to use a range of techniques to produce work of a high quality. In food technology the teacher uses her knowledge very well to ask challenging questions of pupils to develop their

understanding. When making pizzas for example she ensures that pupils know what will happen if they make the base too thin, or do not spread the toppings appropriately.

17 Basic skills are very effectively taught to support the development of literacy with key words to all subjects being consistently re-enforced; in information and communication technology the basic skills are re-enforced throughout the curriculum with opportunities to use computer skills clearly identified in planning for all subjects. Numeracy skills are also planned for in all lessons with clear examples of using basic skills in many subjects such as food technology when looking at shape or counting ingredients or in information and communication technology when using a digital camera and counting the number of photographs to be taken.

18 Pupils are generally managed well but they can be disruptive if management is not effective. For example, in an ineffective mathematics lesson work was not well matched to the pupils needs and the relatively new teacher was not able to manage the ensuing behaviour and as a result little learning took place. In most lessons however, teachers have very secure management strategies and very good deployment of classroom support assistants ensures that pupils work hard and achieve good results.

19 Very good use of questioning and the quality of relationships are significant factors of the teaching in science. The enthusiastic approach of the teachers coupled with a good range of activities using appropriate resources motivates and maintains pupil's interest, enabling them to achieve well.

20 Homework is used appropriately to support learning throughout the school.

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

21 Catcote School offers a broad curriculum for all its pupils. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and relevant to the needs of the pupils. It is particularly good for Post 16 students. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in terms of the subjects of the National Curriculum coverage together with religious education but has elements of physical education and design and technology that are not well planned for, or are difficult to track because of the way in which they are taught through other subjects. The last lesson each day is not consistently used by teachers as a personal, social and health education lesson as it is intended. This reduces the overall amount of teaching time available.

22 The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well developed, and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are having a positive impact across many areas. Information and communication technology is well developed as a specialist subject, and its use across the curriculum is well documented. Some good examples were seen in, science, art and design, English, and to support some pupil research in history. Medium and long term planning is in place and with the exception of aspects of design and technology, this supports the curriculum well.

23 The school teaches food technology as a strength, but has no specialist teachers or accommodation for other aspects of design and technology. Other aspects are therefore taught through science, information and communication technology and art and design, and are not always easy to track in relation to progress and attainment. Control technology is developed through the use of the Roamer, and in a Millennium wheel project. Work using wood, plastic or metal as the medium of study is limited, however some good opportunities do exist for Post 16 students on particular college link courses.

24 In physical education pupils have access in each key stage to most strands of the curriculum but this is sensibly limited at present as the principal teacher is unqualified and is unable to offer gymnastics or dance. There are plans to use other staff who do have appropriate qualifications to extend available courses from January. However, pupils do benefit from a coaching qualification in trampolining on a

regular basis. The curriculum is enriched by good use of community sporting facilities, professional coaching in football, and access to a swimming pool in a neighbouring school.

25 A specialist modified curriculum for pupils with profound and complex needs is in place. This is satisfactory and enables these pupils to make progress. The personal, social and health education curriculum, including sex education and health education is good, and provided within a wide range of subjects and activities, including the café, the greenhouse, social events and enterprise activities. There is a twenty-minute pastoral period for each class each day. The content of these sessions is very variable, and together they represent some sixty hours of teaching time per pupil each year. The taught time for the curriculum overall is below the recommended minimum, and this is unsatisfactory. There is now a clear need to monitor these arrangements and ensure a full teaching commitment is accurately delivered.

26 Individual education and care plans are well developed and support access to the curriculum for all pupils, they are detailed and helpful.

27 Accreditation opportunities have been considerably extended for pupils by the end of their time in the Post 16 unit across a good range of options and subjects. Extensive opportunities for vocational and community based experience, a very strong careers education programme which contains some exemplary pilot work for Person Centred Planning contribute effectively to this. The student base is of very good quality, making this a strong curriculum phase that continues courses begun in Key Stage 4, but within a more mature and age appropriate setting in the school. There are no longer Year 11 pupils in the Link Groups, an improvement since the last inspection. Accreditation for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is not sufficiently in place. There is currently no coherent planned inclusion of Key Stage 4 pupils into mainstream schools which may help to develop this.

28 There is a range of very good vocational experiences available for pupils and students both within the school and externally, the school café providing a very rich experience of making, displaying and selling home made food and drinks to pupils staff and visitors. Office, college, enterprise, care and work experience opportunities are offered to all pupils from Year 12 onwards. Careers education is also very good for Post 16 students.

29 The school offers a broad range of extra curriculum clubs and activities including library and homework opportunities, information and communication technology, discos and football teams within local special school leagues.

Links with the community

30 The school makes very good use of the surrounding community to enhance its pupil's curriculum. Pupils regular visit a local supermarket to buy ingredients for food technology lessons and the school's coffee shop. They visit civic facilities such as the court, police station and youth centre as part of their social education, and local sport amenities to access physical education facilities not available at the school. Pupils' knowledge of work experience benefits from the very good support of local businesses such as for example a horticultural nursery and a garage. The local careers advisory service is funding an Internet link for pupils that will offer pupils more advice on career and work opportunity placements, and the school itself offers a very practical work experience placement for students from local schools and colleges. The school runs a very popular mother and toddlers club for local families and the school's successful enterprise company, 4C, has an approving market amongst many of the visitors to the school, and people outside of the school. The school has good relationships with schools and colleges in the area and a number of pupils integrate into curriculum 'centres of excellence' such as art, physical education and literacy in partner mainstream schools. The school is targeting a number of pupils for integration, but unfortunately the opportunities for pupils with profound learning needs to go onto colleges of further education in the area, are limited.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

31 The school makes good provision for pupils' social and moral development through direct and indirect teaching, personal example and opportunities for social interaction including residential visits. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory although apart from the weekly assembly there is no direct planning and opportunities are limited to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. There has been little change since the last inspection.

32 Planning for pupils' spiritual development is through the weekly assembly by providing a short period for quiet reflection when pupils are encouraged to think about the theme of the assembly, the needs of others or how they should behave. Further opportunities come through the curriculum for example in English when pupils were made aware of the feelings of others when reading 'Of Mice and Men', through history when pupils showed their reaction to the sufferings of others as they read 'The Diary of Anne Frank' or in religious education when they consider the beliefs and values of people from different faiths. Pupils with complex learning difficulties are provided with opportunities to become aware of themselves as different and separate from others.

33 The school provides well for the moral development of all pupils and students. The aims of the school identify the need to value and care for each other and the general ethos of the school is based on mutual trust and respect. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and will sometimes recognise the need to say 'sorry' without prompting. For example at lunchtime one boy had made unkind comments to a girl on his table but when she showed it had upset her he voluntarily said "I'm sorry". There is opportunity for both planned and incidental learning throughout the curriculum. Staff set good personal examples and take the time to discuss issues such as bullying whenever necessary.

