

INSPECTION REPORT

PRESFIELD SCHOOL

Southport

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104977

Headteacher: Mr E. Powell

Reporting inspector: Mrs F.D. Gander
21265

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th February 2002

Inspection number: 230106

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Preston New Road Southport Merseyside
Postcode:	PR9 8PA
Telephone number:	01704 227831
Fax number:	01704 232306
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D. Rimmer
Date of previous inspection:	14 th February 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21265	Mrs F. Gander	Registered inspector	Science Art and design Music English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? How well is the school led and managed?
19342	Mr T. Heavey	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?
16198	Mrs C. Etherington	Team inspector	English Modern foreign language Religious education	
13101	Mr M. Kell	Team inspector	Mathematics History Geography Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2480	Mrs C. Gilder	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Special educational needs Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Presfield is a school for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, but there are a significant number of pupils with severe learning difficulties that attend the school due to parental choice. The school is in Southport but more than one third of the pupils come from the farthest end of the Borough. The school has been part of a special educational review carried out by the Local Education Authority (LEA) and is currently changing its status from a primary and secondary special school to a school which caters just for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 who have a range of educational and emotional needs. The school has 67 pupils on roll and ten of these pupils are in a primary class. Their ages cover four years and the range of special educational needs are very wide. The school has been asked by the LEA to provide education for three students who are over the age of 16, for which there is no appropriate further education placement within the authority. These students are taught along with the Year 11 pupils. All pupils have a statement of educational need, almost one third are entitled to free school meals, and the overall socio-economic background of pupils is below the national average. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and one pupil is currently attending both the school and a mainstream school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The educational provision for the majority of pupils is very effective. The ethos of the school ensures that pupils have very good attitudes to school and that their behaviour is excellent. In the last few years the pupils have achieved an increased amount of external accreditation in a range of subjects. This is due to the very good teaching by specialist teachers and an increase in appropriate resources, including many new rooms. However, the school has too few support assistants to meet the needs of the curriculum and support the wide range of pupils' educational needs. This is particularly evident in some lessons in the primary class, and in the class where Post 16 students are being educated along with year 11. The school provides good value for money in relation to the education it provides for the majority of its pupils. However, it is not equipped or resourced for Post 16 students and in this respect is not able to offer this group their entitlement.

What the school does well

- The school fosters a positive ethos and as a result the relationships pupils have with one another and their behaviour are excellent.
- The school's provision for personal and social development, along with the very good opportunities for spiritual, moral and cultural development ensures that pupils are positive about their learning and prepared well for leaving school.
- The teaching is very good and the majority of pupils make good progress.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good and have resulted in a much-improved school.
- The partnership the school has developed with parents is very good.

What could be improved

- The overall provision for pupils who stay at the school past the age of 16.
- The provision, and the use of information and communication technology to support learning, access to the curriculum and school management.
- The amount of support in classes so that the pupils with greatest learning difficulties have continual access to the activities and make better progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 2000 by Her Majesty's inspectors, who as a result of their visit withdrew the school from the 'special measures' status into which it had been placed. The school has continued to improve and two of the key issues from that inspection have been achieved. There has been a major building programme that has given the school many more specialist rooms, and there have been changes of staff at senior management level. This has resulted in the issue about the provision for information and communication technology not being completely achieved, but the school is now well placed to move this forward. A similar situation exists for design and technology. The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved, and this has been achieved by the reorganisation of teachers so that they teach and co-ordinate their specialist subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	Key	
speaking and listening	B	A	very good	A
Reading	B	A	good	B
writing	B	A	satisfactory	C
mathematics	C	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

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

Pupils, in relation to their prior attainment achieve well in all key stages. The progress they make in aspects of English and mathematics is better in the secondary classes than in the primary class. The size of the class, and the range of educational needs and ages of the pupils, in conjunction with too little classroom support has an impact on pupils' progress, and they do not progress as well as pupils in the secondary classes. This lack of sufficient classroom support also has an impact on the overall progress pupils with the greatest learning difficulties make, as they cannot take part in activities without additional help. However, overall and due to the very good teaching, pupils make very good progress in English, mathematics, art and design, food technology, music and physical education. Pupils who have stayed at the school past the age of 16 are making satisfactory progress in the targets set for them but the lack of an appropriate post 16 curriculum and resources does not allow them to further develop the skills needed for adulthood. Overall, pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual educational plans, and the setting of targets by the pupils themselves further enhances this.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and eager to be involved.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is excellent and arises because of the high respect pupils have for staff and the exceptionally good relationships across the school. Pupils have a great understanding of the impact that their actions have on others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. The relationships that pupils have with one another are excellent and there are many examples of pupils spontaneously helping each other.
Attendance	Attendance is good. It is above average for similar schools and is continuing to rise.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 4 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and it is particularly effective in those subjects where pupils achieve very well, such as English, mathematics, art, physical education, music and food technology. Across the school communication, numeracy and literacy are taught very well. Due to specialist subject teaching to all year groups teachers have a very high knowledge of their subject. Teachers provide well for the wide range of ability in each class, and the learning support assistants play a very active role in supporting the pupils. There are a few teachers who are very new to the school and do not know the pupils' abilities well enough to set appropriate tasks. As a result the quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology, design and technology, and science are satisfactory. However, the learning outcomes for the pupils with the greatest needs are not always achieved due to their need for continual support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is good. It is broad, balanced and relevant for the majority of pupils but the present curriculum arrangements for students at Post 16 are unsatisfactory. The curriculum for the pupils with the greatest difficulties is satisfactory, as different activities are planned, but does not always identify the different learning outcomes for the lower attaining pupils. The provision for personal, social and health education, and especially the careers and vocational education programme are very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. Moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well throughout the whole curriculum. There is strong spiritual emphasis in many lessons but this would be further enhanced by sessions where the tutor group or school comes together to reflect and share their experiences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's monitoring of the academic and personal development of pupils is good, and they receive very good support and guidance so that they achieve well in their education and personal development. The school is a safe and very caring environment.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	This is overall very good. The quality of the information the parents receive is good and they make a very good contribution to their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good. Despite the uncertainty of the school and its change of status within the LEA, the management of the school have continued to develop and improve the school, as well as to encourage to take on new roles and responsibilities. The new senior management team have clearer roles and responsibilities and provide good role models in teaching. The management team has become very proficient in identifying the priorities for development and there is an excellent shared commitment to succeed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The Governing Body fulfils all its responsibilities well. Governors are very supportive, and have continued to play a very active role in ensuring that the development and improvement to the school continues throughout. They understand the strengths and weakness of the school very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and the standards being achieved have developed well and the information from it is providing an accurate picture of the quality of the provision. However, the school's use of information and communication technology to record and analyse information is only just being developed. The school applies the principles of best value well,
The strategic use of resources	The school uses all its resources, including its staff and its funding well. The priorities in the school development plan are appropriate, but the plan does not contain costings and, therefore, is not securely linked to the overall budget.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	There is a sufficient number of teachers in the school, but there are too few learning support assistants. The accommodation is very good, and overall, the amount and quality of resources for teaching the curriculum are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the behaviour of pupils is good. • That the quality of teaching across the school is good. • That the school deals with problems promptly. • That the school expects the pupils to work hard. • That the school is well led by the headteacher. • That the school works closely with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework pupils have. • The range of activities outside lessons. • A narrower range of ability in the school. • Adequate provision for Post 16 students.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments from the parents. The team acknowledges that there is a wide range of learning difficulties in each class and has identified that some pupils need more support. The team also agrees that the provision for Post 16 in the school is inadequate. The team does not agree with the few negative comments concerning homework or activities outside lessons. The team feels that the school has responded well to the shortage of speech and language therapy.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils, in relation to their prior attainment achieve well in all key stages, and the standards identified during the previous inspection have been maintained. However, pupils in the primary class do not consistently make good progress in all subjects. While pupils in this class make good progress in the majority of subjects this is not always possible or achieved, especially in mathematics. This is because there are too many pupils in the class, the age and ability of the pupils is too wide. There is also sometimes insufficient number of learning support staff in the class and this also limits the progress pupils make.

2. This lack of sufficient classroom support has an impact on the overall progress made by pupils with the greatest learning difficulties in literacy and communication in other classes in the school. There are examples of pupils in each class who are unable to take part in activities without support, and who stop working when the teacher moves onto a different pupil or group of pupils. When there are more than two members of staff in the lessons, for example, in art or in English then all pupils achieve the learning outcomes and are fully engaged in the activities. In addition the pupils with the most challenging behaviour present no problems.

3. The progress pupils are currently making in English is good in Key Stage 2 and very good in Key Stages 3 and 4. This applies to all aspects of English and is due to the quality of teaching, including the teaching of each subject by one teacher at each key stage, the use of the national literacy strategy, and the ability of teachers to match the learning activities and outcomes to the wide range of learning needs in each class. As a result, by the time they leave school pupils are confident speakers, who take part in discussions about their work. Most read fiction and non-fiction, and use their reading skills for gathering information, such as in job descriptions and application forms. Many gain accreditation that recognises this achievement. In writing most pupils by the time they leave school are able to complete application forms and CVs, and many write in neat joined-up handwriting. They use grammar and punctuation accurately and spell most words correctly. Post-16 students make good progress in developing their independent reading and writing skills, and in the specially devised units that are taught separately, they make very good progress in reading skills which are relevant to everyday life.

4. This is similar in mathematics, but progress is not as good in the primary class as it is in the secondary classes. The very good learning opportunities and teaching provided for pupils enable them to make very good progress overall, and is reflected in test and examination results. All pupils were successful in the Certificate of Educational Achievement examinations in 2001 and over half achieved merits or distinctions, and the first pupils are being entered this year for the General Certificate of Secondary Education. By the time they leave school pupils can solve simple problems in which they are required to use different mathematical understanding. They also manipulate algebraic equations, and work with indices and square roots. Their competency in handling data and refining ways in which they can display this using new technology has increased.

5. Overall, and due to the very good teaching, pupils make very good progress in art and design, food technology, music and physical education. The amount of external accreditation that has been awarded to pupils has increased in the majority of subjects since the last inspection. Progress in geography is good, as it is in science. However, the progress pupils

made in the science lessons during the week of the inspection was not as good. This was because the teacher for this subject is new to the school and has limited experience of teaching pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and as a result not all the learning activities matched the differing learn abilities of pupils, and some were too difficult for pupils to understand. This is not yet having an impact on long-term progress. This is also the situation in aspects of design and technology where the teacher had only been in the school for three weeks prior to the inspection and had not had time to get to know the pupils' needs and abilities. Pupils' progress in history and French is satisfactory. They also make satisfactory progress in religious education, which is an improvement from the last inspection.

6. The progress that pupils have made overtime in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory and there has been no improvement since the last inspection. There is still little evidence of teachers using information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects, access to the curriculum, or to support the special educational needs or communication difficulties of pupils. In addition, the teaching and learning was interrupted while a new information and communication technology room was being installed, which was followed by the retirement of the co-ordinator and a gap in time before the new co-coordinator was appointed.

7. Overall, pupils make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual educational plans, because they are appropriate, build on previous achievement and the setting of targets by the pupils themselves further enhances this. The very good personal, social and health education programme which is taught across the school, in conjunction with opportunities for work experience ensures that the majority of pupils make very good progress in their personal development. However, the few students who have stayed in the school past the age of 16, make satisfactory progress overall, but they are following almost the same curriculum as they did when they were in Year 11. For example, they are repeating many aspects of work that they have already completed. Due to the lack of a separate provision for these pupils they are not making sufficient progress in preparation for transition or for taking their place in an adult world.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' excellent behaviour, their very positive attitudes to school, and their very good personal development make a significant contribution to their learning and are a strength of the school. This judgement confirms the views not only of HMI but also of the overwhelming majority of parents responding to the questionnaire or attending the meeting with the inspector.

9. Pupils' attitudes to learning throughout the school are exceptionally positive. The majority are enthusiastic about school and their lessons and their eagerness to come to school results in the good attendance figures over the last year. Their enthusiasm also makes pupils very attentive as in a Year 8 history lesson when they showed how well they had concentrated by correctly answering questions about the conditions in coal mines at the beginning of the last century.

10. Across the school the behaviour is excellent and reflects not only the great eagerness to learn noted above but also the esteem in which they hold adults in the school. For example, when, as part of their personal, social and health education (PSHE) studies on road safety, they responded immediately to all instructions and advice from their teacher and the Road Safety Officer as they negotiated a main road near the school. Pupils also demonstrated great care and concern for one another's safety. Such excellent behaviour in

lessons provides a solid platform for learning by enabling themselves, their peers and the teacher to concentrate on the lesson without distraction.

