

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SIR CHARLES PARSONS SCHOOL**

Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle

Unique reference number: 131987

Headteacher: John Preston

Reporting inspector: Noreen Buckingham  
16722

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2001

Inspection number: 230107

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Westbourne Avenue Walker Newcastle
Postcode:	NE6 4ED
Telephone number:	0191 2630261
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor G Douglas
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Noreen Buckingham	Registered inspector	Art and design	What sort of school is it?
16722		French	The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Clare Lorenz 9282	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Margaret Smith 27429	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils?
		Information and communication technology	
		Equal opportunities	
Helen Jones 18932	Team inspector	Geography	
		History	
		Religious education	
		Post 16 provision	
Pip Clark 10760	Team inspector	Science	
		Music	
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Inspection Quality Division  
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Alexandra House  
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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
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	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Sir Charles Parsons School is a maintained special school situated in the east end of Newcastle upon Tyne and serves the whole city. It has been open for two years following the city's reorganisation of its provision for special educational needs. For the first year it was a split site school and has only been in the present buildings since May 2000. It is a secondary school for pupils and students aged from 11 to 19 years and most boys and girls will transfer from the partner junior special school.

The majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties and some have complex learning needs. A few have moderate learning difficulties. There are currently 123 pupils on roll, 73 boys and 50 girls. Attainment on entry to the school is well below nationally expected levels because of their special needs and all pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Approximately 65 (52 percent) are entitled to free school meals. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Sir Charles Parsons School is a very good school. The leadership and management of the school are excellent and this has a very positive effect on the very high quality of education offered to the pupils and students whose attitudes and behaviour are very good. The curriculum offered is very good and prepares pupils and students very well for leaving school. The quality of teaching and learning is good and this is supported by the very effective teamwork of all staff which in turn results in very good relationships between pupils and staff. As a consequence, pupils and students achieve well and make good progress. The school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- The curriculum and other learning opportunities are very good.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are very good. Pupils' moral development is excellent and their social development is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and the teaching of basic skills is very good.
- Assessment is used very well to monitor pupils' progress and inform planning

#### **What could be improved**

- The school should continue to review, evaluate and further develop the policies, systems and structures already in place.

*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**

This is the school's first inspection. However since opening two years ago the school has developed very well and has already introduced a number of systems by which it can monitor its performance and raise standards. A School Self Review in conjunction with the Local Education Authority has been undertaken and the school has analysed the first year's PIVATs ( Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting) results and intends to set targets for improving pupils' progress from this information. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) demonstrates the school's commitment to raising standards. Additionally the school has ensured that all staff have a range of appropriate training including the management and teaching of pupils with complex needs and in augmented

communication systems. The school received an Achievement Award in March 2001 in recognition of the successful establishment of the school.

## STANDARDS

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

<b>Progress in:</b>	<b>by age 16</b>	<b>by age 19</b>	<b>Key</b>	
Speaking and listening	A	A	Very good	A
Reading	A	B	Good	B
Writing	A	B	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	A	A	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