34 The provision for social development is good. In lessons pupils are expected to listen, respect differing opinions and work independently or together as required all of which has a positive effect on the atmosphere in the class and the overall achievement of pupils. Throughout the school week there are a variety of opportunities provided for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility which increase as they get older. The coffee bar and lunchtime cafeteria system are important places for learning how to behave in social situations as well as fostering the awareness of helping others less fortunate than themselves. The choice of lunchtime clubs also provides opportunity for social interaction and the weekly discos give an insight into age-appropriate social activities which is essential for integration into the world outside school. The School Council is a way of introducing the need for accepting responsibility for others as well as for themselves and working together for the good of the community. At present they are involved in raising money for new playground equipment. The annual residential trips provide opportunities for pupils to learn to live together in close proximity and the schools' involvement in the Junior Great North Run and the Millennium Youth Games provide opportunities for meeting and taking part in sport alongside pupils from other schools. The school also takes part in fund-raising for charitable organisations such as the Macmillan Nurses.

35 The provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. It is good in promoting an understanding of their own culture but lacks any planning to develop an understanding and appreciation of the broader multi-cultural society in which we live. Cultural awareness is promoted across the curriculum through English studying a wide variety of literature including modern authors and Shakespeare, through art and design, and ICT in looking at a range of artistic styles such as Van Gogh or Seurat, through music and history. There are also many visits to places of cultural importance such as Durham and York and visits to the school by a variety of artists including a sculptor and a wood carver. Awareness of cultures other than their own is promoted through religious education studying the Sikh religion, a visit from a Sikh Leader and the musical experience of a visit from Raymond Otto, South African singer.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36 Arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic progress and achievement are very good, both against the individual education, and curriculum plans programmes and against National Curriculum subjects and their associated schemes of work. This aspect of the schools work continues the improvements made since and between the last inspections, and continues to find ways to refine the accuracy and consistency of the process across the school and in all aspects of learning. Particular focus is now being given to the small steps, targets and assessment criteria in use for those pupils with more profound and complex needs.

37 Detailed information about individual pupils is collected and used to build profiles of pupil's achievements at the end of modules of learning, or over longer periods of time, contributing to records of achievement and annual reviews, and are also used to help plan changes to the curriculum. Pupils learn of their progress through regular and accurate feedback. This comes as regular marking in some subjects, feedback on how to improve techniques and skills in physical education, testing for taste or texture in food technology, or questions and answers in many subjects. The quality of feedback to students is good and enables them to make good progress.

38 The school conducts careful assessment of pupils on entry, and provides teachers with a very early summary of information provided by earlier schools. The school conducts standardised national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, and assessments at the end of accredited courses of study, mostly in Post 16 classes. However opportunities for accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4 for higher attaining pupils are too few. Annual review procedures are thorough and meet legal requirements.

39 The school takes good care of its pupils. The schools procedures for ensuring pupils' well being, and health and safety are well organised, and support services in the school work together to make sure that pupils receive good support in these areas. A school nurse is in school on a daily basis and offers a weekly drop-in service to pupils, and staff, if they have any general personal concerns. Additionally, the school has two other qualified first aiders and a base in the staff office. The school is working closely with the Speech Therapy Service to make the best use of their time in school and to strengthen the teaching staff's knowledge of speech therapy expertise and it's contribution to pupils' learning. The school's pastoral arrangements for pupils, through their tutors and the whole school pastoral team, enable pupils to have time to come to terms with problems and to help them sort out the answers, for example by addressing an issue of perceived bullying by another pupil. The pastoral arrangements also make a good contribution to monitoring the personal development of pupils. They give staff the opportunity to get to know their pupils very well and to keep in touch with them through the school day. However, the last session of each day is not always used effectively. Health and safety procedures are well thought-out through the school and for example the fire evacuation routine has been risk assessed and approved by the fire service. The school's arrangements for pupil's safety when they are coming into and leaving school are good, and the only concern centres on the inconsiderate use of the school's designated parking/waiting area for coaches on the main road, by car drivers picking up children from a neighbouring school. The school procedures for attending to the necessary toileting and changing arrangements for pupils with special needs are discrete and private. Showers are provided for pupils, but their use is not always encouraged after physical education lessons for older pupils.

40 The school's provision for child protection is satisfactory. Statutory child protection procedures are in place and are addressed through the head teacher and the school's pastoral action team, all of whom have attended recent training to update their knowledge, and who liaise regularly with the area child protection committee when there are concerns.

41 Overall the school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and for dealing with any bullying issues are good. The pastoral action team takes a very specific grasp of behavioural issues and tracks incident reports, deals with pupils on a one to one basis and acts as a conciliation service where there are disputes or disciplinary matters. The school is very aware that those of its pupils who lack self-esteem may turn to bullying as a way to make their presence felt, and the daily monitoring of a class's behaviour management system is a useful way of picking up on these issues. Lunchtime supervisors are very aware of managing behavioural issues and, with staff, support a range of lunchtime clubs for pupils. So for example a pupil need not feel vulnerable in a large playground but can go to the library, join in a computer club or play in a snooker tournament, and even help the school office out with small jobs. The school has adopted specific methods of intervention that staff can use if they felt a pupil, or member of staff was in danger, but not all staff have received training in these procedures. Staff are encouraged to use a range of strategies to resolve behavioural issues, and to pass on a record of pupils misbehaviour for the class teacher or head teacher. The pupil is then either counselled, placed on report, referred to the school's pastoral team, parents involved, or if appropriate, excluded. Additionally, the school has identified a number of pupils whose behaviour gives concern and who may require for example a fully supported individual programme, and grouped these pupils in one class whilst their behaviour is assessed. However, some of the behaviour management procedures observed during the inspection were not successful, as they did not always meet the needs of the pupils. When some of the pupils behaved inappropriately, the strategies were not in place for some of the teachers to manage these pupils. This impacts on the learning of the pupils themselves, and that of other pupils.

42 The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, and making sure pupils are punctual, are very good. The school works closely with the educational welfare service to set targets for attendance, and to follow up reasons for why a pupil is away. The school monitors the attendance registers on a daily basis and staff are prepared to speak to pupils families straight away to find out why a pupil is not in school. Computerised records mean that the school can quickly check on an individual pupil's record of attendance. The school has piloted and researched schemes and funds for sixteen plus students that give them an incentive to achieve a good attendance record at school. A number of students, who the school identified as losing interest in some areas of education, have been encouraged by the school to take part in a social inclusion project run by the local youth service. This is successfully picking out areas of interest for these students and motivating them to keep in education. The school's pastoral action team is an immediate point of reference for all pastoral staff that are concerned about any of their pupil's attendance. This team, the Constructive Action Team, is at the hub of many of the support services coming into the school, and makes a very good contribution to promoting and improving pupils' attendance. All the necessary procedures for signing pupils in and out of school either as individuals, or in a group, are in place.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43 The school works well in partnership with parents and parents are pleased with the links that they have with the school. Parents are very pleased that the school has addressed the issue of which pupils are admitted to the school. They feel that this has contributed to a rise in behavioural standards across the school and that their children are happy to come to school and are well looked after. Parents appreciate the very open communication that they have with the school. They make good use of the home/school book to send information to teachers on medical, social, dietary and educational aspects. The home/school book is especially valued when staff can write in the book and let parents know what pupils have done during the school day, especially if that pupil has difficulty in communicating the information themselves. Parents like the fact that the school is quick to contact them when there is a problem. One parent wrote 'When my son is not well enough to go to school, his teacher always phones to see that he's OK. This is the act of someone who really cares'.