11. The excellent behaviour is based on the very good relationships across the school community creating a climate of warmth and well-being that makes the pupils feel secure in the care of the adults. In turn, the adults are respected and valued by the pupils, and they know the pupils so well that they are able to challenge and motivate each one individually. The pupils respond very well to this model adult behaviour by acting responsibly, and with increasing maturity. There have been no exclusions in the school this year, and inspectors saw no evidence of aggressive or intolerant behaviour. One pupil with particular difficulties was so well managed in a small group by the learning support assistant that both he and his peers were able to engage in the task without distraction to their peers. It is perhaps in the area of personal development that pupils at this school gain most from their learning – a feature highlighted by almost all parents in their response to the questionnaire. Parents highlighted that their children felt confident and happy through the acceptance, love and patience of staff at the school, while others noted that their children had responded very well to the encouragement and praise given, and as a result behaviour had greatly improved. Pupils demonstrate their very good levels of personal development by accepting responsibility for chores around the school, such as taking registers to the office, wiping tables after the meal or taking out play equipment for lunchtime play, and collecting it afterwards. Pupils carry out responsibilities spontaneously and politely, for example, giving assistance to visitors at lunchtime.

12. Attendance is good. It is above average for similar schools, having started at 91 per cent in the autumn term rising to 94 per cent in the summer term 2001. Unauthorised absence fell to less than 1 per cent. Side by side with the raw figures lies the pupils' great eagerness for school, resulting in very high levels of punctuality and minimum loss of time between activities. Such good attendance levels give pupils access to the full range of learning opportunities on offer, and, therefore, help to raise standards. Registration at both morning and afternoon sessions was conducted in line with requirements, briskly and without fuss.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching and learning is overall very good, and has been maintained since the last inspection. It is particularly effective in those subjects where pupils achieve very well, such as English, mathematics, art, music, physical education and food technology. Across the school communication, numeracy and literacy are taught very well. On the week of the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching and in half the lessons the teaching was very good or excellent. The exemplary teaching occurs in art and design, and food technology, while there is overall very good teaching in English, mathematics, music and physical education. Teaching in French, geography and history is good, and in design and technology, information and communication technology, religious education and science it is satisfactory.

14. The overall high quality of teaching and learning is the result of teachers teaching their own specialist subject to all year groups. They have developed a high knowledge of their subjects, and because they know the pupils very well, plan and organise a range of learning activities and outcomes that match the pupils' differing abilities. However, even though the teaching is very good, and the teachers are well supported by hardworking and knowledgeable learning support assistants, not all pupils continue learning throughout the lessons. This is because those pupils who have the greatest difficulties do not have sufficient support and cannot work unaided. Although all teachers emphasise the learning of basic skills in their teaching, they do not make sufficient use of information and communication

technology in their teaching and therefore pupils and students do not have enough opportunities to transfer the skills they have learnt in the information and communication technology lessons.

15. The quality of the teaching for students who have stayed at school after the age of 16 is of the same quality as the rest of the pupils in the school, and for much of the time their work is overseen by learning support assistants. Although the learning support assistants are very well briefed and are very capable, the arrangements are unsatisfactory as this arrangement leaves the rest of the class without additional support.

16. Lesson planning is consistent across the school, although teachers who have only been in the school for a short time do not know the ability of the pupils very well, and at times the expected learning outcomes are either too difficult or too simple for specific pupils. For example, in science the expectations are appropriately high enough for the higher attaining pupils and have a positive impact on learning but are too complicated for the lower attaining pupils. This along with the use of complicated language by the teacher confuses these pupils and they do not make sufficient progress. In those subjects where there is exemplary teaching, the lessons are extremely well planned and the activities are delivered in a way that brings the topic alive. For example, in an art lesson where pupils were studying the artist Lowry, the teacher does not hurry into the main activity of painting but through the excellent use of resources, such as clothes, pictures and music gets the pupils to think about the emotions that were being portrayed in the artist's painting entitled 'The Funeral'. In this lesson there was very good emphasis the pupils' personal development, their knowledge of past times, and they were given very good opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and emotions. These aspects are also present in music, food technology, and in personal and social education.

17. The lessons are well managed and timed and this has a significant impact on raising standards. For example, in mathematics the introductory mental session is lively, includes all pupils and is greatly enjoyed. The teacher is skilful in challenging pupils to explain their reasoning and the strategies they have used in arriving at their answer. This is shared confidently with the rest of the class and supports the progress pupils make in communication. The majority of teachers' communication skills are very good and pupils listen well and answer confidently. Where group work takes place, the expectations of teachers for behaviour and productivity are high. Pupils understand these very well and as a result they respond and behave in a very positive manner.

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

18. Overall, the curriculum offered by the school provides a good quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils. This has been maintained from the last inspection. The primary and secondary curriculum are both good. However, the curriculum for post-16 pupils is unsatisfactory. Particularly strong subject areas include English, mathematics, music, art, physical education and food technology whereas information and communication technology and design technology (resistant materials) still require further development to become fully effective.

19. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is satisfactory. Although the school has an appropriate statutory curriculum in place for years 4-11, it does not provide equal curriculum opportunities for all its pupils. Some pupils benefit from supplementary provision, such as additional literacy support, but do not benefit from the consistent use of information and communication technology to support learning or communication. In addition, while their needs are generally acknowledged in teachers' lesson planning through the

identification of different tasks and resources, there are occasions when pupils cannot take maximum benefit from these activities because of inadequate numbers of learning support assistants in the classroom.

20. A good curriculum is provided for the majority of the youngest pupils as it is broad, balanced and relevant and they benefit from being taught by subject specialists in a number of areas such as science, music, art and physical education. However, these primary-aged pupils are taught as a single class, ranging in age from eight to eleven, and there was even a Year 7 pupil in the group for assessment during the inspection. Therefore, although the school offers a comprehensive curriculum for Key Stage 2 pupils it does not always meet their needs because the planned lesson activities cannot always be delivered effectively in practice. This is because pupils span such a wide age range of age, are working at very different levels and some have behaviour management needs that require very careful supervision but there are not always sufficient staff present to offer the required levels of support.

21. The secondary curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow a relevant curriculum that prepares them well for progression into their final years of school. Subject specialists teach them, and this provides them with a firm basis for their Key Stage 4 studies in which they work towards externally accredited qualifications. The curriculum for these oldest pupils is appropriate to their needs and prepares them well for when they leave school and enter employment or further education and training. There is a good balance between academic subjects, personal, social and health education, and a work related curriculum. The school has widened the range of accreditation it offers so that externally accredited Certificate of Educational Achievement courses are followed in English, mathematics, science, and geography. A General Certificate of Secondary Education qualification in mathematics has been introduced this year. Accreditation for individual units in religious education, food technology, history, and careers are also offered and there are plans to introduce courses that lead to accreditation in art, design and technology, and information and communication technology. The school also seeks opportunities to extend the learning experiences of individual pupils, such as the current arrangement with a local secondary school that enables a pupil to attend lessons there for two days a week.

22. The school's curriculum for post-16 students is unsatisfactory. This is not sufficiently different or discrete from the programme offered to Key Stage 4 pupils. Students are taught alongside Year 11 pupils and, therefore, on many occasions they are repeating work they have done previously. At times this leads to frustration and students' attitudes deteriorate accordingly and therefore learning opportunities are reduced.

23. The school promotes personal, social and health education very well. It is a thorough and well-planned programme that includes modules on sex education and drugs awareness as well as a structured careers education module for the oldest pupils. This aspect of the vocational curriculum builds on the careers programme by making good use of the local community through visits to different work environments and work experience opportunities. Members of the community also enrich the school's curriculum provision by conducting mock interviews before pupils leave school and inviting them to regular 'fun days' along with other schools. The school also has good links with other educational establishments. Pupils attend the local further education college for taster courses in a range of vocational areas, and there are strong sporting links with local schools. The school also provides work experience placements for students from local schools.

24. The school has very effective and coherent overall strategies for promoting literacy and numeracy both within English and mathematics lessons and across other subjects of the curriculum. Literacy is promoted through the identification of key words in many subjects

and the promotion of opportunities to improve speaking and listening skills during discussions, such as in food technology. Teachers also provide activities for extended writing in subjects such as history and, on occasions, geography. Teachers recognise the opportunities to reinforce key numeracy skills too, such as the French lesson in which pupils added and subtracted numbers. Current practice does not consistently promote information and technology skills through different subject areas. Whilst some teachers in some lessons do provide activities to practise these skills, new technology is generally underused and teachers have to consider how this can be better used to stimulate pupils' learning.

25. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. Transport arrangements restrict after school activities but the school does still manage to provide clubs, such as gardening and a leisure/recreation activity. In addition they offer lunchtime activities like homework and music clubs.

26. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. This is an improvement from the last inspection, when it was found to be satisfactory. There is a strong ethos throughout the school of valuing all pupils and their work. Teachers set a very good example by respecting pupils' views and encouraging pupils to value the beliefs and viewpoints of others. Most lessons have time set aside at the end for pupils to reflect on their own successes and to share and celebrate their own and others' achievements. Once a week, there is a whole-school assembly dedicated to celebrating pupils' achievements. Displays in classrooms and corridors of high quality artwork and of scented flowers and colourful plants make the school a pleasant and attractive place to be and constantly remind pupils of the beauties of nature and of their artistic successes. Religious education lessons provide opportunities for pupils to consider their own and others' faiths. Many lessons in other subjects also have a spiritual dimension, especially those in art. This was particularly evident in an excellent lesson based on L S Lowry's painting *The Funeral*. The teacher encouraged Year 8 pupils to reflect on people's expressions and how mourners were dressed; moving on to considering what feelings people have at funerals and when people die. Pupils were encouraged to draw on their own experience as well as their study of the artist's technique, and the playing of relevant music - 'Pictures of Matchstick Men', enhanced the atmosphere of reverence. There is a spiritual element in the form of prayers in assemblies held for different age groups but the school could provide more opportunities for reflection through a morning tutor time or a daily act of collective worship for pupils.

27. The opportunities for both moral development and social development are very good. The school provides a strong moral framework for all its pupils. All adults in the school are good role models of how to conduct themselves and behave appropriately, encouraging courtesy and consideration of others. The inspectors noted that adults in the school always gave a reason to pupils when commenting on their behaviour, in order to reinforce the link between their actions and their effect on others. The drama sessions encourages pupils to consider matters of principle and to be able to make appropriate decisions when faced with moral dilemmas. This work is well supported for pupils through the personal, social and health education programme. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' moral development as they counsel pupils when they have difficulties.

28. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The educational visits, the 'After School Club', the Sports and Gardening Club the First Aid Course and the visits from Connexions and Careers Advice all make their own contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Teachers make very good use of personal, social and health education sessions to motivate pupils and to raise their self esteem. In one such session, Y11 and 12 pupils presented a drama to their parents and friends. They had been shown how to stand up in front of an audience, to project their voices, to engage in dialogue, dance and sing. In another session younger pupils were taken to a busy main road, and with the help of a Road

Safety Officer were shown how to survive on the roads. Such activities not only raise the self-esteem of pupils but also teach them how to act responsibly as future citizens.

29. With the help of their parents and the adults in the school pupils learn to demonstrate a sense of citizenship from an early stage in their education. They raise considerable sums of money for the disadvantaged in society through charities such as NSPCC, British Red Cross, the Epilepsy Society, the Mozambique Disaster Fund, Derian House Hospice, and giving Harvest produce to the homeless. The day visits provide good opportunities for pupils to learn to consider each other's needs. Pupils work harmoniously in lessons, for example, pupils work co-operatively, helping each other when they create music, and when performing music, dance and drama. The school's success in regional and national competitions helps to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

30. Provision for pupils' cultural development is now very good. This is a big improvement since the last inspection, when it was satisfactory. There are many planned opportunities for pupils to learn about and appreciate their own cultural heritage, contemporary popular culture and about the traditions and cultures of others. In history, pupils learn about aspects of the past, relating them to the local area with visits to local museums, old buildings and places of interest, such as Wigan Pier. They also explore their cultural heritage in music and art lessons where they study a variety of genres from many times and places, including the modern day. English lessons contribute to the range of cultures studied, with literature texts including myths and legends, Shakespeare, poetry and science fiction. For example, pupils were particularly enthusiastic in a lesson where the teacher used an extract based on the most recent *Star Wars* film to compare with a science fiction novel and a story written by one of the pupils. In geography, pupils study a range of places and teachers encourage them to empathise with different lifestyles through role play. Art and music lessons include the study of many cultures, including African and Chinese art and music. The religious education programme includes opportunities to learn about major world faiths. All of these are enhanced by visits to appropriate places such as relevant places of worship, a Chinese Pagoda and a trip to Chinatown to coincide with Chinese New Year. Visitors from other cultures come and talk to pupils about their cultures and traditions. Modern foreign languages and food technology teachers work together to hold joint events where pupils can learn about the European dimension. In these ways, despite the school not having a multi-ethnic population, pupils learn how to live in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare health and safety satisfy legal requirements.