The school is building up data from a number of sources from which to set targets to raise standards and monitor progress, for example, "P" levels and PIVAT scores. Targets for individual pupils are well matched to their prior attainment and as a result of the good teaching overall they make good or very good progress and achieve well. In English pupils and students throughout the school make very good progress in speaking and listening. In reading and writing they make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in post 16. In mathematics pupils and students make very good progress and they make good progress in science across the school. In personal, social and health education pupils and students make very good progress. In other subjects of the National Curriculum they make from satisfactory to very good progress. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls or for pupils and students of different levels of attainment throughout the school.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to school and they work well. Many show enthusiasm in lessons and want to improve. They make good use of the lunch time clubs.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in and out of lessons is very good. Any misbehaviour is dealt with effectively with minimal effect on others. The majority of pupils are polite and courteous. The school is an orderly community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The STEPS programme and the personal, social and health education curriculum make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Relationships within the school community are very good and pupils work well together.
Attendance	Good. Pupils like school and are punctual to lessons even though they have to move up and down stairs when changing lessons.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and want to learn. They are pleased to talk to visitors and are polite and courteous.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-16	Aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	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 overall is good with many excellent features and very few weaknesses. Ten percent of teaching is excellent, 33 percent is very good, 33 percent is good, 22 percent is satisfactory and only two percent is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good overall and in Key Stage 4 and post 16 teaching is very good overall. Knowledge of pupils' different needs, very good planning and secure subject knowledge, coupled with appropriate management systems have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Weaknesses occur when lesson planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' individual needs and the subject content is not always focused. The quality of teaching in English is very good overall with only a very small percentage which is unsatisfactory. In mathematics fifty percent is very good or better and the remainder is good. In science, teaching is good overall with a very small percentage which is unsatisfactory. In personal, social and health education while teaching is good overall, pupils make very good progress because their personal and social development is promoted across the curriculum and in other situations. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been well adapted for pupils throughout the ability range and have a significant effect on pupils' achievements throughout the curriculum. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good and the school makes very good use of signing, symbols and switches etc. to support communication for all pupils and students.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, especially post 16 which has a curriculum designed to prepare students very well for leaving school. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities available to pupils and students. Links with other schools are developing.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall but the moral development of pupils is excellent and their social development is very good. Pupils' spiritual development is good as is their cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for one another and staff provide good role models.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are very well cared for in school and a number of support systems and personnel ensure their safety and welfare. Child protection procedures are sound. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress are very good including assessment procedures which are used well to support lesson planning.

The school has developed a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all pupils. All statutory requirements are met. The curriculum for post 16 students is particularly relevant with the aim of preparing students well for life after school. Vocational guidance and careers education are very good and pupils have very good opportunities for work experience. Pupils receive very good support from a range of other professionals; such as speech therapists, physiotherapists, school medical services and specialist teachers. The school is building up an effective partnership with parents and recognises that there is still room for improvement in the school improvement plan. Parents receive regular newsletters keeping them informed of school activities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff are excellent. All staff with a responsibility work hard to fulfil their individual role. Day to day management of the school is very good. Communication within school is clear and all staff understand the systems.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Members are very supportive of the school and the mentoring system which has been introduced is becoming effective in building good relationships between staff and governors while keeping them up to date with the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Although the school is relatively new, procedures for evaluating its performance have been established and a Self Supported Review with the LEA has already been completed. An analysis of PIVATs scores has been undertaken and the information will be used to set targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All available resources are well used and there is a close relationship between educational and financial planning.

The headteacher provides the drive and vision which gives the school a very clear direction. The leadership group, together with others who have a management role, work very hard together to ensure a very high quality of education for the pupils. The school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development and the School Improvement Plan identifies appropriate targets for improvement. The priorities are clearly linked to raising standards and therefore have a positive effect on pupils' learning. There is a sufficient number of well qualified teaching and support staff for the current number of pupils on roll. Resources on the whole are good as is the accommodation except for the facilities for music, design and technology and art. A restriction to the full integration of all pupils and students are the small lifts. The school provides very good value for money. Best value principles are applied to all expenditure.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of pupils and students</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like more homework</li> <li>• The range of activities outside of lessons</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the views of the parents except that there is a very good range of activities outside of lessons including a number of lunchtime clubs and after school clubs and activities.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Across the whole curriculum pupils demonstrate they are acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding and making good and often very good progress. All pupils have statements of special educational needs which for the great majority identify severe or complex learning difficulties. A few pupils are identified as having moderate learning difficulties. Although overall attainment on entry is well below national averages because of pupils' special educational needs, with respect to their own targets and their earlier learning they achieve well. In areas of personal and social development pupils of all ages make very good progress. All pupils make very good progress towards meeting targets specified on their Individual Education Plan( IEP) and their personal targets which are reviewed at the end of each lesson and from which points are awarded.

2. The school uses both "P" levels and PIVATS to support the assessment of pupil's progress and to set appropriate targets in order to raise standards. Already last year's PIVAT results have been analysed and the school is considering the data in order to help it identify strengths and weaknesses.