44 The quality of information that the school provides for parents is good and parents are pleased with the newsletters, reports and letters that they have from school. They can come into school on any day and go into the coffee shop. This provides an informal venue to talk to staff and pupils and look at the work of the school. Annual written reports of pupils' progress are of a good standard and meet statutory requirements.

45 The school has sent out questionnaires to parents to seek their views and values the opinions that parents have on school issues. At present there are no parent helpers in school, but the school is hopeful that once the hydrotherapy pool is being used, a number of parents may come in to support this provision. There is an active parents and friends association that supports fund raising initiatives for the school and organises social and information events for parents and families.

46 Parents say that they find staff very helpful and that the school is open to suggestions, and even accepts criticisms with good grace. They are concerned about the impact on their children's learning of long-term staff absences and some are unsure over the continuity of the speech therapy provision that their children are receiving, although they know that the school is addressing this issue.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47 The school is well led and managed. This has continued to build on the improvements identified in the last report. The head teacher is newly appointed having taken up post in September 2001 from his previous position of assistant head teacher of the school. He has made the transition successfully and has continued the work on the further improvement of the school.

48 The school is well led and managed because all staff and governors show a determination to raise standards and improve the quality of education; all staff are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities and largely discharge them effectively. The governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and are clear about what action needs to be taken to improve further; and most importantly, the school has established very clear systems for monitoring and evaluating the standards being achieved and analysing the factors which need to be improved. From their analysis strategies for improvement are identified and implemented. This has had a very positive effect on standards and the quality of education provided by the school in relation to all pupils, regardless of the extent of their special educational needs.

49 The head teacher and assistant heads form an effective management team. They have carried on the work established following the initial and subsequent inspections. They have established amongst staff, governors and pupils a clear understanding of the need to develop standards and a common commitment to this end is evident. This is clear in the very detailed planning, monitoring and evaluation which has been established. Individual education and care plans are in place and evident in all subjects to challenge and develop individual pupils and whole school targets are in place to develop and challenge different groups of pupils, with separate targets for groups of pupils with moderate, severe and profound and multiple difficulties.

50 The roles of subject co-ordinators have continued to develop. They are fully involved in auditing their subjects and producing subject action plans which feed into the school improvement plan. As a result the most important areas for development are clearly and objectively identified. The audits include clear monitoring of standards being achieved and the factors impacting on these.

51 The governing body has developed its role effectively and fulfils its responsibilities well. An appropriate committee structure has been established with clear decision making systems in place. It is fully involved in evaluating the priorities and in exploring the outcome on standards. Best value principles are followed, and the school uses its money wisely. The Chair of Governors is very effective and has a

high presence in the school, having been fully involved in developing action plans and monitoring improvements from the previous inspections.

52 The governors are very well informed and have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

53 Financial management and control is well-linked to the educational priorities of the school and procedures for monitoring and controlling expenditure are secure.

54 Given the good achievement of pupils, the good teaching and the effective leadership and management set against the cost of educating each pupil, the school provides good value for money.

Accommodation

55 The school makes good use of its' accommodation and all space is used effectively to give pupils and students a wide range of experiences. The specialist facilities available have a positive input into pupils' learning opportunities. This enhances opportunities to include all pupils. All practical subjects, including ICT, have specific rooms with the exception of design and technology. Good quality equipment for pupils and students with the most severe learning needs gives good opportunities to extend their learning and promote movement. A light room, ball pool and trampoline all support the curriculum and a new hydrotherapy pool is soon to be opened which will further add to their experiences.

56 The suite of rooms allocated to the Post 16 link unit is very good. The office training rooms are excellent, as is the Coffee Shop and these are both used daily giving students relevant experience in developing social and work related skills.

57 Outside areas, both hard playing areas and grassed areas with climbing equipment, can be used constructively by pupils and the space enables them to play team games to promote their personal and social development. A small and secure outdoor area for the pupils with the most severe learning difficulties allows them to use their senses. There are appropriate rooms for medical support which are also well furnished.

58 The school is well maintained by the site manager and his staff and there is no litter or graffiti around the buildings.

Resources

59 Overall, the provision of resources has improved since the last inspection in all subjects except for design and technology for resistant materials and music. Resources for English are very good with a wide range of fiction and non fiction books of a high quality. The class teachers make an excellent range of work sheets and writing frames which make the work very clear to pupils and students. The library is well stocked with attractive books.

60 The provision for information and communication technology is improving and is now good. Very good progress has taken place since the last inspection. Teachers are building up a resource of software for their subjects.

61 Resources are also good for physical education, food technology, art and design and geography. They are satisfactory for other subjects.

Staffing

62 Staffing is sound overall with appropriately qualified teachers. Currently however physical education is being taught by an unqualified teacher supported by the head teacher and music is taught by the peripatetic service. There is an appropriate balance of ages and experience. The assistant head teachers give good support to the head teacher. There are weaknesses in some teachers' management of pupils' behaviour. This is because they are new to the school and are currently being inducted into the school's procedures. The contribution of the non-teaching staff to the life and work of the school is significant.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63 In order to improve further the head teacher, staff and governor must;

- (1) Improve the overall curriculum by:
 - (a) ensuring that all aspects of design and technology and physical education receive an appropriate time allocation.
(Paragraphs 6, 23, 24, 91, 96,123,)
 - (b) ensuring that the amount of available teaching time each week more closely matches the school recommendations for each key stage.
(Paragraph 25)
 - (c) ensuring the lessons at the end of each day are used more effectively and consistently as taught time.
(Paragraph 21)
 - (d) improving the opportunities for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 by extending the range of externally accredited course.
(Paragraphs 27, 87)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

83

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	32	29	15	1	0	1
Percentage	6	39	35	18	1	0	1

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

No of pupils

Number of pupils on the school's roll	94
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	47

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3

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	93
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Post 16

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.1
Average class size	8.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Post 16

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	470

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	925,681
Total expenditure	878,413
Expenditure per pupil	9,150
Balance brought forward from previous year	-15,006
Balance carried forward to next year	32,262

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	94
Number of questionnaires returned	9

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	22	11	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	33	0	0	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	38	12	12	12
The teaching is good.	78	22	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	33	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	22	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	22	11	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	22	11	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	22	11	11	0

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

ENGLISH

64 The provision for English is very good, with very good progress made since the last inspection. By the age of 16 pupils make good progress in reading and writing skills and very good progress in speaking and listening. By the age of 19 students make very good progress to achieve success in accredited courses. All pupils make good to excellent progress in lessons and good progress over time. Pupils with complex needs successfully follow individual language development programmes which are supported by the speech and language therapist. Pupils are assessed on entry to school to provide individual English targets which are used in lesson planning. Literacy is encouraged very well through all subjects which offers a secure and continuous approach for pupils and students. The use of key words in subjects, dictionaries and spelling books support reading and writing. Progress is shared with pupils and parents in reviews, reports and informal discussion.