32. The Head Teacher is the designated person for child protection matters and is known as such by adults throughout the school. He has attended training in the past, and has some practical experience of related matters. **Not all adults in the** school however, were convincingly clear about procedures, indicating that greater familiarisation with LEA procedures is needed.

33. The school has a good range of clearly written policies relating to health and safety, and responded positively to the Inspector's observations on some minor matters about recording of hazards and the use of fire doors. Fire drills are conducted each term and alarms are tested weekly. The nominated person conducts First Aid procedures efficiently, and pupils showed that they are familiar with them. Gas and electrical appliances are subject to an annual safety check while health and safety regulations are rigorously applied in the kitchen. The personal safety and security of pupils is ensured through personal, social and health education, and through the appropriate security arrangements around the school.

34. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good, and their effectiveness is reflected in the good attendance reported on earlier in this Report. Registers are clearly marked and well maintained. Immediate follow up demonstrates to parents the school's serious approach to attendance. Good support from the Education Welfare Officer, the good levels of co-operation from parents and the great enthusiasm of pupils further enhance the school's efforts.

35. The school's very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour spring from its caring ethos reflected in the behaviour policy. Adults in the school model the high standards of care and tolerance that they expect from pupils. Parents comment that the school always emphasises the positive in pupils and thereby raises self-esteem, and that behaviour improves. Inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying is closely monitored in accordance with procedures. The school is very vigilant and are aware of troubled pupils. The associated issues are often explored in drama lessons. Intimate knowledge of each child enables staff to anticipate difficulties and to manage behaviour effectively, resulting in the excellent relationships acknowledged elsewhere in this report. The inspection team could see no evidence to support the suggestion by one parent that the school's procedures had failed her daughter.

36. The school's very good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are firmly founded in its caring ethos. In just the same way that the school's intimate knowledge of its pupils helps to manage their behaviour, as reported in the previous paragraph, that same knowledge helps the school to develop in the pupils a sense of personal responsibility and citizenship. Each one has his or her own personal targets, shared with parents through the year tutor, and discussed at staff meetings so that all are well informed. Targets are evaluated at half term. The weekly 'Awards Assembly' rewards effort and honesty rather than merely academic achievement.

37. At the last inspection, the assessment of pupils' academic progress and personal development was good. This has been maintained, and there are now some very good features particularly in monitoring, supporting and guiding pupils' personal development. The recent development of a whole-school framework for planning the curriculum, and assessing pupils' progress at the end of each module of work is improving teachers' ability to use assessment information to guide their forward planning. Assessment is now co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher, who has set up a termly monitoring programme to guide teachers' assessment further. Training in the moderation of National Curriculum teacher assessments has been effective and is ongoing.

38. There have been good improvements made to the procedures for monitoring personal development and the use of individual education plans (IEPs). A new assessment framework to track each pupil's progress in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is being developed. Individual targets for each pupil are now discussed by the whole staff at the start of the school year, and agreed. This good approach enables the school to compare pupils' performance in different contexts, such as investigative and practical work, group work, creative expressive and physical contexts. Pupils' targets also include those for school priorities, such as literacy, and personal targets related to behaviour or learning skills. These are often well used during lessons by teachers. Some very good work is done in lessons to promote pupils' own knowledge of their learning through self-assessment and discussion with staff and peers.

39. Statutory assessments at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 are undertaken in accordance with national guidance, and the procedures for conducting annual reviews, including transition reviews are good. Review reports from the school also act as the annual

report to parents, and the subject reports are appropriately balanced and provide clear assessments of pupils' knowledge understanding and target areas for improvement. Parents value these reports highly, and there is very good evidence in pupils' record files of the school's active engagement with parents if any concerns or issues arise during a pupil's time in school.

40. Although the assessment procedures are good, there are areas that need to be developed and improved. In order to ensure that the achievements of pupils with the greatest difficulties are accurately recorded against National Curriculum levels, the current use of the nationally recognised 'P' levels for assessment, could be used more widely across the school. This would provide a more rounded picture of their progress and will help teachers to identify clearly teaching strategies and appropriate learning targets, particularly for pupils with additional needs such as specific learning or behavioural difficulties and autism.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Parents responding to the questionnaire and those attending the meeting have a very good opinion of the school. They point to the recently established post of Parent Coordinator in response to a consultation exercise with parents as an indicator of a very productive partnership with the school. More than 90 per cent of them report that Presfield is a good school where their children like to come, where teaching and behaviour are good, and where their children make good progress. The great majority of parents indicate that they are kept well informed about their children's progress, and that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school with any concerns about their children. A similar proportion agree that the school works closely with parents, that the school expects their children to work hard, and helps them to become mature and responsible citizens. Thirty-seven out of forty three parents state that their children are given the right amount of homework. Of the remaining six people some suggest that there is too much, and others that there is too little homework. The view of the inspection team is that the quality and the amount of homework are generally well suited to the needs of each pupil

42. The quality of information provided for parents, especially about their children's progress makes a good contribution to the effectiveness of their partnership with the school. The 'Home Book' is used well, especially with younger pupils and is valued by parents for day to day communication. The very good annual reports give a clear positional statement about each pupil, including what they have done, can do, and will be expected to do the next term. The Parents' Evenings are very well attended and give parents the opportunity to discuss their children's work with members of the staff team. The Prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to parents comply with legal requirements, but the latter is in need of some minor improvements to make it more easily understood by parents. The bright and colourful Newsletter, including a column for the Friends of Presfield, makes a helpful addition to the good flow of information from the school.

43. The involvement of parents has a good impact on the work of the school, further enhancing the effectiveness of the school. Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning at home by ensuring that their children attend regularly, by communicating regularly through the Home/School diary, and by supporting their children in the work they do at home. While only two parents are actively involved in school every week, others make a good contribution to the school's work by supporting the fundraising activities of the Friends of Presfield, and by volunteering their services on school trips and special events. Over the years a significant contribution has been made to the school and has helped with the purchase of equipment and resources for the pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and the senior management team is overall very good, and although there have been changes in the senior management team, the quality has been maintained since the last inspection. The result of this is that the school has continued to improve and take on board all the changes following the LEA's special school review. Areas for further improvement and development have been recognised, and acted on or planned for.

45. The leadership provided by the headteacher has continued to provide a very clear educational direction, even through this time of change and uncertainty concerning the new school, and how it will meet the needs of the changing population. This uncertainty has not undermined target setting and a self-evaluation process that has begun to be used by the management of the school, and is ensuring that the school is effectively meeting its aims and values. The headteacher is highly thought of by his staff, not only for his leadership skills but because he is a 'team player'. He has actively supported and nurtured staff to have the confidence to change responsibilities and teaching roles. A good senior management team provides good support to the headteacher, and this management team has become very proficient in identifying the priorities for development and there is an excellent shared commitment to succeed. All these members provide very good role models in terms of the quality of their teaching. They, along with all staff who have responsibilities to oversee and develop areas, contribute very well to the overall effectiveness of the school and the quality of education it provides.

46. A strength in management lies in curriculum development. The overall curriculum manager and subject co-ordinators have clear roles and these responsibilities are performed well. There are effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the curriculum and there is a clear mechanism for regularly reviewing and analysing its construction and impact in providing broad and relevant learning experiences. There is a coherent whole-school approach that guarantees that pupils experience a continuous and progressive taught curriculum as they move through the school up to the age of sixteen. The weakness in the school's planning and management lies in the area of provision post 16.

47. The Governing Body fulfils all their responsibilities well. They are very dedicated and many have had a long liaison with the school. They are a very supportive group, and have continued to play a very active role in ensuring that the development and improvement to the school continues throughout all the changes that have taken place. Even though they are few in number, they manage to form committees, meet regularly, and understand the strengths and weakness of the school. For example, they have been very involved and concerned about the change to the population of the school, the appointment of a specialist teacher for design and technology and for information and communication technology. They regularly receive reports from the headteacher, such as, whether targets are met and comparisons of the school results with similar schools. They also effectively act as the body that ratifies all policies and schemes of work. However, they do not evaluate the cost effectiveness of their spending decision and, therefore, have no way of formally reporting on how spending is affecting standards and quality of the provision.

48. The school's priorities for development and improvement are good, and appropriately focus on improving the curriculum, the range of accreditation, the accommodation and the resources. The school development plan is effective in raising standards. It is well linked to school targets and regularly monitored. It covers all areas of the school's work, but does not include costings and therefore is not securely linked to the planning of the budget. The action that the school has taken towards achieving the targets is very good.

49. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and the standards being achieved have developed well and the information provides an accurate picture of the quality of the provision. However, the school's use of information and communication technology to record and analyse information is only just being developed. The school uses all its resources, including its staff and its funding well. Day-to-day financial systems and control were judged to be very effective at the time of the last report and this high standard has been maintained. The principles of best value are applied and good care is taken to ensure the budget is spent very wisely.

50. Overall, the school's level of adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good. There is a good match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. At secondary level, pupils are taught by specialist subject teachers, most of whom are well qualified in their main subjects, with additional in-service training needs identified through the school's good system of appraisal and performance management. This specialist teaching provides continuity of teaching and learning for pupils, and is extended to some subjects for pupils at Key Stage 2, who receive an appropriate balance of class and specialist teaching. The school has a comprehensive continuing professional development policy, currently in draft form. It applies to all types of staff and will encourage the use of professional development portfolios to track and record staff training and achievements. All staff, including teachers, learning support staff and lunch-time supervisors, have had training in behaviour management, and lunch-time staff have received training in promoting constructive play activities. These have resulted in the consistent approach to behaviour management across the school. The site manager has received a good range of training, including fire safety and risk management, and is able to do much first-line maintenance and undertake electrical safety checks on behalf of the school.

51. Apart from the systematic arrangements that are in place for newly qualified teachers joining the school, induction remains quite friendly and informal and there is not yet a formal staff handbook. Though staff appreciate this approach, it does not always ensure the provision of relevant training in a formal and structured way. As the school's population changes, and pupils are admitted with a wider range of abilities and needs, staff have not always been provided with relevant specialist training, for example in teaching pupils on the autistic spectrum, those with other medical conditions and those with more severe learning difficulties or more complex communication problems.

52. The school currently has eight dedicated, hardworking and well qualified learning support assistants who all make a significant contribution to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across the school and with pupils of all ages. All have appropriate qualifications as nursery nurses, or in childcare or learning support, and have received additional training in the teaching of literacy, numeracy and basic information and communications technology, and in behaviour management and first aid. Some have undertaken training in specialist areas, such as a French language course or an National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in pottery to help them to support particular subjects. All have substantial designated duties within the school. Many are attached to particular subjects, where they build up expertise in supporting pupils' subject learning and in giving technical support where required. One has responsibility for the library, another acts as a part-time parent liaison co-ordinator, and several act as first-aiders. Others are involved in delivering additional literacy and speech-therapy programmes and one has been trained in giving early literacy support to the primary children. All give extra time to lunch-time clubs, activities and residential trips.

53. Despite all of this, the school has insufficient learning support staff for the demands of the curriculum and to support the range of needs of its pupils as the school admits pupils with a wider range of abilities and more and more diverse needs. This is particularly evident in the Key Stage 2 class, where numbers are high, and pupils range widely in age, ability and

special educational needs. Similarly, at the other end of the age range, Post 16 students do not have access to appropriate levels of learning support and this restricts the curriculum that they can be provided with. There are insufficient resources to allow a support assistant to be attached to the post-16 students full-time, and consequently, they are taught alongside Key Stage 4 pupils for much of the week, thus causing them to repeat work.

54. Since the last inspection, the school's accommodation had been greatly improved by the building of a new extension comprising three extra rooms and improved corridor access. The school now has very good accommodation for supporting its curriculum provision. This has allowed the school to dedicate and equip specialist rooms for science, design technology, food technology, information and communications technology and art. All subjects of the curriculum now have dedicated teaching areas and, even where these are shared between two subjects, this allows teachers to create topic-related displays of pupils' work. Subject resources are also easily accessible to both pupils and staff as they can be stored and displayed in these specialist rooms.