3. Achievement in English across the school is very good and sometimes excellent in Key Stage 3. Pupils make considerable gains in communication skills as they move through the school, including pupils and students who need some form of additional support, for example; signing, symbols and switches in order that they are understood and can understand. Speech and language therapists work well with staff to encourage maximum communication. The school identifies the needs of individuals and provides high quality teaching and support. This develops pupils' confidence and, as a result, attitudes are very good and pupils achieve well. In Key Stage 3 pupils are confident speakers and try very hard to respond to questions using a range of descriptive words in the correct context. Similarly in Key Stage 4 pupils build on previous experience and participate in discussions about their work. They respond to role play with enthusiasm when re-enacting scenes from "The Odyssey", demonstrating how confident they are and showing an increasing maturity. Post 16 students listen very carefully and try hard to improve their pronunciation of difficult words. Others use signing very effectively to communicate. Pupils are given good opportunities to improve their reading as they move through the school and are introduced to a wide range of books and plays. Younger pupils enjoy Roald Dahl and in Key Stage 4 they enjoy "Macbeth". In Key Stage 3 pupils enjoy being read to and most know that both print, pictures and symbols can convey some meaning. Some have strategies to correct mistakes and others are at the early stages of matching words or pictures. At Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils read well with some expression and show a good recall of the story. They have some understanding of grammar and can identify a range of punctuation successfully. Strategies to read unfamiliar words are used appropriately. Lower attaining pupils successfully identify signs, symbols or photographs to demonstrate understanding of simple everyday events. Post 16 students recognise and understand a range of labels and signs, everyday instructions and safety procedures. Lower attaining students can match pictures and symbols to places they have visited on a recent field trip. In Key Stage 3 pupils' achievements in writing are very good. Many pupils use print but some make good attempts at cursive writing using punctuation. They write for a variety of reasons, for instance, book reviews, magazines and recipes. Lower attaining pupils are given very good support to record their work, such as a braille and computers. When writing, pupils in Key Stage 4 do so for a range of purposes and higher attaining pupils use a cursive script but

this is sometimes not uniform in presentation. Many use punctuation correctly and also use information technology to produce their work. Post 16 students can complete basic self-assessment sheets and write simple diaries recording their experiences related to college or work experience.

4. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are good. In Key Stage 3 they show a wide range of achievement from learning about big and small and understanding basic mathematical language, counting to ten to recognising 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional shapes, ordering numbers to 50 and sometimes 100,, understanding simple fractions and handling data. Mathematical experiences in Key Stage 4 are closely linked to life skills and this supports other areas of learning and is extended in post 16. They use their number skills to make decisions affecting their everyday life. They can also count in twos and use tables up to five. Lower attaining pupils make choices and can record their work appropriately. All pupils make good progress according to their ability. Post 16 students become familiar with money learning the value of coins and what they can buy. Mathematical skills are practised in other subject across the curriculum but more especially in food technology where they learn to weigh ingredients.

5. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. As a result lessons are well structured very focused and time is used very well.

6. In science, pupils' achievements are good and they make good progress. In Key Stage 3 pupils learn about living things, sound and light and the properties of different materials. They enjoy using a microscope and make simple conclusions about the formation of rocks. When learning about light and sound pupils know that shadows occur when light cannot get through and some know the correct technical language. Pupils in Key Stage 4 follow courses leading to an external accreditation. They learn about the importance of healthy eating and look at different lifestyles and the differences between themselves and their friends. Many pupils can test for acids and alkalis using indicator fluids or litmus paper and know what tells them the strength of the acid. They also learn about magnetism using a variety of everyday objects. Post 16 students continue to study for externally accredited courses and are encouraged to relate their learning to as preparation for leaving school. They learn about the systems of the human body and what they need to do to keep healthy, and the need for exercise. Most can plan an investigation and carry it through to a conclusion, for example finding out what happens to the pulse rate during exercise.

7. Achievement in information and communication technology ranges from good to excellent. Good teaching of basic skills and access to very good equipment means that pupils become confident users. They have a secure understanding of how to access programmes and files that they need and use them appropriately. The internet is used to access information and pupils make very good use of a digital camera to record their work. Many pupils are also familiar with laptops, interactive whiteboards, multimedia projector, switches and printers and use them appropriately.