65 The two English teachers have excellent subject knowledge which ensures a comprehensive approach to planning and teaching. The syllabus covers a wide range of work and experiences such as drama, Shakespeare, poetry and reading a variety of interesting books. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop the library and ensure a good range of new books. Pupils take care of books in class where the colourful variety and good quality add enjoyment to learning. A computer is available for pupils to word-process their work and use games and information to develop their reading and spelling. The lunch time library club is popular, where pupils share books and information. More regular borrowing of books and set homework would extend this interest.

66 The excellent team work of the learning support assistants (LSAs) and the teachers ensures all pupils are supported well in lessons. Pupils with complex needs are taught by their class teacher. Symbols, objects, signs and photographs are used effectively to encourage pupils to express their choices and preferences. One girl can open and close a box and take out a photograph which she recognises and gives a sign. With encouragement she gives good eye contact and can sign hello, good bye, doll and kiss. For the first time she gave a sign for 'bounce' during trampolining which delighted both her and the staff. A few pupils have communication boards which encourages them to interact. Two classes are taught English by their class teachers with signs and symbols used very effectively. Pupils in a Year 7 group respond well to the good praise and individual support to match and recognise letters and word shapes in a game. One pupil can say all the words on her card. While mixing paint and looking at beautiful art books Year 9 pupils recognise and match colours to symbol cards to independently fetch their paints. With encouragement they express themselves well to compare their work and colours with those of the artists Miro and Kadinsky.

67 Year 7 pupils respond to the wide range of resources which enables them to work on a variety of spelling, writing and reading tasks independently. They enjoy writing on their own white boards and work sheets. The excellent attention to sensible behaviour ensures they complete their work and are learning to work together. A lively drama lesson encourages all pupils to give words beginning with 'sh'. The teacher leaves the word sheep on the board to introduce the Fable 'A Wolf in Sheep's clothing'. The pupils wear masks and while reading together they thought it would be good to make a play and act it for class 1. The good use of a big book and individual small books encourages the pupils to read together. They know the stories are called Fables and make very good progress to understand the message is the moral of the story. The good use of correct terms ensures pupils think sensibly about vowels, capital letters and meaning. The very well planned lessons encourage pupils to focus on key words, most pupils can give words beginning with j and g and identify the vowel sounds. One pupil underlined the vowel sounds on the board. Most

pupils can read with the group to enjoy the poem 'Jimmy Jet and his TV set'. A few pupils can identify and describe the character from the verses.

68 A good use of a game encourages pupils in Year 8 to record the number of 'ch' sounds when the teacher reads them a poem. Pupils are making very good progress to recognise words, they enjoy spelling and phonic games on the computer. One boy wrote 'chilling' on the board which was applauded by the class. A calm atmosphere with Year 9 pupils and good use of a variety of resources ensures the pupils are clear about what they have to do. All pupils can recognise a word with a vowel and make up words beginning with 'wh'. One pupil knows there are 5 stanzas in the poem and another pupil recognises the consonants. Most pupils are making good progress to recognise the word and meaning of 'narrative'. A few pupils are making very good progress to reason out the text the characters and their relationship to each other in the poem 'What has happened to LuLu?'. They follow the school reading scheme and have a good understanding of the plot and characters in 'Buddy'. A few pupils have achieved their target to recognise 40 words.

69 Careful questions to a Year 10 group involve them in relating to two characters, a boy and a girl who are homeless. They can reason out why it is they became homeless and say words such as expelled, fostered, crisis and choice. One pupil said the boy did not have a choice as he was being ill treated. All pupils identify with the characters especially when the teacher read them a passage from the magazine 'Big Issue' and the poem called the 'Vendor'. The excellent use of spelling and particular approach to breaking down words enables pupils to understand the meaning. They are making very good progress to understand speech marks and apostrophe use. The high expectations and good rapport the teacher has with the pupils ensures pupils attend and behave sensibly to develop a mature attitude to work. They make a good attempt to write their own poem and express fluently what they would miss if they were homeless such as their friends, school, comfort and family. Poetry by three pupils is published in the National Project 'A Poetry Odyssey 2001'. A small step approach for pupils when reading from 'Poems around the World' encourages them to recognise words that rhyme. This is further encouraged with the good use of signs and reading together. They are making good progress to recognise the poem 'Gilbert', is about a Hurricane. They are encouraged to work together and show pleasure in the rhythm of the words. A Year 11 group respond well to the teacher's sense of humour to spell and think of words to organise a trip to London. They try hard when reading aloud and with encouragement and good use of questions they are able to write a menu. They are identifying with and enjoying the John Steinbeck novel 'Of Mice and Men'. Previous work shows a gain in confidence and a wide range of work achieved.

70 Clear well planned modules and accreditation for Post 16 students ensures they attend well to achieve a wide range of work building on their previous knowledge and skills. Their files give a clear indication of good and very good progress. One group can think of questions and answers using mime. A few know the answer to questions on a form and can give a sentence in reply. This is further developed when they organise and carry out an interview with a member of staff. The very good drama of the teacher and LSA give the pupils a very good example of how to answer a telephone correctly. The excellent individual work sheets give clear guidelines to the students. Most pupils can sequence their sentences and phrases independently and read them out. During the lesson most students make excellent progress to show they understand and demonstrate their knowledge of a telephone conversation for their unit of work.

71 Regular reading is encouraged during lessons and pupils follow the school reading scheme. Additional reading practise would give more skill and confidence to particular pupils. A few pupils are very fluent readers with one boy writing his own book in which he says there are very difficult words. A wider range of accreditation for pupils will give them an opportunity to build on credits and link to college courses at age sixteen. The use of a broad range of tests are supporting the monitoring of pupil and student progress to successfully plan individual work. The use of information technology is improving. More frequent use would provide further opportunities for those pupils who are reluctant to write. Theatre visits, films and link workshops with other schools give pupils good experiences of the work of Shakespeare in 'A

Midsummer Night's Dream' and musicals such as 'Oliver' and the tale of 'The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe'. Homework is used effectively to support learning.

MATHEMATICS

72 Provision in mathematics is satisfactory. This is an overall improvement since the initial inspection in 1998, and a consolidation on the findings at the last inspection.

73 As at the last inspection, pupils' achievements are satisfactory by the time they are aged 14, and also by the time they are aged 16. This is largely due to some very effective teaching, supported by well documented planning which ensures coverage of all aspects of the subject. The teacher responsible for mathematics has worked hard to develop a suitable curriculum, and enhance the resources, to include a range of teaching aids that match the pupils' understanding. Further progress is slowed because other teachers of the subject are not yet fully acquainted with these materials and set work that is not always appropriate. Where this occurs pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils, find the work too easy and do not achieve, as they should, during lessons.