55. Secondary-aged pupils benefit from learning in these subject bases, while primary-aged pupils are appropriately taught mostly in their own classroom base, giving them continuity and confidence in their surroundings. However, the lack of separate accommodation for post-16 students limits their access to an appropriate curriculum. The hall is suitable for the teaching of physical education and there are hard-standing and grassed areas available outside for a range of games and sports, including a netball court, football pitch and a shared running track. There are boys and girls changing rooms and limited shower facilities. The school does not have its own swimming pool but access is arranged to local community facilities. Outside, there are extensive grounds and gardens and a range of play areas is available for pupils to use during break and lunch times, including a well equipped adventure playground. The school has been able to create a new library area, which is well furnished with seating and accessible shelving and well used during lunch times for study support, clubs and quiet reading. The hardworking and dedicated site manager and contract cleaners ensure that the building is very clean and well maintained. The staff work hard to ensure that extensive high quality displays of photographs, pupils' work and art throughout all rooms, corridors, the hall/dining area and entrance foyer brighten and enliven the school, making it a welcoming and stimulating place where pupils look forward to coming to learn and staff enjoy working.

56. Overall, the school has good learning resources, with improvements made in many subjects. There are very good resources and equipment for the teaching of art and food technology. Good resources are available for English and mathematics, music and physical education. Most other subjects have satisfactory resources, but there are some areas where improvements remain to be made. There are satisfactory resources for the teaching of science at Key Stage 2, but for older pupils there are insufficient resources for them to undertake a range of practical experiments. This is unsatisfactory. In religious education, the range of resources satisfactorily reflects the variety of world faiths studied but the quantity remains unsatisfactory, leading to an over-reliance on the completing of photocopied worksheets instead of first-hand research and handling of appropriate artefacts. In information and communications technology, the school has undertaken a programme of improvement of its hardware resources. Most classrooms now have their own computer, television and video. There is also a specialist computer suite with facilities for pupils to work individually rather than in groups. However, the range of available software remains limited, restricting the amount of support that information technology can give to most subjects of the curriculum. The school has a library that has recently been computerised. This is very well organised, with all books and resources catalogued and arranged so as to be accessible to pupils and staff. However, although the range and quality of books is very good, the quantity remains low. There are plans to continue improving the library stock. The school has its own

minibus, which is well used to enhance the curriculum through a planned programme of visits and trips, allowing a wide use of the local community and its facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher and Governing Body, in conjunction with the Local Education Authority, need to :

57. Improve the overall provision for pupils who stay at the school past the age of 16 by :

- setting up a separately taught class which is appropriately resourced and supported so that students' learning and the progress they make are based on previous learning and experiences,
- implementing a relevant and appropriate curriculum, which meets the educational needs of the students, prepares them for the next stage of learning and develops their personal independence,
- introducing accreditation which recognises achievement and that can be built on when students transfer to further education.

(Paragraphs : 7,15,22,46,55,59,67,81,101).

The headteacher, staff and Governing Body need to:

58. Increase the amount of support in classes so that the pupils with greatest learning difficulties have continual access to the activities and make better progress.

(Paragraphs : 1,2,14,53,58,70,98).

59. Improve the provision and the use of information and communication technology so that:

- it is used skilfully and confidently by teachers to support pupils' learning, communication, and access to the curriculum,
- pupils and students gain recognition of their skills and achievements through accreditation,
- it can be used to provide information about the school for monitoring and evaluation.

(Paragraphs : 6,19,24,49,76,77,80,117,118,120,121,132).

In addition the headteacher and the Governing Body should include in their overall school development planning the following minor issues:

- Increase the opportunities for reflection and celebration.
- Provide in-service training so teachers broaden their knowledge of special educational needs.
- Include costings in the school development plan.
- Improve the teaching of reading by recording the errors pupils make and identifying patterns where further practice is needed.
- Continue improving the standards achieved and the provision for design and technology.

(Paragraphs : 5,16,26,40,48,51,66,93,94,95,97).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	23	18	10	0	0	0
Percentage	9	43	32	18	0	0	0

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	67
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

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

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4

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

Attainment

In the end of key stage tests in the year 2001, one pupil in Year 9 gained the nationally expected level in mathematics and science. All other pupils in all subjects attained below the nationally expected levels.

In the year 2001, nine students from year 11 and two from year 12 took Certificate of Achievement in English, science, mathematics and geography. A total 35 certificates were gained by these students. In addition 147 certificates were awarded for Unit Awards (NEAB), and also certificates in First Aid, British Red Cross, and 'Compact' graduation.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	67
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y12

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.7
Average class size	9.5

Education support staff: Y4 – Y12

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	260

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	610586
Total expenditure	591569
Expenditure per pupil	8104
Balance brought forward from previous year	13760
Balance carried forward to next year	32777

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
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

67

Number of questionnaires returned

43

Percentage of responses in each category (2 per cent is equivalent to 1 parental response)

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	60	33	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	40	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	42	14	0	0
The teaching is good.	74	26	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	74	21	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	9	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	77	21	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	23	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	35	5	0	2

Other issues raised by parents

There were some parents that attended the meeting who did not like the wide range of ability in the school. They felt that the teachers worked very hard to meet these needs of all the pupils, but that it was an impossible task to achieve. There was a great deal of concern about the possible future designation of school, and how this would increase the range of ability and needs. There was great concern over the reducing number of pupils in the primary part of the school and what would happen when there would be only a few pupils left.

There was some concern about the lack of provision within the Local Education Authority for the school's lower attaining pupils when they reached the age of 16, and they felt that the school did not have the staffing or resources to provide adequately. All parents very strongly felt that their children did not receive enough speech and language therapy, and that this service was now being spread more thinly as more pupils are being included into mainstream educational. A few parents reported that their child's statement of educational need had not been reviewed since they started at the school and their needs had changed.

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

ENGLISH

60. At the time of the last inspection, pupils made very good progress in English throughout the school. Overall, these standards have been maintained. Most pupils continue to make very good progress and there has been good improvement in the school's provision for English. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 make very good progress in all areas of English. However, there are two groups of pupils where circumstances have reduced the amount of progress that they are able to make from very good to good.

61. Pupils in the Key Stage 2 class make good progress rather than very good progress because there is insufficient regular learning support allocated to the class. The class is very big, with a wide age range from Year 4 to one pupil in Year 7. Pupils have a variety of special educational needs, including some who have specific medical conditions, leading to there being a very wide range of abilities within the class. Only one learning support assistant is allocated permanently to the class. Although additional support is provided for some lessons, this does not allow for the build up of expertise, relationships and knowledge of pupils' needs that a second full-time assistant could give.

62. Post-16 students are taught alongside the class of Key Stage 4 pupils for some of their English lessons. During this time, they are sometimes repeating work that they have already covered, but make good progress in the acquisition of basic literacy skills. However, when staffing arrangements allow them to be taught separately, they follow specially devised units of appropriate work that prepare them for transition to college and to life after school. In these lessons, students make very good progress.

63. In speaking and listening, pupils make very good progress overall. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. They learn to answer questions clearly, listen carefully to the teacher and to each other and to take turns in 'circle time' sessions at the start and end of literacy sessions and other lessons. They gain confidence in speaking to a group when they are encouraged to report back their achievements at end of lessons. By the end of the key stage, in lessons in other subjects, for example religious education, most pupils can recall details of places they have visited and describe the people they met and the features they remember. In Key Stage 3, pupils make very good progress. They learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. They understand that their speaking and writing can be made more interesting by including more complex vocabulary, such as adjectives, adverbs and 'more powerful' verbs. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can express their answers and opinions clearly, choosing appropriate register and amount of detail, and listen politely and carefully to others.

64. Key Stage 4 pupils also make very good progress. They become confident speakers, taking part enthusiastically in discussions about their work in English and in other curriculum areas. An example, of this was seen in a very good Year 10 lesson on the poem *The Lady of Shalott*. Pupils contributed well to an introductory discussion on the text, making suggestions about what particular 'archaic' words might mean, and then reported back to the class on what they had achieved in follow up group work. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can use their speaking and listening skills in a range of situations, including some out of school, such as when on work experience or on college taster courses. They understand that they must select appropriate information to convey, for example when reporting back on research tasks that they have undertaken. Post-16 students make good progress when taught alongside Key Stage 4 pupils and very good progress when taught separately. They continue to use their speaking and listening skills in a variety of practical situations, most relevantly in trips into the local community, for example, to do shopping. Their progress was

demonstrated during the inspection, when they took part confidently and enthusiastically in a pantomime that they had helped to devise. The audience comprised other pupils, some of their parents, staff and visitors, and the performance took place in their classroom. Such was its success that they volunteered to do a follow-up performance to a wider audience in the school hall.

65. In reading, pupils make very good progress overall. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. They join the school with differing experience and levels of attainment. They practise their individual reading skills regularly, including at home with their families, and learn the letter sounds and combinations and develop a basic sight vocabulary of the most used words. As a group, they read a range of literature, including good quality modern texts and the simplified stories of older books, such as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. By the end of the key stage, many pupils can read basic texts successfully, some with support. In responding to reading, they can retell a fairy story such as *Cinderella* in their own words. Key Stage 3 pupils make very good progress in reading. They continue to develop their individual skills in class, and most continue to read regularly at home with their parents. In groups and as a class, they read a very good range of literature, including myths, legends, poetry, plays, non-fiction and fiction of different genres. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can read a variety of texts fluently and with good use of expression. They know that authors use different language to create atmosphere and effects in their writing, for example, they can identify these features in Shakespearean language in their study of *Macbeth*.

66. Pupils in Key Stage 4 also make very good progress. They still develop their own independent reading skills, including reading for information through research tasks as well as fiction. Many still read regularly at home to support their learning in school. Units of work include responding to a very good range of literature, including narrative poetry, drama, and electronic media. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can read and respond to fiction and non-fiction, and can read practical materials such as job descriptions and application forms. Many gain accreditation that recognises their achievement. Post-16 students make good progress in developing their independent reading skills and in responding to literature in lessons that are taught alongside Key Stage 4 pupils. However, in specially devised units which are taught separately, they make very good progress in relevant skills such as reading and following a recipe or set of instructions, using bus and train timetables and finding out information from brochures and leaflets and other materials encountered in everyday life. This makes a significant contribution to preparing students for whatever they will move on to after school.

67. In writing, pupils make very good progress overall. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. They practise forming lower and upper case letters and learn to spell high frequency words. Through writing over or underneath words and sentences modelled by adults, they learn to write their news from home, descriptions, stories and reports. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils can write in proper sentences with a capital letter at the start and a full stop at the end. Their handwriting is neat with well-formed letters. Many words are spelled correctly. Lower attaining pupils still need support with their writing. Pupils in Key Stage 3 write for a range of purposes, including retelling a family anecdote, letters, poems, a diary and advertisements. They study the elements of a sentence, such as nouns, verbs and pronouns, learn about punctuation and regularly practise spellings. By the end of the key stage, most pupils are confident writers who can use dictionaries and thesauruses to help with their work. Some can use paragraphs to organise their writing. Pupils understand that writing can be improved through redrafting, and they can use the computer to word-process the final copy.

68. In Key Stage 4, much of the writing that pupils undertake is linked to the syllabus for their accreditation. They write about the literature texts and other genres that they are studying. For example, they review a soap opera they have watched or analyse an evening's viewing as part of a unit on media. By the end of the key stage, most pupils can write for a range of audiences, including completion of application forms and CVs, and many write in neat joined-up handwriting. They use grammar and punctuation accurately and spell most words correctly. When taught alongside Key Stage 4 pupils, post-16 students continue to develop their writing, through handwriting practice and phonics and spelling activities. They make good progress in this. In their separately taught focussed units, they make very good progress in gaining practical skills for everyday living, such as writing a thank you letter, an invitation, a shopping list, stock order and a simple advertisement for an event.

69. The teaching of English is very good overall. It is good at Key Stage 2, where there is insufficient learning support, and very good in the other key stages. Strengths of the teaching include excellent behaviour management combined with a very good range of well-planned and balanced activities, ensuring that pupils are well behaved and highly motivated. Teachers' planning is very good and is based closely on the National Literacy Strategy with strong emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. This results in most pupils becoming expressive readers, confident speakers and writers. Teachers know their pupils and plan well differentiated work supported by individual targets so that those pupils of lower ability or with specific learning difficulties receive appropriate additional support, enabling them to reach their potential in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Teachers deploy their support assistants well in relation to this. For example, the learning support assistant in Key Stage 2 has been trained in Early Literacy Support and withdraws small groups of pupils for good quality sessions in basic skills. Teachers have devised good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, but the teaching of reading could be improved by recording the errors pupils make, and identifying where further practice is needed. Although some pupils gain accreditation, these opportunities could be extended for the more able pupils and for lower attaining pupils and students at post-16.

70. Some parents are concerned that their children receive insufficient speech therapy. The school makes effective use of the limited allocation of speech and language therapy provided by the local health trust. The speech therapist uses her one day per week in school to very good effect, working with individual pupils or groups and undertaking assessments of need. Individual and small group programmes are appropriately devised for pupils, which are delivered well by designated learning support assistants who have received some training. This gives good support to developing pupils' language skills. Learning support assistants also work effectively with lower attaining pupils to give additional literacy support. However, although the units of work for Post-16 students are of very good quality, there is insufficient learning support allocated to allow enough time to be spent on them.