8. In religious education, pupils' achievements are very good at both key stages. They learn about Christianity and other faiths and remember a number of facts about Hinduism. Pupils enjoyed a lesson about Noah's Ark which was brought to life with wet role play making sure that pupils would remember some of the symbolism of the Old Testament story. They learn about important festivals such as Easter and Diwali and a visit to a local church is used very well to illustrate one aspect of church life.

9. In other subjects of the curriculum pupils generally make very good or good progress. Pupils make very good progress in physical education, food technology and music and good progress in French and satisfactory progress in art, design and technology, history and geography. All pupils and students make very good progress in personal and social education. This is not only taught as a discrete subject but is also included in the everyday life of the school. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls and all pupils and students achieve very well in relation to their differing abilities. The curriculum, along with the good teaching, good relationships and understanding of individual needs, allows pupils to build on previous learning.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are very good as is the personal and social development of pupils. Pupils are very enthusiastic about coming to school and, with very few exceptions, are keen to learn. The majority listen very well to instructions and openly offer their own ideas, such as in a Year 9 mathematics class when pupils were encouraged to interact and participated well. They work well in class and, as was seen at assembly, as an ensemble when drummers and ribbon twirlers vigorously played together very well. Nearly all pupils keenly communicate about what they are doing in and out of class although there are a few pupils whose occasional flare-ups cause temporary distraction for other pupils. Staff are very quick to resolve such instances and the remainder of the class carry on learning with good concentration throughout.

11. Pupils came to the present building last May from two different sites. It is a tribute to the staff that all pupils understand the rules and that behaviour by the great majority of pupils is consistently very good. It is very good in classrooms, the dining hall, corridors and in the yards outside. The main yard is somewhat small for the vigorous ball games that are played there but these are well supervised and there are plans to increase the size of this area. All pupils understand the "class book" rewards system and are keen to earn points each day, for points lead to certificates and prizes. Nobody reported feeling bullied and all were confident that, if worried, staff would sort the problem out. There have been no exclusions.

12. Relationships between teachers and pupils and groups of pupils are very good. Pupils are most co-operative and very friendly and many work well in pairs and groups as well as on their own. Many pupils are relaxed and humorous and polite to both staff and visitors, and friendly and helpful towards each other. Pupils throughout the school have raised money for charities and the Sixth Form Council encourages older pupils to take an active part in decision taking. Pupils, including those with complex learning difficulties, were seen actively questioning a member of staff from Newcastle College about what it had to offer as well as starting to plan an eighteenth birthday party for a council member. Such activities allow pupils to show what they can do and are very good vehicles for developing pupils' initiative and sense of responsibility for others.

13. The personal development of pupils is very good. The personal, social and health education programme makes a very good contribution to this outcome as do assemblies, the STEPS programme and school clubs as well as the extensive use of information and communication technology. The emphasis on relating school work to future careers and training from Year 9 onwards is very good. In all lessons pupils are expected to pay attention and behave in ways which are socially acceptable, for example, to listen quietly while others are talking, waiting turns and sharing. Pupils with complex learning needs are provided with a range of opportunities to develop an awareness of the world around them through sensory and tactile experiences and to tolerate being with both familiar adults and

other adults. Another important aspect of their personal development is how pupils and students develop an understanding of the need to look after themselves and care for the world around them. Examples of this were seen in a Year 11 lesson when pupils identified ways in which the environment can be damaged by pollution or by the unnecessary killing of animals. Post 16 students were able to indicate familiar objects around them as dangerous or safe and some can recognise the symbols representing fire hazard or poison.