74 By the age of 14, pupils are gaining increasing fluency and confidence in their use of numbers. The higher attaining pupils understand numbers to 10. They recognise simple symbols and understand the vocabulary involved such as 'more than' and 'between'. They work independently. Lower attaining pupils use digit cards to make numbers such as 13 and 67. They learn to develop their speaking and listening skills during question and answer sessions, but too often their writing is limited to the completion of worksheets. By the age of 16, many pupils have secure mental recall of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables, and count on and back in 2's, 3's, 4's to 10. The higher attaining pupils are familiar with the 6, 7, 8 and 9 times tables. The lower attaining pupils understand the concept of odd and even numbers and know how to share a number by two to find out where a number is even or odd. There remain weaknesses in the quality of writing as pupils continue to struggle producing work to a sufficiently high standard. Strategies for developing these areas of weakness in mathematics are not yet sufficiently effective. There is sound use of information and communication technology for them to produce and interpret graphs. Some pupils follow an appropriate syllabus including certification in Numeracy. However, the higher attaining pupils are not able to enter for the Foundation stage of the GCSE, of which they are capable. Older pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Many do so in practical situations, becoming familiar with the use of money and coins, for example, while assisting in the coffee shop. They read and interpret charts in cookery books, being familiar with heat and temperature. The lower attaining pupils of all ages sort shapes such as squares, triangles, circles and rectangles. They understand terms such as 'big' and 'small', and numbers from 1 to 10 with the aid of visual symbols. Pupils with profound and multiple learning needs locate, reach for and have contact with objects placed in various locations. They also locate objects out of sight and investigate them when placed nearby.

75 There is appropriate use of number work in other subjects, including in science, geography, design and technology and information and communications technology. For example, pupils recognise numbers in practical situations such as in cooking with 50ml of milk or trunk roads such as the local A19.

76 Most pupils are interested in mathematics. Many are not as keen when it comes to writing. The teachers are careful when planning their lessons to try to ensure that pupils get opportunities to develop their understanding of all aspects of the subject. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards the subject as they get older, and work hard to achieve and make progress. Commendably, when lessons are occasionally disrupted by the behaviour of a pupil, the rest of the class try to ignore what is going on and try to get on quietly with their work.

77 The quality of teaching in mathematics is sound overall. In most of the lessons, teaching is at least satisfactory. Sometimes it is very good. The main factor for the effective teaching is effective

strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour, leading to most pupils being able to participate fully. Consistent use of rewards and sanctions aids the pupils' sense of purpose. Most relationships are firmly established on a positive foundation, usually leading to relaxed and easy responses from the pupils. There is usually a secure environment where the pupils are aware of boundaries. Most pupils' learning is helped by their good behaviour and responses to mathematics. However, where control is insecure far too much disruption occurs for any meaningful progress to take place. Most teachers' subject knowledge is secure, but work is needed to plan for interesting activities suitable for all. There is too much use of worksheets, which are repetitive and boring. In contrast, the subject planning as exemplified by the subject co-ordinator offers a wide range of appropriate activities to further the pupils' skills and knowledge. They respond particularly to well-considered questions and practical activities.

78 The co-ordinator has sought to develop many areas of the subject, and leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has sought to assess and monitor the pupils' standards and this is effective. The other teachers of mathematics, and all the learning support and general assistants, who work very effectively with individual pupils, strive hard to support her.

79 Pupils' numeracy skills are sound throughout the school and steadily improve over time. Pupils are given planned opportunities to develop these skills in lessons and there is evidence of sound numeracy skills improving pupils' performance across a range of subjects. Assessment of pupil's progress is well documented and recorded, but the monitoring of teaching numeracy, and the evaluation of strategies used, is yet to be developed.

SCIENCE

80 All pupils achieve well and make good progress in science. Not all students in the Post 16 link unit have science on their timetables but those who do enjoy the work and learn well making good progress. At the beginning of each lesson five or ten minutes are spent on developing skills which will be of use to pupils in science lessons. This involves them in undertaking a range of simple tasks which involve using simple apparatus carefully and learning to work with each other in the science room. This works well and pupils know where apparatus is located and that it needs to be handled with care. They also practice measuring and are learning the correct names for the apparatus.

81 In Key Stage 3 pupils enjoy the practical element of a lesson about forces and participate with energy and enthusiasm as they investigate whether the size of the surface area and shape change the rate of fall and they discuss their ideas with surprising confidence. Pupils also work with magnets to extend their understanding about forces and others learn about the structure of cells. They understand appropriate vocabulary such as, cytoplasm, membrane and nucleus and know that all cells have this structure. Other pupils are studying the human skeleton and can name some bones, such as, skull, ribs and spine and know how they protect important organs in the body and keep us upright.

82 In Key Stage 4 they learn about male reproductive organs and this is taught in a very effective and objective way which enables these older pupils to respond in a mature manner. In this way they remember and understand the important concepts. Others use a microscope effectively to observe a range of cells and draw what they see. This intrigues them and they concentrate well. The work in this key stage builds very effectively on previous work in more depth. Most of these pupils are quite confident and their files show that they have completed a good quantity of work.

83 Students on the Post 16 link unit are encouraged to work independently at times and they do so quietly and with concentration asking for help when needed. They are working towards externally accredited examinations and many of them should be successful.

84 Pupils with more severe learning difficulties join in with enthusiasm and experiment with magnets during a lesson about forces. They can show what is meant by pushing and pulling and find objects to demonstrate this. Good interactions between the pupils and adults results in constant challenge at a level the pupils understand and respond to. Pupils and students with more complex learning needs learn about science through their senses as they respond to noises and show pleasure or dislike by familiar gestures or movements.

85 Teaching is always good and often very good. The teacher is enthusiastic about the subject and wants the pupils to enjoy their lessons. Her enthusiastic approach coupled with a good range of activities using appropriate resources motivates pupils and maintains their interest. Lessons have a brisk pace and pupils are eager to participate. Very good use of questions extends pupils thinking and also allows the teacher to assess how well pupils are learning. The teacher has very clear expectations of behaviour when pupils are in the science room, especially when using equipment, and they respond very well to this and rarely do pupils have to be reminded more than once. Relationships between the teacher and the pupils are very good and there is always a positive classroom atmosphere which encourages pupils to work hard. The teacher knows the pupils well and directs them accordingly so that they experience success, but they are also expected to complete the work and concentrate.

86 Science is well planned and led by a very enthusiastic teacher. A detailed subject plan shows areas for future development and these show a commitment to further improvement of the subject for all pupils and students. Assessment and recording procedures are in accordance with the schools' policy and demonstrate achievement and progress through the planned modules. External accreditation is planned for students in the Post 16 unit but pupils at Key Stage 4 are not given this opportunity yet. The school is aware of the need to develop this.