71. Accommodation in specialist English rooms is very good, and the hall is available for drama work. The newly converted library is very well organised by one of the learning support assistants and has recently been computerised. Reading scheme books are well displayed alongside library stock. This comprises of a good range of fiction, non-fiction and reference books, but the quantity remains low for the number of pupils on roll. Parents contribute to their children's learning by hearing them read and helping them with learning spellings or doing research tasks, but a group also helps with preparing 'story sacks' as resources to support the pupils' reading. Overall, resources for English are good, but although information and communications technology is well used for word-processing and research, there is insufficient software for supporting pupils' learning of basic skills such as spelling and phonics. The curriculum is enhanced by trips to the theatre and visits from drama groups. The library is well used at lunchtimes for quiet reading and for study support and homework

clubs. The range of literature that pupils have access to makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

72. The school has made good progress in implementing a whole-school approach to developing pupils' literacy skills, and some staff from the school have been involved in Local Education Authority literacy initiatives, such as providing in-service training for other schools. The National Literacy Strategy for pupils of all ages has been effectively incorporated into teaching, and teachers of other subjects have been given support by the English co-ordinators to emphasise the teaching of literacy in other subjects. For example, in mathematics with the youngest pupils, staff encourage pupils to talk about their work and explain their investigations. In history, older pupils are reminded to pay attention to spelling and punctuation in their writing. In physical education, the judo instructor clearly explains the origins of the sport; whilst in design and food technology, pupils are encouraged to read instructions, recipes and safety information, and to evaluate their work using standard English. There are other effective cross-curricular links, for example between English and music when Chinese literature and music are studied near to Chinese New Year, with planned opportunities for pupils to discuss these links. Post-16 students undertake an English unit where they set up and run a tuck-shop enterprise, which makes a strong contribution to their development of practical numeracy skills. Self-evaluation in the subject is good, with the collection and evaluation of assessment data by the co-ordinators. This has identified the need for more writing opportunities across the curriculum, and as a result the school has produced a writing portfolio to help raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

73. The very high standards identified during the previous inspection have been maintained as pupils achieve very well in lessons overall. However, achievements in the primary class are only satisfactory because, although many aspects of teaching are very good, the large class size, wide age range and ability of the pupils, and shortage of support staff sometimes combine to limit pupils' progress. However, the very good learning opportunities provided to pupils in the secondary department mean they are able to make very good progress overall during their time in the school. The very good progress they make is reflected in test and examination results. All pupils were successful in the Certificate of Educational Achievement examinations in 2001 and over half achieved merits or distinctions, and the first pupils are being entered this year for the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

74. Pupils in the primary department work on the key areas of number; shape and space; time and money and begin to develop appropriate mathematical vocabulary such as longer/shorter, bigger/smaller, heavier/lighter and straight/curved. By the age of eleven pupils recognise two digit numbers as both numerals and words and put numerals in the correct place on a number line and a 'hundred square'. They count on in twos and tens, estimate, round up numbers to the nearest ten, and carry out simple written addition and subtraction sums. They know the names of common two and three-dimensional shapes and count and record the number of faces and corners. Pupils have also learnt how to handle data so that they carry out simple surveys, such as classmates' favourite colour, tally the results and draw bar charts.

75. As pupils move through Key Stage 3 they follow a very well-balanced subject curriculum that develops their mathematical knowledge and extends their understanding of concepts involving numbers, shapes and handling data. Therefore, at the age of fourteen pupils are able to demonstrate a range of mathematical skills in all these areas. They know how to halve and double numbers and multiply two and three digit numbers. Pupils can measure and calculate angles and construct a two-dimensional shape like a triangle from

written instructions. They read scales accurately, such as capacity, record their readings using the correct units and convert these appropriately, such as changing millilitres into litres. They also demonstrate their increasing competence and confidence in handling mathematical data. They calculate the mode and range of a set of numbers, draw bar charts and pie charts and read information from them.

76. The oldest pupils follow externally accredited courses that build on previous learning and allow pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in simple problem-solving activities in which they are required to use different areas of mathematical understanding. Through these investigations pupils identify sequences and patterns of numbers so that they predict outcomes and develop hypotheses that they test. By the age of sixteen, pupils also demonstrate greater understanding of numbers as they manipulate algebraic equations and work with indices and square roots. They show their understanding of less than one as they order fractions, convert improper fractions and mixed numbers, and match fractions with decimals. Pupils also demonstrate their increasing competence in handling data and refining ways in which they can display this using new technology. They use real life information and sources, such as a newspaper that shows the times when all goals were scored on a particular Saturday, tally these to show the frequency of goals at different times into the game, enter the results onto a spreadsheet and print off bar charts.

77. The vast majority of teaching of mathematics is very good as teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject and high expectations of academic achievement and behaviour. The school has embraced the national numeracy strategy so that lessons follow the common format of a mental warm-up session followed by group work. This is followed by a closing plenary session on those occasions when it is appropriate although this is not always necessary for the oldest pupils who may have worked on very different activities during the group session. All these different sessions are extremely well managed and timed and this has a significant impact on raising standards. The introductory mental sessions are snappy and lively and greatly enjoyed by the pupils as they are all included. A high degree of challenge is maintained and this includes requiring pupils to explain their reasoning and the strategies they have used in arriving at their answer and to share this with their classmates.

78. Teacher's communication skills are very good and pupils are confident with their responses and this effective two-way communication contributes greatly to the maintenance of a good pace. Group work is equally productive because tasks are carefully chosen to meet individual needs and other adult support staff are very well briefed and managed so that they are able to provide high quality individual support through probing questioning and careful explanations. The subject specialist is particularly skilled at providing progressive activities that extend pupils' learning and they, in turn, respond very positively. They work with interest and understanding and they persevere, taking pride in getting the correct answer. Excellent relationships form the basis of much of the very high quality of learning that takes place, as older pupils are able to work collaboratively and independently when required. This results in a busy and purposeful environment in which pupils are able to succeed.

79. The management and leadership of mathematics are very good and a highly organised and knowledgeable subject leader has a perceptive understanding of how to develop the subject even further. She co-ordinates the teaching of the subject and is responsible for the meticulous planning and assessment procedures that are in place that ensure a smooth transition from one key stage to another. She also promotes the subject across the school curriculum extremely well through running in-service training for staff and plans to involve parents in supporting their children's numeracy skills through focused parents' evenings. Consequently, the school's strategy for teaching numeracy skills is extremely effective. Good learning resources supplement the very good teaching, but

although new technology is used on occasions it is not used consistently to enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

SCIENCE

80. There has been satisfactory improvement in this subject since the last inspection. The content of the curriculum is currently being reviewed so that it provides a greater variety of learning experiences, and with the building extensions there is a large new science room so that investigation work can take place. Standards have risen since the last inspection with more pupils gaining accreditation. Pupils in both key stages achieve very well and the progress that they make is good. Pupils of all abilities complete the same topics but the learning outcomes are different and the resulting breadth in the accreditation reflects this. By the time pupils leave school most have gained a Certificate of Achievement with the majority gaining merit or distinction. In addition, last year these pupils gained 80 NEAB units of accreditation between them. This is directly attributable to the high quality of the teaching. However, not enough improvement has been made in using information and communication technology to research topics or in the monitoring of the results of experiments.

81. The youngest pupils learn about growth, both in animals, plants, and in the human body. They understand that pushing and pulling things will move them in different ways, and that materials can change, such as when butter is cooled in the fridge, or bread is toasted. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have covered a range of topics, and all, with support, carry out practical investigations. They conduct simple investigations, such as the conditions that are necessary for seed germination. They can explain how to make their testing fair, and the higher attaining pupils make a predication of what they think might happen.

82. At the start of Key Stage 3, pupils learn how to conduct themselves in the science room and are aware of laboratory rules. They learn how to handle apparatus safely, such as Bunsen burners and microscopes. By the end of the key stage they have extended their knowledge of how different materials react, their properties and how they can be changed. They understand that some materials are more useful than others for different purposes, for example, when building a house, or keeping the body healthy. They understand feeding relationships, cells structure, and when testing solutions how indicators, such as litmus can provide information to the scientist. By year 9, pupils have studied chemical change, and are beginning to show an understanding of the simple atomic structure of compounds, such as water. The experiments they conduct are more rigorous, and include good predictions, monitoring of results, and analysing what has happened.

83. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have a good understanding of how to design their experiments so that they include a fair test. They predict what should or might happen, and give reasons why things actually worked as they did. The higher attaining pupils plot the results on graphs, using a database to generate these graphs, as well as writing about the sequence of what they did. Lower attaining pupils complete the same work but their levels of literacy are taken into consideration and they record their results in different ways, such as by filling the correct words or completing sentences. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge of growth in plants and humans, and understand that some characteristics are inherited, and others are caused by factors in the environment. They have studied energy in greater depth, and understand that plants gain energy through photosynthesis, and that people can use the power of the sun. They are competent and safe in their use of equipment, and can set up and dismantle their own apparatus for experiments. However, although pupils carry out simple research tasks using books, they do not make sufficient use of information and communication technology programs.

84. The few students over the age of 16 are taught with Year 11 pupils and although they are continue to build up their knowledge through working on further units of accreditation they are not making sufficient progress as they are covering work that they have previously covered, such as cell structure. This is because the content of their curriculum does not provide them with sufficient opportunities to develop skills that they will need in an adult world.

85. The subject is taught to Key Stage 2 pupils by class teacher and the specialist science teacher. The quality of teaching and learning on the week of the inspection was overall satisfactory, although analysis of pupils' work and the standards they achieve indicate that teaching over time is at least good. The current specialist teacher is new to the school and has not had any experience in meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties. Although expectations are high and leads to higher attaining pupils achieving well, the level of communication used is too complicated for pupils who have the greatest learning difficulties and they do not understand what they are expected to do. This is also compounded by the lack of additional support in lessons, especially practical situations. Evidence in a primary lesson, where there were three adults in the lesson shows that when there is this amount of support all pupils make good progress, complete their tasks and at the end are able to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning objective. This good subject knowledge is reflected in the well-planned lessons, which have clear learning objectives and activities, and which challenge pupils through investigation work.

86. The quality of the curriculum is good, and the modules of work are currently being reviewed before they are taught to pupils. Planning contains different activities for differing ability pupils but the learning expectations are too great for the pupils with the greatest learning difficulties and this hinders the overall progress they make. This also results in some of the pupils' targets being too broad, and as a result they cannot be easily measured for success. This subject makes a good contribution to pupils' wider development. Teachers ensure that pupils make good use of their English skills when writing up their prediction and experiments, and that mathematics skills are used. Pupils working in groups and pairs improve social skills, and many pupils are amazed by the results of experiments. Good assessment of pupils' progress is carried out in all key stages. Pupils' achievements are assessed well at the end of each module of work, often using ideas for tests from the scheme of work, or old standard test papers.

87. The co-ordinator is new to the school and is managing the subject well. There is a good and clear overview of the subject, particularly of the secondary department, and the senior management team is playing an active part in monitoring the quality of teaching. There have been major developments in the subject recently, including the building of very good accommodation for teaching this subject. Due to this development, the purchase of additional resources has been put on hold, and currently they are unsatisfactory to teach the reviewed curriculum. However, a substantial allocation of money from the school budget has been made available for this purpose and demonstrates that the management and the Governing Body are committed to improving the provision.

ART AND DESIGN

88. There were no judgements in the last report concerning art across the school. However, discussions and documentation show that very good improvements have been made since the last inspection. This includes the installation of a new room, the purchase of a very good range of resources and artefacts, and the recent introduction of Certificate of Achievement. These improvements are due to the appointment of a new co-ordinator, who teaches the subject across the school. This subject is a strength of the school as many pupils are producing work that reaches national expectations, and therefore achievement is very good.

89. At Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and in the lesson seen on the week of the inspection progress was very good. This was mainly due to the increase amount of additional support in the class and the reduced number of pupils as some were absent. Pupils therefore had enough support to remain on task and complete the work. Pupils know that Monet painted scenes that included gardens and flowers of different colours. They examine and observe pieces of wood and bark, discussing the different shape and textures of the pieces and the bark. They describe how it feels and using crayons make rubbings of the different textures. Pupils draw what they can see, but the quality and accuracy of their finished pieces is extremely wide and reflects their learning difficulties. For example, their drawings of people range from being very detailed, including details of clothing, to virtually no discernable details except a circle with eyes. Pupils produce repeat patterns, use pencils, felt pens, and paint to complete their activities.

90. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make very good progress. The quality of the observational drawings in their sketchbooks varies with their abilities but in relation to their difficulties they achieve very well. For example, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils talk about L. S. Lowry and his different work, and produce individual figures similar to those found in Lowry's 'The Funeral' painting, and from the painting of 'A Man Lying on a Wall'. They can describe the different techniques that have been used, choose appropriate materials, such as the correct type of pencil or brush to give the right effect. They produce patterns using hatching and cross hatching techniques, draw facial expressions that reflect different emotions, and make good observational sketches of different types of shoes. When using textiles, pupils suggest and select the most appropriate material in terms of texture and colour to complete their work. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils produce Chinese style paintings of plants and flowers in the style of Luke Ch'en, using ink and 'bamboo' brushes. They have developed their observational skills very well and use them to complete facial sketches. There is a lot of clay work on display around the school, and pupils have used to produce a variety of pleasing art work including pots, decorated and glazed tiles, and examples of animals, such as fish and birds.

91. Overall teaching and learning is very good, and in some lessons during the inspection it was excellent. Although the teacher has no formal training in art, she has a very high level of knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum, and in a very short time has developed a great deal of expertise in modifying the learning activities and outcomes for pupils with a range of learning difficulties. Introductions to all lessons are exciting and consist of the excellent use of resources, such as clothes, pictures, music and other artefacts which link very well to the lesson content. For example, in the lesson on Chinese painting, the teacher introduces pieces of traditional material and explains the use of red and gold as celebration colours. As other artefacts are introduced, such as pictures of Chinese art, a Chinese calendar and a bamboo plant, pupils gasp and show amazement. A similar event happens in the lesson about L S Lowry's painting of 'The Funeral' – where there is a huge emphasis on what people wore in the past and what emotions people feel when they attend a funeral. All lessons have excellent links with other subjects, such as history, science, music and personal, social and health education. The teacher always demonstrates the technique and as a result pupils know what is required, such as how to use the bamboo brush to get the right effect. Questioning during these sessions allows the teacher to build on previous learning and informally assess the pupils' understanding.

92. Through very good guidance, pupils are encouraged to think before they start their work, so as to improve their work, and they are beginning to see themselves as 'artists'. The planning is very precise with clear thinking about the resources needed and how learning support assistants will work in the lessons. These details are all conveyed to the assistant who is able then to help pupils carry out their tasks, but without taking away pupils'

independence. All lessons are accompanied by the use of appropriate music that is connected the topic being studied. Due to this very good teaching, pupils' attitudes to their work are excellent. They are eager to start their art projects, listen intently and complete tasks with enthusiasm. They are very proud of their efforts and due to the high quality displays around the school they are able to identify their work and reflect on it. The relationship pupils have with the teacher and with the learning support assistants is very good and as a result pupils' achievements are high.

93. The curriculum is very good, but there are too few instances in the planning of pupils using information and communication technology as a means of researching or producing art. The policy has not been updated since the co-ordinator has taken over and does not reflect all the work that is going on in the school. However, the schemes of work have been reviewed and reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum. Planning of individual lessons is very good, and activities are well matched to pupils differing abilities. Assessment information is gathered from observations of lessons and the pupils' work that is used to inform the planning for individual pupils. The subject provides well for the spiritual, social and cultural development of pupils through the pupils' study of artists, and visits outside school.

95. The co-ordination of the subject is excellent. The co-ordinator has only taken over teaching art in the last term, having previously taught in the primary part of the school. The co-ordinator has an excellent overview of what is needed to improve the curriculum further and has produce clear action planning. For example, the introduction certificate of achievement is recent, and there is a desire to bring artists into school. There is an excellent commitment to the improvement of this curricular area, and this is supported and valued by the headteacher. Monitoring of the teaching and the work has taken place and is good.

96. The accommodation for the subject is now very good. It is a new room with ample storage space and a kiln facility. Resources for teaching the subject have recently been purchased and are very good and make a considerable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. The standards in some aspects of design and technology, such as 'Working with resistant materials' have declined since the last inspection. The action taken by the school and the specialist teacher to raise standards in food technology has been highly effective, but has not been matched in the other aspects of the subject and therefore there is an imbalance in the quality of the provision for the subject overall. Pupils' achievement in the two aspects of the subject, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4 are very different. In food technology achievement and progress overall is very good, but in these key stages in other aspects of the subject it is unsatisfactory, and for those at Key Stage 4 it is poor.

98. The co-ordinator who also taught the subject, other than the food technology aspect, left during the last year and the subject has been taught by a temporary teacher. A new specialist teacher is now in place, but had only been at the school for a few weeks before the inspection. This instability of staffing has had a negative impact on the standards achieved by pupils. In the aspect of 'Working with resistant material the achievements of pupils are unsatisfactory, and work produced by them does not show skills and understanding built on previous learning. The curriculum has not been reviewed in light of the changes made nationally, and assessment of pupils work is against an out of date version of the National Curriculum. Some improvements have been made with the refurbishment of the teaching area and the purchase of new equipment to broaden the range of materials available.

Working with resistant materials

99. Pupils' achievement and progress are also unsatisfactory overall, and poor in Key Stage 4. Work completed last term does not demonstrate the progress in range, detail and quality expected, and photographic evidence of finished products is very limited. For example, all pupils completed the same health and safety worksheet, which was too easy for higher attaining pupils or older ones. Although pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post-16 have made items each year, they too often have followed designs given to them or worksheets that constrain their design ideas, and they lack the knowledge and skills to work effectively with tools, materials and components. They have spent valuable curriculum time following instructions to assemble items from a construction kit, but do not attend to detail in planning or execution of their designs and have limited experience of evaluating their work as it progresses or to check it meets a design specification. Standards of achievement and progress are lower for older pupils because they lack the firm foundation of knowledge skills and techniques needed to meet the demands of the new accredited course the school is introducing. It was not possible to observe the subject in Key Stage 2, as it is not taught during the first half of the spring term.

100. Overall the quality of teaching and learning by the new teacher on the week of the inspection was good. There are some very good features, including careful planning and preparation, ensuring that the learning support assistant is well informed and is able to provide practical support and supervision. Due to this new approach pupils show that they are beginning to develop the skills and knowledge they need, and they attend very closely to the practical demonstrations and instructions. They work with energy and focus, and clearly enjoy the subject. Introductions to each lesson are clear and help pupils understand the tasks, the order of activities and what they are expected to produce. There are very good demonstrations of skills and techniques, so that pupils see what is expected, and individual guidance, including showing how a change of stance improves safety, comfort and accuracy when sawing and drilling. The management of pupils' behaviour or anxiety when confronting new experiences and equipment is very good. There is challenge, pace and flexibility in lessons, for example, when pupils finish their project earlier than expected an extended activity is introduced. The very wide range of pupils' abilities and needs is still new to the teacher, and occasionally there is over-estimation of pupils' literacy skills and understanding.

101. A new scheme of work for the year has been developed, and the teacher is using his first term's modules to develop a clearer view of pupils' skills and knowledge so that a long-term programme can be developed to give a more balanced curriculum and ensure that pupils make progress. The school does not have facilities to work with metal, but work with textiles is offered through food technology and art, thus creating a balance of experiences.

102. The leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory and have not ensured that the improvements identified in the last inspection have been maintained. The monitoring by the senior management team had identified weaknesses but progress in recruiting a specialist teacher was delayed. The new teacher has already received monitoring support from the headteacher and the LEA adviser, and this is providing a clear picture of in-service needs. Appropriate resources have been bought and meet the needs of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils, so that they can all take part in the activities. Although the quality of learning support in lessons observed was good, the current number of learning support assistants is inadequate to ensure that at least one is present when groups are split for work with food and resistant materials.

Food Technology

103. It was not possible to judge pupils' achievement and progress in lessons at Key Stage 2 as the subject was not during the inspection. However, by the time they are eleven, pupils

have learned the first skills of food preparation and understand how to mix and use ingredients to make simple recipes. They are introduced to the importance of healthy eating and have a secure grounding in health and safety in the kitchen. The highest attaining pupils follow the process and order of tasks in a simple recipe successfully. Lower attaining pupils, with support, can take part in cooking activities where each process is broken down into very small steps.

104. Pupils' achievements and progress in Key Stage 3 are very good, with the highest attaining pupils following verbal and written instructions independently, designing and making their own recipes and explaining clearly the reasons for their choices. Lower attaining pupils develop confidence and basic skills in food preparation, and name items of kitchen equipment and their uses. All pupils develop an appreciation of the design and evaluation elements of their activities. During the week of the inspection, pupils created and made a range of cereal mixes to appeal to teenagers. For these they had designed and made packaging, effectively using information and communication technology to produce attractive and very well finished products. The higher attaining pupils discussed the impact of advertising and packaging on consumers and offered thoughtful and discriminating evaluations of each product. During the evaluation, the lower attaining pupils assessed whether a product containing oats, fruit, and pieces of finely chopped 'Mars' bar would reflect healthy eating. Pupils understand which elements are good for them, and explained the part sugar plays in diet.

105. At Key Stage 4 pupils' achievement in food technology is excellent. They follow an accredited course and all present their assignments and written work with care. Higher attaining pupils' evaluation of the design process for a Christmas cake, and its execution, show a very good understanding of where they could have improved their work, and photographic evidence of the products show that all pupils' finished products met their design intentions. In practical work, the higher attaining pupils organise themselves to follow recipe, and their planning and use of time was excellent. The lower attaining pupils keep up with the timing and ask for help when they needed it. All managed to mix ingredients successfully and divide their mixture evenly for baking. Post-16 pupils are following the same accredited course, and within this they make good progress, but would benefit from a specifically designed post-16 programme. However, pupils who may experience difficulty in areas of their learning, find success in this subject, and through skilful development of self-evaluation come to a realistic appreciation of their abilities and personal qualities. Work in the subject is making a major contribution to the aims and values the school has set for its pupils.

106. Teaching and learning in Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good and often excellent. The teacher is well qualified, both in her subject and in the management of pupils with special educational needs. Her very good knowledge of the subject is supported by regular updating and matched by excellent knowledge of individual pupils' needs and abilities. Work planned is challenging for all the pupils, and the long double lessons are very well paced. Learning support assistants provide excellent support for pupils of all abilities. The questioning by the teacher and support staff is excellent, and finely tuned to pupils' understanding and learning styles. For example, one Key Stage 4 pupil asks if he is using olive oil in his cake mix. Instead of giving him the answer, the teacher takes him to the fridge, asks him to read all the labels of the fats and oils and choose the correct one. She follows this up by asking him about choosing hard fat or oil, and he explains what he has learned about the merits and characteristics of each successfully. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent and pupils who at times have trouble managing their behaviour are supported skilfully. As a result, pupils of all ages and abilities develop skills steadily and their gains in confidence and knowledge are clear. They work with considerable application and persistence, and pupils whose fine motor skills are limited persevere and practise their techniques. They show very good knowledge of safety issues and one lower attaining pupil

was able to explain with accuracy, and some force, why licking a spoonful of chocolate mix was never done in *this* kitchen. They cooperate very well indeed, show support and concern for each other, and are sensitive to the needs of more vulnerable members of the group. More able pupils, making faster progress, often offer help to others and demonstrate techniques very well.

107. Since the last inspection, a new approach in the school to planning the food technology curriculum and assessing pupils' work has contributed to the improvements in teaching and learning. The scheme of work builds skills and extends the range of technique and equipment progressively, and modules of work for the Key Stage 4 course are well designed and make a very good contribution to developing pupils' life skills. Links with other curriculum subjects are a particular strength and are built clearly into lesson plans. Every opportunity to contribute pupils' core skills in Literacy and Numeracy is seized upon, and high expectations of standards in speaking and calculating are reflected in the plans and in lessons. Throughout lessons, praise is used judiciously, and these exchanges closely reflect targets set for pupils. Assessment has developed since the last inspection, and very good records of performance in each lesson are meticulously maintained. End of module assessment is used well to plan the next term's activities and targets for pupils. This aspect will be further improved when a new scheme of work in design and technology is implemented and the two teachers develop an integrated assessment scheme of skills common to both focus areas.

108. Leadership and management of food technology are excellent. The creation of a specialist teaching base has been an appropriate priority within the development plan, and the new facilities now meet the needs of pupils at the school at present, and can be adapted to meet the needs of any pupil with physical disabilities who may join the school. The investment in the range and quality of both large and small equipment is raising standards of achievement for pupils – the new accommodation is rightfully a source of pride for staff and pupils alike, and is very well cared for. Monitoring of teaching and planning supports the rising standards. The deployment of learning support assistants in this aspect of the subject is excellent and they are clear about their role and contribution to each lesson. Information and communication technology is well used to enhance presentation and for work related to consumer awareness; a dedicated computer and software to support the subject is planned.