14. The level of attendance is good. Pupils receiving some of their education at, for example, mainstream school or further education college, are inappropriately recorded by the LEA system as absent when this is not the case. The level of pupils taking holiday in term time is satisfactory. Most pupils are brought to school by taxi or bus and punctuality is good and lessons begin on time.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

15. The quality of teaching overall is good with many excellent features and very few weaknesses. Ten percent of teaching is excellent, 33 percent is very good, 33 percent is good, 22 percent is satisfactory and only two percent is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 3 teaching is good overall and in Key Stage 4. In post 16 teaching is very good overall. In English teaching overall is very good with only a very small minority which is unsatisfactory; in mathematics it is never less than good with 50 percent very good or better; and in science teaching is good overall with a very small minority which is unsatisfactory. Knowledge of pupils' different needs, very good planning and secure subject knowledge, coupled with appropriate management systems have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

16. Where teaching is excellent or very good lessons are carefully planned with detailed objectives and activities to meet pupils' individual learning needs, and this ensures that they have excellent learning opportunities with work they understand and can do. A good introduction usually starts these lessons, in which prior learning is reviewed and key words are used as reminders where needed. Resources are well prepared, relevant and within pupils' understanding so time is not wasted during the lesson and pupils gain from the teacher's full attention. Pupils are skilfully challenged but supported to succeed within their own capabilities and their individual targets are successfully met. That teachers understand pupils well was demonstrated in an English lesson with Year 9 pupils when the teacher acknowledges that a pupil is tired following a busy day including a physiotherapy session and varied the pace of the lesson and redirected the support. During a religious education lesson the teacher demonstrated an excellent understanding of how pupils with complex learning needs learn and used this knowledge in the preparation of materials, use of language, interactive resources and management of the pupils. In addition excellent use of switches and signing meant that all pupils were involved.

17. The majority of teachers have very secure subject knowledge and this results in confident teaching in which the teacher can respond to questions appropriately and alter the focus of the lesson smoothly without losing pace or the attention of the pupils. Excellent teaching in music makes learning exciting. A sense of humour coupled with enthusiasm really inspires pupils and they perform with enjoyment. At the same time their musical knowledge and understanding is increasing. Similarly in physical education very secure subject knowledge, understanding of pupils' abilities and very good teamwork ensure great enjoyment. Pupils are hard working and their skills improve which increases their self-confidence.

18. Pupils are generally very well managed and lessons are well organised with teachers using a range of appropriate strategies to enable pupils to learn effectively.



Behaviour plans are well used resulting in few disruptions to lessons. Any potentially difficult behaviour is handled with minimal fuss and therefore has little impact on the learning of others. In all lessons pupils are reminded of the learning objectives and of their own personal targets which are revisited at the end of the lesson and discussed. This involves all pupils in assessing their own learning. Praise, encouragement and reinforcement are used very effectively to give pupils confidence to express themselves and to complete tasks, which results in good learning. Special needs assistants work well with teachers as part of a team and know the pupils well so that they do not over-support the pupils but work with them.

19. Weaknesses in teaching occur when lesson planning is not sufficiently detailed to identify the individual learning needs of pupils and a lack of direction results in time not being used productively, so pupils lose interest. The school has organised in-service training in order to raise the quality of teaching in mixed ability classes but this has yet to be followed through into an overall review of this aspect of teaching. Other shortcomings are in recognising that some special needs assistants do not have sufficient confidence to work with groups of pupils even though the teamwork in the classroom, in terms of managing pupils and working together, is not in doubt.

20. Day-to-day assessment is generally used very effectively. Sometimes teachers involve pupils in this so that they begin to be aware, a simple level, of how well they are learning and of what they need to do to improve. Assessment is a significant feature of teaching resulting in good learning and progress. Although teachers use assessment very well, the marking of pupil's work is inconsistent both across subjects and within them. The school has a marking policy but this area has yet to be monitored by subject co-ordinators. In some subjects marking is consistent and very helpful but in others it is variable and of little help to pupils. Homework is given on very few occasions so that pupils have little work to do at home to involve parents in their child's learning.

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

21. The organisation of the school's curriculum includes Key Stages 3 and 4 as well as provision for post 16 students. The majority of pupils are experiencing severe learning difficulties but the curriculum provides for pupils over a wide ability range, from moderate to severe and complex learning difficulties. In spite of this range of difficulties, the school meets its statutory requirements well to provide for all pupils a broad range of relevant and appropriate learning experiences, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education.