ART AND DESIGN

87 The provision for art and design is very good with strengths in painting, observational drawing and three dimensional work. This has led to pupils achieving well in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Post 16. The attainment of some pupils reach age appropriate standards. The school could improve further by entering pupils for accredited courses where their work could achieve the recognition that it deserves.

88 Throughout the school pupils participate in an impressive range of activities requiring them to observe with sensitivity and attention to detail. In Key Stage 3 pupils use a range of media to represent their ideas and observations and pay good attention to detail in shape and colour. For example in the topic of self-portraits Year 7 pupils use a digital camera to produce images of themselves which they then trace and finally mix colours to paint them. Year 8 pupils build on this by drawing self portraits in black and white pastels to develop the use of tone and shade. Many pupils successfully experiment with colour and paints and use brushes to see the different effects that may be produced. They gain inspiration from examples of famous artists and are able to communicate creative ideas. For example when Year 9 pupils produced very good landscape work in the style of Seurat. Pupils are able to mix a range of primary colours in order to use contrast and matching skills. They draw and paint well from direct observation and readily discuss how to improve their work. Pupils are able to confidently use a wide range of materials, including charcoal, pastel, textured paper, fabric and paint. All pupils acquire a range of highly developed skills in observing, drawing, painting, printing and modelling. Pupils produced very good work in response to the topic of African mask. For example Post 16 students used computer programs to create imaginative wrapping designs, Year 11 pupils designed necklaces using painted straws and Year 10 pupils completed detailed still life drawings of African artefacts. Pupils with profound and complex difficulties can explore the sensations of different materials such as sand, water and fabric. They also create paint effects on card to contribute to a design of a decoration. However too often the pupils choices are restricted and there is a need to provide them with more opportunities to participate in the activities.

89 The quality of teaching is very good. Planning is very good and leads to pupils being fully aware of the skills that they will develop. Lessons are very well structured and each stage of learning is thoroughly explained. Teachers skilfully use instruction to individuals and groups and also demonstrate the required skills. This leads to pupils showing considerable enjoyment of and enthusiasm for art and design. As a result pupils' confidence increases and they are willing to experiment with ideas enabling them to become more independent and evaluative learners. Their behaviour and maturity when handling equipment is very good. Where teaching is very good teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations, review pupils' progress thoroughly and use space and resources very effectively. As a result pupils are conscientious, remain on task for sustained periods of time and persevere to complete their work to the highest possible standard. They take great pride in their achievements and appreciate the display of their work in class and around the school.

90 The subject leader has a very good knowledge of art and design, provides good, enthusiastic leadership and has high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. There are very effective procedures for monitoring the standards of work and assessing pupils' progress. The pupils' work is celebrated throughout the school in professional and imaginative displays and reflects the school's ethos and commitment to high quality work. There are very good links between art and design and other subjects; for example with the topic on the environment in geography. The work of artists in residence further enhances the work in the school and helps to sustain the pupils' motivation and interest; for example when a sculptor led workshops to enable the school to exhibit excellent three dimensional work on the theme of 'Journeys' for the town's millennium celebrations.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91 Pupils achieve very well in the food technology aspects of design and technology. Satisfactory standards are achieved in other aspects which are taught through science, information and communication technology, and art and design. During the inspection it was not possible to see much control technology or construction because of when they are planned to be taught. However, earlier evidence indicates satisfactory progress. This approach to teaching these aspects of design and technology make it difficult for the school to be sure of the time allocated to each area. It is also difficult for pupils to achieve more than satisfactory standards because of the inconsistent approach.

92 Pupils quickly learn the procedures to be adopted in the food preparation areas. They wear and use appropriate protective clothing, operate basic health and safety and hygiene procedures to a good standard, and progressively without reminders, as they move through the school. They are fully aware of the appropriate ways of using sharp knives, and heating foods, and liquids. As a result very good progress is made.

93 Pupils develop specialist vocabularies well and learn to estimate and measure with appropriate degrees of precision. They prepare and blend materials carefully, following the detailed steps of recipes and plans, but some opportunities to plan themselves are missed. Food is always prepared for a purpose and the teacher has linked the work throughout all phases to target audiences such as the family, children's parties, sale in the café or in enterprise activities. These activities are regular and provide an excellent central focus for the social and economic activity in the school.

94 Post 16 pupils achieve at a high level in specific projects for example the building and control of a Millennium wheel with flashing lights in information and communication technology. An African Mask project in art and design, the exploration of forces and structures in science have also produced good examples in Key Stage 3 and 4. Pupils with more complex needs have achieved success in control technology, using a 'Roamer' to track raspberries or to produce repeat patterns. A group of pupils have produced beautiful table displays of flowers that are on sale to support a local hospice.

95 Teaching in food technology is a strength. All teaching is very good in this aspect, with occasional excellent lessons seen. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The challenge of completing the full range of tasks in the time available is supported by a very good level of preparation, enabling all pupils to work with confidence. Relationships with pupils are very good and expectations are high and responded to, as a result discipline was never a problem in the lessons observed, and a culture of support and co-operation has clearly been established. Pupils, as a result, help others who have not moved so far forward, wash and disinfect surfaces to a high standard, share space and generally work towards vocationally appropriate standards. Teaching and support staff give readily of their time to take the results of their very good teaching on into social and economic settings where the products are tested by consumers and the pupils can grow in stature from the praise they receive. During the inspection, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement of teaching in the other areas of the subject.

96 The curriculum provided is very good in food technology and although satisfactory in the other areas the inconsistent approach means that it is difficult for the school to be secure in the amount of time allocated to these areas. Co-ordination in food technology is very good but the school does not have a secure overview of the entire subject area.

GEOGRAPHY

97 The provision for geography is good with strengths in the planning, assessment and teaching. This leads to considerable breadth in the range of pupils' geographical experiences and increases the extent of their knowledge and understanding of geographical skills and geographical language. This has led to pupils achieving well in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

98 In relation to prior attainment pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 make good progress. They are able to carry out investigative work and record their results in different forms; for example Year 7 pupils measure the amount of rain using an anemometer and are able to explain the water cycle in spoken words and diagrams. A strength of the curriculum is the pupils' mapping skills. For example Year 8 and 9 pupils can locate the countries and the main seas and rivers connected to the United Kingdom. They develop this work by describing coastal features such as cliffs, headland and beach and identify the effect of erosion on the coast. A further strength of the curriculum is the emphasis placed on increasing the pupils' understanding of environmental concerns; for example Year 10 pupils investigate the range of energy supplies that are available, which are the most environmentally friendly and then identify the differences between non-renewable and renewable sources of energy. This understanding is consolidated when Year 11 pupils compare the average rain fall in London with that in a tropical rain forest. They then analyse what are the main threats to rain forests and the possible effect upon the environment. There is good provision for enabling pupils to understand the school's locality and contrasting it with other different localities; for example when Year 7 pupils investigate settlements they are able to record the differences between towns and villages. Pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties explore their locality when they are taken to important buildings and shown what happens in them. They also visit a local park where they are made aware of the environment through touch and smell. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world is developed when Year 8 pupils study Kenya and are able to complete an account of daily life for people living in rural Kenya and contrast it with their own life style. It is further consolidated when Year 11 pupils contrast two areas of France to show that within other countries there are differences in land and life style.