GEOGRAPHY

109. Overall, pupils achieve well in lessons and they make good progress over time. Progress is satisfactory in the primary department but the good progress made by secondary aged pupils means that they are able to follow an externally accredited course in Key Stage 4. Many are now successful in obtaining a Certificate of Educational Achievement at the end of Year 11. This represents satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

110. No geography lessons were observed in the primary department during the inspection and only a limited amount of work was available for analysis. However, by the age of eleven pupils know about some features of their locality through studying, for example, how they travel to school and how long it takes. They understand the differences between work and play and know where work and recreational activities take place.

111. A broad and balanced subject curriculum ensures that pupils develop a number of geographical skills and extend their understanding and knowledge of different places as they move through Key Stage 3. Therefore, at the age of fourteen they know the locations of significant places in the British Isles and some identify the location of major European and world countries, cities and features such as continents and oceans. They understand the differences between physical and human features so that they know how local environments

can be improved or damaged. Visits to local places such as Formby Pine Woods and Marine Lake reinforce this understanding very well. Pupils get a much wider perspective on such issues through studies of ecosystems like the tropical rain forest so that they know about the effect man can have by damaging natural vegetation. Studies like this also give pupils insight in to other cultures and focus their attention on moral issues such as the destruction of the rain forest. Pupils' geographical skills are also promoted well. They read simple maps and plans and use grid references, and whilst some pupils' knowledge of temperature is restricted to knowing the difference between hottest and coldest, higher attaining pupils read thermometers accurately as they take the temperature in different parts of the school.

112. The oldest pupils develop geographical skills well using local resources through investigations that form part of their accredited course work. In particular, they develop the skills of collecting data, presenting the information and interpreting it. They do this through fieldwork examining different forms of sand dune and investigations into the number of visitors to a local nature reserve on weekdays and weekends and how they travel. They use questionnaires to collect information, tally their results and display the information as a bar chart. They know about the concept of developed and under developed countries and the link with world populations and read line graphs to show how these populations change over time.

113. The quality of teaching is good. Strengths of teaching include the good use of simple but effective resources and targeted questioning that includes all pupils and encourages their participation. This is particularly effective when questions and explanations are linked closely to the learning objectives identified in planning and require pupils to use their existing knowledge to explain situations and to predict outcomes. This feature of teaching was well demonstrated in a lesson when a class of sixteen-year-olds considered the human impact of natural disasters. Good relationships underpinned a well-managed discussion in which pupils were challenged to link different types of aid with three types of natural disaster. This activity extended pupils' understanding of the meaning of words such as drought, which one described as meaning 'dry' whilst another answered the question 'what is the opposite?' with the response 'lots of water', but it also required them to apply their knowledge. Pupils had to place cards with different types of aid written on them, such as 'pumps' and 'water', into the appropriate disaster box on the board and one pupil showed his understanding and thoughtful consideration of the issue by placing the card 'offers of accommodation' at the point where the three boxes touched because "that would be needed everywhere". Although teaching is generally of a high standard and different written activities are provided for different groups of pupils, at times these do not always meet their needs. On some occasions higher attaining pupils are over directed by the teacher whilst the tasks for lower attaining pupils are not sufficiently different to enable them to try independent work.

114. The management of geography is satisfactory. Although the co-ordinator is relatively inexperienced and newly appointed she has received good support and guidance from the school management team and the local authority adviser so that subject planning is thorough and there are comprehensive procedures in place for assessing and recording pupils' geographical skills, knowledge and understanding. Effective links with other local schools are being established and the local environment is used very well to enrich pupils' learning and to promote their social development. Subject resources are generally satisfactory, but some basic equipment like compasses are not available, and new technology to aid pupils' learning is under used although this is recognised by the subject co-ordinator.

HISTORY

115. Primary aged pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve well and make good progress. The oldest pupils do not study history. Good quality planning ensures a broad subject curriculum that is balanced in terms of the different periods of history that pupils study and is increasingly challenging as pupils transfer into the secondary department and move through Key Stage 3.

116. The youngest pupils examine different periods of British history, such as the Tudors and Victorians, and as they do so they learn about significant people of the times, like Henry VIII and Queen Victoria. Studies such as this give pupils understanding of the nature of these societies and a developing understanding of how, and why, events occurred. Therefore, by the age of eleven pupils relate the cause and spread of The Great Plague to poor levels of hygiene in Tudor society. Studies such as this also develop pupils' understanding of chronology so that by the time they leave the primary department they sequence a series of statements, such as the main events in the life of Queen Victoria.

117. By the age of fourteen pupils have increased their knowledge of a number of different periods of British history. They know about Medieval Britain and significant events that occurred in that time, and many features of the Industrial Revolution associated with factories and the growth of industry. Pupils have also developed some understanding of the characteristics of other societies from the past. They know about the Anglo Saxons and why they chose different locations for settlements, and understand some of the characteristics of the Roman Empire, like aspects of everyday life and details associated with the Roman occupation of Britain. Pupils also develop historical skills of enquiry through their study of British, European and world societies. They are encouraged to learn about the past by seeking clues and therefore they know about potential sources of evidence, such as different representations of Queen Elizabeth I and the reasons why she was painted and described in certain ways. This skill is further developed through world studies, such as the black people of the Americas, and topics such as this make good contributions to pupils' moral and cultural development.

118. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 2, but the subject is well taught in Key Stage 3 and pupils achieve well in lessons. From the analysis of work, it can be seen that pupils are presented with a good mix of activities that are varied and interesting and build systematically on their previous learning and the teacher's presentation skills maintain their interest. As a result, pupils respond well and remain attentive and responsive because they have good understanding of the subject content. These features were evident in a lesson when a class of twelve-year-olds extended their knowledge of Roman Britain. The teacher presented a range of activities that encouraged pupils' speaking and listening skills and provided opportunities for reading and written work. She used a good mixture of explanation and questioning to prompt pupils to make contributions, and they were encouraged to observe drawings closely in order to comment on detail and to make predictions about likely outcomes. Good relationships gave pupils the confidence to contribute to these discussions as they felt supported and are not afraid to make mistakes. Activities such as this also provided opportunities to reinforce basic literacy skills, such as suggesting words to describe Queen Boudica's necklace. Written exercises were well chosen to meet the needs of individual pupils so that there were good opportunities for higher attaining pupils to extend their writing skills. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm were evident in an effective summary session during which the teacher skilfully allowed different pupils to demonstrate their newly acquired understanding.

119. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator is not a subject specialist but is keen and enthusiastic so that overall management of the subject is satisfactory and realistic areas for subject development have been identified. All stages of planning are now securely in place and effective assessment procedures that record what pupils can do, know and understand

have been developed. Resources for the subject are satisfactory, although they still require auditing, but the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use new technology as part of their historical investigations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

120. A key issue in the last inspection centred on improving the quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology so that pupils could make better progress and use it in other subjects to support learning. The school has not been able to achieve this key issue because of the major building project in the school, including a new information and communication technology suite, and the arrival and installation of new computers. The computers were out of action during this building work, and this has been followed with difficulties with connection to the Internet. During this time pupils' learning and progress was interrupted and therefore older pupils have not made sufficient progress in building up adequate skills and knowledge. In addition, the person co-ordinating this area retired and the new co-coordinator has only started at the school three weeks before the inspection and has not yet been in place long enough to make any changes or improvements. There is still little evidence of teachers using information and communication technology in other subjects.

121. As a result of all these factors, pupils' achievements and the progress they make overtime are unsatisfactory. In addition the school has not kept sufficient evidence in the form of pupils' work to demonstrate their skills and understanding, and what amount of progress they have made. All pupils enter and manipulate text, but the lower attaining or younger pupils need help with altering the style or size. They are able to retrieve, save and print their work. The higher attaining pupils and some who have access to computers at home are confident when using graphics, clip art and photographs in their work. For example, there are some good examples around the school of posters that have been produced using clip art applications, but there is very little evidence that they use information and communication technology for handling data, displaying results, or monitoring changes.

122. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are not achieving as much as they should, although higher attaining pupils in Year 11 demonstrate that they are able to use spreadsheets confidently to record and analyse data and information. They use this information to generate pictorial graphs, and in science pupils make use a linked computer and microscope when looking at the cell structure of plants. There is some evidence that they are beginning to use the Internet for research, but pupils are not yet confident to using it as independent learners. They have limited experience of communication using email and the Internet, or of using computers to make things happen. However, pupils are attentive and eager to learn, listen well and show very good co-operation and support for each other. They enjoy using computers, take pride in their successes and are working hard to use the skills they have to present work attractively for their folders, although they have not made enough progress to be successful in any external accreditation

123. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory. These lessons are now being taught by a teacher who is new to the school and who is not a specialist teacher, but does have some knowledge of the requirements of the subject. The planning and preparation of the sessions was thorough, with the learning support assistants providing good additional advice and guidance for pupils with the greatest learning difficulties. Because the teacher has been in the school only a few weeks and there is a lack of evidence to show what pupils can do, he is not yet aware of all the needs or abilities of the pupils. The lesson activity, presented to each year group, of collating and analysing the results of a whole school pet ownership survey is providing him with some assessment information. Pupils' work is being carefully retained, and the recording of the progress made in each session is

good. The teacher is presently building up a relationship with each group and uses some very skilful management to help the least confident pupils to apply themselves to their work.

124. The quality of the teaching and learning over the last few years has been unsatisfactory. This applies both to the discrete information and communication technology lessons and in other subjects. Teachers across the school do not sufficiently use or develop pupils' skills in applying information and communication technology to other subjects. For example, when composing and performing music, or researching information for specific topics, or producing presentations using applications such as 'PowerPoint'. The reasons for the lack of emphasis in the curriculum stems from the changes that the school has been going through in the last year, the delay in the in-service training of staff, and the amount of development which has taken place in this subject nationally. In addition to this the school has a number of lower attaining pupils whose educational needs would benefit from the specialist use of information and communication technology to access the curriculum, such as writing or reading with symbols, or augmentative communication. As the school has traditionally been a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and has not needed these facilities, the skills of the staff in the use of this to support learning has not been emphasised.

125. The present curriculum is unsatisfactory, but the new co-coordinator has produced an interim curriculum that is developing word processing, spreadsheet and database skills for all year groups. It provides an opportunity to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding, revise the scheme accordingly, but does not ensure that knowledge and understanding is systematically built on previous learning. All staff, including the co-ordinator, are in need of specialist information and communication technology support in developing and implementing a new curriculum across all subjects. The management of the school is clear about what now needs to be done and is fully committed to ensuring that rapid progress is now made on this aspect of the school's provision

126. The resources for the subject are satisfactory, as the school has a newly built information and communication technology room that is well equipped. This in addition to the computers in each classroom puts the number of computers well above the national target. The school is also very well equipped with televisions and video players, and almost all classrooms have new equipment. The next stage of development for the school is to increase the computer applications as they develop the curriculum, and to ensure that teachers as they take part in the National Opportunities Funded (NOF) training that they become familiar and proficient in using them.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

127. Since the last inspection, pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress in learning French. However, there has been a good improvement in the school's provision for modern foreign languages, and those groups taught jointly by the teacher and a foreign language assistant who is a native French speaker have started to make good progress.

128. Pupils start to learn French in Year 7, and begin by becoming familiar with a range of simple vocabulary, including numbers to 12, colours, parts of the body, *la famille* and how to greet each other. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils know numbers up to 20 and can say the days of the week in the correct sequence. They can order their choice of drinks and snacks from a waiter in a café role-play situation, using phrases they have learned, and adding *s'il vous plait* and *merci* appropriately. Pupils can read basic words and phrases, and can record their work in writing, such as a café menu, labelling a map with the ferry routes between Channel ports, and translating hotel details into English.

129. Pupils in Key Stage 4 continue to make satisfactory progress. Their learning is appropriately linked to more grown-up themes, reflecting their preparation for work experience and college taster sessions, for example, there are units on work, *au college* and *au telephone*. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can write a 'pen portrait' of themselves, talk about their pets and answer questions about their families. They can give and understand simple directions, and hold a role-play conversation between a shop assistant and a customer to purchase a garment. Post-16 students continue to learn French and are taught alongside pupils at Key Stage 4. Again, they make satisfactory progress.