99 Overall the teaching of geography is good. Teachers plan very thoroughly and identify clearly what pupils will learn in each lesson and in each module of study. Very good teaching was observed in Year 7 where good organisational skills, high expectations of behaviour and the very effective use of the support assistant meant pupils understood the different tasks that were set. As a result pupils work hard, concentrate well and enjoy their lesson. There are good relationships between adults and pupils and effective use is made of field work in and around the school; for example when pupils visit the power

station in Hartlepool. The pupils' responses to learning are very positive in both key stages and they behave very well in lessons and on trips outside of school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to ask questions and work co-operatively and collaboratively in small groups. This leads to increased levels of independence and confidence and encourages pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills.

100 The co-ordinator provides good management and leadership and future priorities have been established through an action plan. There is now a clear understanding of the value of geography and what pupils will learn in each year. There are very good procedures for the monitoring of teaching and this has resulted in improvements in the breadth of pupils' learning. The geography resources are good. Very good use is made of the local environment and field trips to stimulate pupils' interests and improve their learning; for example visits to York, a continental market shop and the coast all create a sense of excitement and purpose for pupils across the school.

HISTORY

101 Only pupils within Key Stage 3 are taught history and few lessons were observed during the inspection. However, pupils' work files were analysed which gave a broader picture of their work and achievements. The majority of pupils make good progress in history and achieve well. The current topic about Anne Frank interested pupils and made them think about their own lives and the freedoms they have. They gained some knowledge and understanding of the Franks' flight to Holland and the reasons for the restrictions they and other Jews encountered. An appreciation of rules and of the influence of power makes pupils think of their own daily lives and school rules. Other pupils can order dates and develop an awareness of the passing of time. This is supported by recalling some notable events from the past.

102 The consistent good teaching, often tinged with humour, ensures pupils attention and interest and this adds to their enjoyment of the lessons. Tasks are well planned and meet individual needs so that the majority of pupils experience success. Only occasionally does the lesson not motivate a pupil with more severe learning difficulties who finds the ideas within the lesson hard to grasp and loses interest. Good relationships and good management of the pupils enables lively discussions to take place which supports pupils' learning. In all lessons the aims and objectives are shared with the pupils and assessed at the end which allows pupils to be involved in assessing their own learning.

103 The subject is well planned ensuring a good range of experiences for pupils. Work is assessed and progress through the topics is well monitored in line with the schools' policy. A good action plan ensures that pupils will continue to have opportunities to learn about major historical events which are then organised in appropriate ways allowing all pupils access to relevant information which develops their knowledge and understanding of history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104 Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology throughout the school are very good. This reflects the good progress made since the last inspection in 1999 and very significant improvement since the previous inspection in 1998. These improvements are as a result of introducing ICT into the taught curriculum as a discrete subject, the development of a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, very good teaching and the establishment of a good range of resources and equipment.

105 In Key Stage 3 pupils develop the skills to collect and communicate information, record and present their work and control equipment recognising the necessity for using clear and precise instructions. By fourteen years of age most pupils know and use the correct terminology for the parts of a work station and for the various procedures used with the PC's. They can access programs, enter and change the appearance of text, use clipart, save and retrieve their work. Most pupils have the confidence to work independently when adding data to a database although a few continue to need one to one support. Pupils

especially enjoy learning to control and predict the actions of the 'roamer' putting in increasingly complex instructions. As a consequence of this activity they develop an understanding of the need for accuracy and precision when programming everyday equipment such as washing machines, videos etc. as well as PC's. Pupils with severe learning difficulties make good progress in using the mouse, identifying different symbols and icons and can dress a teddy on the computer screen colouring in the clothes using the brush tool.

106 Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 4 but evidence of previous work shows clearly that pupils continue to make very good progress. By sixteen years of age they can save their work into a directory or floppy disc. They become confident and competent in editing procedures, can create factfiles and illustrate their work by downloading material from the Internet. One example of work done is a 'Food Survey'. The pupils gathered the information on food preferences from their friends, entered this into a database, used the information to find the answers to various questions and drew conclusions such as 'the most and least popular food'. Their control skills extend to making complicated shapes using the screen turtle and they understand the value of simulated exercises to train operators such as airline pilots or drivers in 'virtual reality' situations.

107 Students in the Post-16 group are able to follow the Certificate of Achievement programmes to obtain external accreditation. In studying for the certificate of achievement last year students demonstrated their skills in being able to tab text, insert Clip and Word art, use different font, size and type script for effect, change the colour of the text and apply print options to create a booklet.

108 Pupils with complex learning difficulties achieve well and make good progress. They experience a range of activities involving ICT and most respond to and enjoy sessions with the computers. Some can activate the screens using 'Big Macs' with adult help. At least one student goes to the ICT room for individual tuition where she is able to demonstrate her skill at using switches to activate programs. During one lesson she was able to show her recognition of pictures on the screen by signing the correct responses for doll, drink and bounce.

109 Planning for the use of ICT across all areas of the curriculum is very good and each term the subject manager carries out an audit of its deployment giving help and advice as required. In addition the ICT lessons identify close cross-curricular links. Although the use of ICT was only seen in a few lessons during the inspection there was evidence from the wall displays and in pupils own recorded work that it is used regularly and effectively.

110 The co-ordinator teaches all the ICT across the school with the exception of one class of pupils with severe learning difficulties. It was not possible to see this class during the inspection. The quality of teaching is always good and often very good. Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives and referenced to cross-curricular links. As a result of this very good planning, an enthusiastic teaching style and high expectations for good behaviour and independent work the pupils and students consistently work hard and make very good progress. The atmosphere that the teacher creates in the ICT suite is supportive and encouraging so that pupils enjoy the subject, gain in confidence and have very positive attitudes to learning all of which contributes to the high achievements.

111 The subject is very well organised and managed. The curriculum is appropriate to the needs of all pupils and students and as such ensures that everyone is challenged to the best of their ability. Last year saw the first candidates entered for the OCR Certificate of Achievement all of whom gained Distinction with 100 per cent marks. The subject manager has it in her further development plans to consider the introduction of further options for accreditation as the need arises. Resources are good although the provision of further computers for each classroom would be advantageous for implementation of ICT throughout the curriculum. There are 2 digital cameras one purchased by the school and one as a result of

sponsorship for the Junior Great North Run. Because of extensive use, however, it is envisaged that another camera will be needed in the near future.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

112 The provision and teaching of a modern language is satisfactory. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection report. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are taught French for one lesson each week. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time. Where lessons are well planned with good revision of previous work pupils respond with interest. When instructions are not clear pupils become very restless and reluctant to take part with unacceptable behaviour. A few of the exercises are not clear and are too difficult for a minority of pupils.

113 Most pupils in Year 7 can say the French alphabet with the teacher and at the end of the lesson a few could spell their names in French. Most pupils can answer the question 'Comment t'appelles tu?' with the answer 'Je m'appelle'. Year 8 pupils are supported well by the LSA and a few can sequence the verb 'aller'. Pupils work better with individual support and individual targets would further encourage them to attend. A few pupils can match flashcards to recognise and say the words. Most pupils in Year 9 can sound out five words in the exercise. One pupil understands most of the locations such as derriere, devant and pres de.

114 The good use of lesson marks given as a team by the teacher and LSA give the pupils a good idea of their work and behaviour. The teacher has good subject knowledge but planning is not always in small steps. High expectations of appropriate behaviour would further encourage pupils to make good progress. There are adequate resources for French but a more exciting range would encourage pupils to research and work independently.

MUSIC

115 Overall, provision in music is satisfactory.

116 Pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, even though arrangements have changed because of changes in staffing. Music is still taught to all pupils.

117 It was only possible to observe one music lesson because the specialist teacher teaches five classes on the one day of the week when the inspectors were not present. However, analysis of planning and assessment documents, scrutiny of written work and video evidence, and conversations with teachers indicate that teaching is sound overall.

118 Evidence shows that teachers are usually effective in managing the pupils' behaviour and setting appropriate expectations for them academically and socially. As a result, pupils arrive expecting to enjoy their work, and most settle quickly. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning.

119 All pupils take part in simple performances, including singing. They use simple percussion instruments and develop confidence in performing actions to accompany songs, including clapping to beats. Younger pupils complete a music quiz, which contributes to their writing and spelling. They design a CD label and cover, using their skills in art and design, and design and technology. Pupils use their speaking skills by talking about their favourite music. They use information and communications technology to make a musical pattern, and print it out. They create music, developing their ideas of timing and mood

creation, as when composing a tune to go with the 'Hairy Scary Castle'. Lower attaining pupils pick out instruments. They listen to and imitate distinctive sounds such as a mouse's squeak. They join in and take turns, make choices and respond to prompts to 'go faster' or 'go slower'. Older pupils use tuned and untuned instruments to create pictures in sound. They use simple symbols to notate music they have created relating to the 'weather', 'light and dark', and 'growth'. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties listen to music in a number of environments such as the sensory room and the waterbed. They are always included in whole school events, and play percussion instruments for short periods.

120 The subject is managed soundly under the overall direction of the head teacher, who is making effective use of the personnel and resources available to him. Assessment of pupils' achievements is well documented and the specialist teacher, who is new to school this term, has already carried out diagnostic testing of pupils' areas of strengths and weaknesses. He is changing the curriculum appropriately to reflect the experience of the first few weeks.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121 The provision for physical education is satisfactory; there are some strong elements and some aspects which require more attention. This is because the subject is currently taught by an unqualified teacher, supervised by the head teacher and she is not yet confident in some aspects of the subject. In areas where she is confident and well supported by support staff and eternal coaches, such as staff from the local football club, teaching is at least good and often very good. In these lessons pupils achieve well and make good progress. For example, they develop good games skills, showing good ball control and passing skills. They play with commitment and join in small games with enthusiasm. Although pupils in Key Stage 3 do not use space effectively, by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4 they have developed this well.

122 Pupils accept the need for rules, and for people to apply them in team games, enabling them to overcome frustrations and maintain good relationships with each other. Pupils of all levels of attainment and ages make very good progress in confidence and skills on the trampoline. In Key Stage 3 pupils have developed a range of moves, bounces and control techniques which Key Stage 4 pupils are able to develop into linked movements or sequences. Those with more complex needs benefit from 'rebound therapy' sessions on the trampoline, making good progress because of knowledge and skills of teachers and support staff. One older pupil worked very hard to maintain and increase his mobility and a girl new to the school, was delighted after initial anxiety when she climbed onto the trampoline independently and bounced with the teacher. Pupils achieve success at other times of the year in swimming, sports day, a local special school football league, canoeing and as participants in the Junior Great North Fun Run.

123 At the time of the inspection aspects of dance and gymnastics were not being taught because of the staffing situation. However there was evidence of these having been taught in each key stage in the past. The school is aware of the need to ensure that these aspects continue to be taught in order to maintain balance in the curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

124 Throughout the school pupils make good progress in religious education. The significant improvements noted between the 1998 and 1999 inspection reports have been further enhanced by the introduction of an appropriate curriculum, good planning, good teaching and improved resources. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties make good progress in awareness of themselves and the world around them through the well planned 'pastoral' sessions and opportunities to listen to and enjoy stories with moral, social and religious content.

125 In Key Stage 3 pupils are introduced to three of the world's major religions, Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism. By 14 years of age the majority of pupils understand that people around the world believe in a variety of religions with different beliefs and customs but that in spite of differences there are also many similarities. For example they can name the important leaders from each religion, the special holy books and identify the different places of worship. The whole school takes part in the celebrations of Christmas and Easter and most pupils understand the relevance of these to the Life of Jesus and Christians. Currently Year 7 and 8 pupils are beginning the preparations for Advent. Pupils listen to a range of religious stories and begin to recognise the moral implications and the difference between right and wrong.

126 In Key Stage 4 pupils continue to study the same three religions but begin to apply learning to their own life experiences. For example, writing a time-line of the major events in the lives of their families and identifying the relevance of some of these to religious rituals and symbolism, such as the attitude and approach of different religions to birth, marriage and death. By 16 years of age a few can recognise it is not just believing in a particular faith that makes people different but that we are all unique and special, as one student in Year 11 stated "what makes us different is that we all have different thoughts" so leading to a discussion on acceptance and tolerance.

127 Post 16 students focus on social and moral issues as they affect their everyday lives such as drugs, alcohol and aspects of religion which may have a direct impact on their lives, for example the significance of the marriage ceremony. The less able students begin to understand the implication of rituals and symbolism through practical lessons and role play such as planning and acting a wedding.

128 With the exception of Class 1 religious education is taught by the specialist subject leader. Teaching is always satisfactory, usually good and sometimes very good. Because lessons are well planned and taught in a supportive and caring atmosphere pupils and students develop in confidence and self esteem so that generally most work hard and make good progress. Occasionally, particularly in the upper part of the school, a few students adopt a disinterested attitude and find difficulty co-operating, making remarks such as "I don't believe in any of this stuff". The good teamwork, the skill of the teacher in using and valuing everyone's contribution and in adopting effective behaviour management strategies ensures that attention remains focused on the task and any potential disruption is kept to a minimum so having little or no adverse effect on the class as a whole.

129 The relevant curriculum is based on the Hartlepool Agreed Syllabus adapted for the particular needs of the pupils and students. The research project undertaken by the subject leader at the Farmington Institute, Oxford has made a valuable contribution to the development of this curriculum. The subject is well managed, resources are satisfactory and assessments are carried out at the end of each topic that are used to guide forward planning. At present there is no accreditation available for the older students.