130. The teaching of French is satisfactory overall. The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory and work is divided up into appropriate units covering a range of real-life situations, including home and family life, sports and hobbies, school and college, work and travel. This ensures that pupils see the practical applications of the target language. Practice of new vocabulary followed by role-play gives pupils chances to consolidate their learning in a 'real-life' situation. The co-ordinator teaches all lessons himself, ensuring continuity of teaching methods and the opportunity to plan for pupils to build on their prior learning. For example, a 'circle-time' activity at the beginning of each lesson is used to reinforce basic vocabulary such as numbers, days of the week, and the date. Pupils respond well to these familiar routines and enjoy their success in speaking a different language. However, teaching could be improved by the use of supporting gestures by the teacher. At the moment, pupils must rely on their auditory memory alone. Although some praise is given in French, too many oral prompts and instructions are given in English, resulting in pupils having an insecure grasp of everyday commands and instructions.

131. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the school's provision for French and provides good subject leadership and management. Although not a specialist teacher of the subject, he has sought advice and support from the local education authority, a retired languages teacher in a consultant capacity and a local mainstream high school. This has resulted in improvements in resources, teaching methodology and in particular in providing pupils with access to hearing a native speaker of the target language in the form of a foreign language assistant shared with the high school. This gives real motivation to pupils and has the effect of improving their pronunciation. The provision of very good accommodation in the form of a dedicated room enhances pupils' learning because all resources are stored centrally, their work can be displayed and the teacher has made prompt words and phrases in French for pupils to use to support their learning. Resources are satisfactory, with materials drawn from a variety of commercially produced schemes supported by those made

by the teacher. However, there are no French reading books and information technology plays a very limited role in supporting pupils' learning. This situation is unsatisfactory. The subject is enhanced by joint activities with food technology, where groups of pupils plan and prepare French meals and then serve them to their peers. This makes a good contribution to the provision for pupils' cultural development, by adding a European dimension.

132. There is an appropriate action plan to further develop the subject. This includes acknowledgement by the co-ordinator of the need to update his own subject expertise by undertaking a refresher course, the need to improve resources to include more reading materials in the target language and specialist computer programs, and costing out a short visit to France to give pupils opportunities to apply their French in a real situation. Currently, pupils are assessed at the end of each unit of work, but there are plans for them to gain units of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4. This could be supported by the systematic recording of pupils' oral work so that their progress in speaking, listening and responding could be analysed and assessed.

MUSIC

133. Pupils' achievements and progress are overall good in Key Stage 2 and very good in Key Stage 3. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. One teacher, who is a music specialist, now teaches music across the school and this has a very positive impact on pupils' achievements. Pupils in this school achieve particularly well in regional and national competitions, and in working with visiting musicians and companies, such as, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

134. At Key Stage 2, pupils, when playing instruments, have developed a sense of timing, and can interpret whether it is three beats or two. Pupils sing well-known tunes that are connected with the Victorian times very well, and display immense enjoyment in these sessions. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils know the names of untuned instruments. In groups they perform well, follow instructions very well and distinguish when the beat is fast, slow, and sounds are loud or soft. At Key Stage 3, pupils can identify and name unusual instruments heard in a piece of Elizabethan music. They know whether they are wind, string or percussion instruments. Because they have a good relationship with the teacher they are confident to make a guess when they are unsure. Pupils also show confidence when performing with instruments and they are able to play recorder, keyboards and drums using simple notation. They practice and perform, either individually, in small groups or as a whole class. Pupils have high regard for their music lessons, and show keen interest. Of particular note is the way in which the higher attaining pupils help and work with lower attaining pupils, quite spontaneously, while the teacher is working with other groups of pupils.

135. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection was very good. A teacher with a high level of specialist knowledge teaches lessons, and as a result pupils' achievements are high. The school also effectively involves many independent music specialists from outside the school, so as to broaden the range of experiences pupils have. This also helps with their social development. The lessons are very clearly planned and the teacher works very hard to ensure that all pupils are included in the activities. This is sometimes difficult and pupils would benefit from having more than one learning support assistant in the class. Lessons, especially those where pupils can demonstrate their achievements and perform, are enjoyable for those taking part and for observers. At Key Stage 3, the quality of learning is very good and pupils' interest and concentration during the lessons was also very good. By the end of the lesson, the objectives had been achieved, and all pupils had performed individually or in groups. The teacher's expectations are high and the activities are arranged so all pupils achieve, with more being expected of higher attaining

pupils. Final performances are used well to provide a good ending to the lesson where the teacher assesses the pupils' understanding and knowledge.

136. The curriculum is very good and consideration is given to the breadth and balance within the subject. The policy and scheme of work has been updated to include amendments for the new curriculum 2000, and provision for Key Stage 4 pupils. The policy is comprehensive, but medium term planning could have a clearer identification of the learning outcomes for pupils of differing abilities, and in turn this would provide the teacher with a clearer framework for planning and assessment for the lower attaining pupils. Assessment takes place by observation and is reported well to parents. The use of information and communication technology has not been developed and pupils are not given enough opportunities to use the skills they are learning in information and communication technology lessons. The equality of opportunity and access is very good, as is the subject's contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For, example, all pupils take part in the annual Christmas performance, and pupils take part in a wide range of projects outside the school.

137. The co-ordination of the subject is very good, with a well-informed member of staff leading the subject who cares about the quality of the experiences that pupils receive. The overall ethos for learning is very good and as a result the subject has continued to develop from the last inspection. There is very much a shared commitment to improvement between the co-ordinator and the senior management team. The accommodation is adequate as teaching takes place in a large classroom, which is also used as a teaching room, but this is satisfactory, as the noise does not interrupt any other classes. Resources are very good and match the needs of the curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. The very high standards identified during the previous inspection have been maintained as pupils achieve very well in lessons and make very good progress.

139. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a range of experiences provided through a broad and relevant subject curriculum. Activities such as swimming, gymnastics and a range of ball games encourage them to explore movement, to increase awareness of themselves and others, and to develop a growing concept of space. By the age of eleven pupils follow instructions, such as starting and stopping on command, and listen and watch attentively when new skills are demonstrated. Whilst some pupils have limited mobility and eye/hand co-ordination, others have very good co-ordination and ball skills. They hop and skip with good balance, stop a football and pass accurately with either foot; they catch a beanbag with either hand and 'juggle' with two tennis balls. Pupils who are at the early stages of swimming or still developing water confidence make their way across the pool with the aid of armbands whilst the more competent swimmers have an effective stroke and take part in small competitive relay races.

140. As pupils move through Key Stages 3 and 4 they continue to develop their skills through a variety of activities. By the age of fourteen many pupils have very good ball skills. In basketball they bounce the ball with either hand, receive and send a pass correctly and shoot accurately. They are developing early understanding of rules and tactics so that they take part in attack/defence practice and small-scale games. They oldest pupils work well with partners and in small groups so that by the age of sixteen they have the skills and team awareness to take part in competitive games against other schools.

141. All teaching is of very high quality. The management of pupils and of the teaching environment is excellent so that pupils work safely and with confidence, and therefore make

very good progress. Teachers have excellent understanding of their subject and they combine highly effective group demonstrations with individual coaching. They are particularly good at recognising and celebrating achievement to allow pupils to demonstrate their skills to others. Consequently, pupils learn very well in lessons because teachers provide activities that match their needs so that they all experience success. These features of high quality teaching were evident in a lesson when a group of sixteen-year olds practised basketball skills. The activities built systematically on the skills that had been developed in previous lessons and were very well timed to maintain pupils' interest. A striking feature of the lesson was the very strong mutual support that pupils gave to each other, as they were genuinely pleased with others' success. Therefore, when one pupil with a mobility difficulty eventually moved across the hall using side steps, he was warmly and spontaneously applauded and this exemplified the very good relationships that exist.

142. The subject is very well led and managed and this was recognised when the school was awarded its Sports Mark in 1998, for which it has just reapplied. Pupils follow a broad and well-planned curriculum and their achievements are assessed and recorded efficiently so that their progress can be tracked easily. The school has strong links with both the local community, through organisations such as the Merseyside Disability Association, and other educational establishments in both the immediate and wider vicinity. As a result of these links with other schools pupils participate in inter-school sporting activities such as swimming galas and athletics competitions in addition to competitive matches against other schools. These events provide very good opportunities that encourage pupils' personal and social development. This development is further enhanced through the use of local facilities, such as the swimming pool, and visitors in to school. For example, during the inspection a visiting judo specialist was observed teaching a class of fourteen year olds as part of a five-week series of lessons. This was particularly important in exposing pupils to a relative stranger who insisted on the firm discipline associated with the sport and who gave them an insight into another culture as he explained some of the history of the sport and used appropriate Japanese instructions. The one weakness in the provision is the absence of any outdoor and adventurous pursuits.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were making unsatisfactory progress. There has been satisfactory improvement since then, and pupils of all ages now make satisfactory progress. Strengths of the school's provision for religious education are the inclusion of related visits to places of worship and the range of visiting speakers from the different faiths studied. The very good, dedicated accommodation allows relevant displays to support pupils' learning. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural education.

144. All pupils at the school study religious education. At Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in learning about Christianity and start to study other major world faiths, for example Judaism. Pupils know the meaning of Poppy Day. They understand about harvest festival and Christmas celebrations and can write, mostly with staff support, simple prayers as ways to say thank you to God. When studying Judaism, they learn about Rosh Hashanah, what the inside of a synagogue is like and how to make Jewish honey biscuits.

145. At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress. They continue their study of Christianity through learning about the stories and parables told by and about Jesus and the lives of some of the saints. They read the Lord's Prayer and then write prayers of their own. In studying other major faiths, they learn about Islam, including the life of Muhammed, the Qur'an, and the mosque as a place of worship. They can talk about the things that are important to Muslims. By the end of the key stage, pupils know similar information about

Sikhism. They have learnt the difference between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. They know the importance of key Christian figures, including Abraham, Moses and Jacob. Pupils are starting to understand concepts, such as justice, and can make a list of their own talents and set themselves targets.

146. Pupils in Key Stage 4 continue to make satisfactory progress, but some of the concepts, which they are asked to consider as part of the curriculum, are too difficult. This undermines the progress they make. They extend their knowledge of world faiths by studying Hinduism, and deepen their understanding by revisiting Sikhism, Judaism and Islam. In their study of Christianity, they learn about Catholicism and the significance of religious symbols. They further their moral education by considering influences on them, such as their peer group and religious beliefs and they can discuss what makes a good marriage. They learn about the work of charities and undertake fundraising activities. By the end of the key stage, pupils have an opportunity to use some of their knowledge, skills and understanding to gain accreditation in a unit of work on St Paul. Post-16 students are taught alongside pupils at Key Stage 4 and they also make satisfactory progress.

147. The co-coordinator, who is a subject specialist, teaches pupils at Key Stage 2, but not at Key Stages 3 and 4. The teaching and learning is overall satisfactory. The teachers know the pupils well and use good behaviour management techniques in lessons. Pupils show interest in their lessons because of this, and concentrate well. There is a high emphasis placed on listening to, and valuing, the views and traditions of their peers and of people from other faiths and cultures, and as a result pupils show respect for these. For example, during the inspection a local vicar came to talk to the oldest pupils and students about the Ten Commandments. Information and communication technology is used in some lessons to support pupils' learning. For example, in Key Stage 2, pupils used a multimedia dictionary to print off the definition and an illustration of a poppy when learning about Remembrance Day.

148. Older pupils use the computer to improve the presentation of their work or to do limited research work. Teachers borrow artefacts to supplement the school's resources for religious education, and trips to places of worship and visits from representatives of the faiths studied enhance pupils' learning by providing practical first-hand experiences. However, the school's own resources for religious education, though satisfactory in the range of faiths they represent, are unsatisfactory in quantity. Consequently, teachers rely too heavily on the use of photocopied worksheets for many lessons. When topics are revisited with older pupils, often the same worksheets are used again. This has the effect of making lessons very similar and can result in some pupils losing interest.

149. A strength of the teaching of religious education is seen in the emphasis that teachers place on the teaching of basic literacy skills. For example, at Key Stage 2, staff encourage pupils to discuss their work, including visits to local churches, and to think about spelling and phonics as they write to record their work. Poems and recipes help pupils to remember the information as well as the more usual writing, such as prayers. Older pupils also record their work in a variety of ways and they write business-style letters when they are undertaking fundraising for a charity. They have opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion of spiritual and moral issues.

150. The subject co-ordinator is currently revising the schemes of work for religious education. The completed units are closely based on the locally agreed syllabus and cover an appropriate range of world faiths with the required emphasis on Christianity, and help pupils to consider other issues such as how we can look after the environment, caring for others and why society needs rules. Whilst this range is good, some of the concepts are too abstract and insufficient practical activities are planned to help pupils to understand them. Assessment opportunities are incorporated into each unit of work but they do not always

reflect the identified teaching objectives. The process of trialing the new schemes of work is hampered by the fact that the subject co-ordinator is not the main teacher of the subject and is not able to judge the success of what she has planned by teaching them herself.