22. The overall quality and range of learning experiences provided by the school is very good. The contribution made by individual subjects to pupils' learning is very good in English, mathematics, music and physical education; good in science, design technology, information and communications technology, religious education and French, and satisfactory in history, geography and art. The school has not been previously inspected but in the relatively short time since its opening it has rightly prioritised the development of pupils' core skills whilst ensuring that the overall curriculum remains broad and balanced.

23. The curriculum is very well planned so that pupils build on what they have already learned. Long term planning for subjects of the curriculum is very thorough and is broken down into shorter elements which are clearly linked to the overall objectives identified in the longer term. Pupils are generally taught in their year groups and in the classes in which they spend the greater part of the school day. However, where there is a greater

concentration of pupils with more severe and complex difficulties, as in the present Year 9 for example, the curriculum is carefully adapted to take account of the specific needs of this group of pupils. Some subjects are taught on a rotating basis over alternate half terms to ensure that the curriculum retains its breadth and pupils have as wide a range of learning experiences as possible. French alternates with swimming, for example, art with design and technology. The oversight of the curriculum rests with the curriculum management group (CMG) consisting of three teachers who report regularly to the senior management team. This is a very good arrangement which ensures that the overall breadth and balance of the curriculum is carefully monitored and any necessary adjustments can be made in the longer term.

24. Vocational and careers guidance are very well organised and offer pupils and students a very good range of opportunities which prepares them well for leaving school. The school has an impressive list of connections with local businesses and training agencies so that pupils and students experience a variety of work placements, which gives them and the school a very valuable insight into what pupils can do.

25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good despite the wide ability range of the pupils. Effective subject and classroom planning in the majority of lessons ensure that higher and lower attaining pupils make good progress, often within the same class. All pupils have very specific targets set through their Individual Education Plans. These targets cover areas of social progress as well as progress in communication skills and are regularly reviewed with parents. Pupils have a very good knowledge of their own individual targets through the very good system used by the school. This ensures that pupils are briefly reminded of their own targets at the beginning of every lesson and of how well they have done at the end. Additionally, pupils have individual targets set for them in specific areas of the curriculum and again these are discussed and reviewed with pupils during each lesson. The school has a commitment to an inclusive policy to ensure that all pupils have full curriculum access with their peers. In the important core subjects of English, mathematics and science the curriculum is effectively enhanced by organising pupils into groups of similar ability for some lessons.

26. The school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils and students have equal access to the curriculum. The accommodation, on three floors, places some restriction on the total inclusion of pupils or students with complex learning difficulties. Additionally, although there are two lifts these are very small and slow and much time is needed to move pupils in wheelchairs from one floor to another. The PIVAT data shows no significant gender differences. As yet, ethnic differences are not monitored but no issues were seen during the inspection. Resources are allocated to groups or individuals in a way that ensures equality of opportunity for all: for example in ICT a range of access devices is available, switch, joystick, alternative keyboard. All staff are aware of the need to monitor language to avoid stereotyping, or excluding any group or individual, and terms of address are respectful and neutral in terms of disability, gender, race or belief.

27. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been well adapted for pupils throughout the ability range and have had a significant effect on pupils' achievements throughout the curriculum. This is particularly noticeable in their skills of speaking and listening and their confidence in reading. Pupils learn to count in French lessons for example and to weigh and measure in food and design technology.

28. The school makes very good provision for a wide range of extra curricular activities despite the constraints of home-school transport arrangements. These activities include a daily lunchtime computer club which is very popular with pupils, an evening basic cookery

club at which pupils are taught to prepare and cook simple meals, and an after school swimming club for pupils with more complex learning difficulties. The school has been successful in gaining additional funding for this club through the New Opportunities Funding now available to schools. Older pupils have opportunities to experience a residential visit during their final years at school. The curriculum is considerably enriched by a wide range of other opportunities which enable pupils to visit and experience theatres, galleries and musical activities.

29. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PHSE) in a variety of ways, for example through direct teaching, individual target setting, the planned activities on Wednesday afternoons throughout the whole curriculum, and residential opportunities. As a subject, PHSE is in the early stages of development but the co-ordinator has introduced a very good curriculum which is already having a very positive effect on pupils' learning.

30. The school has developed good links with a wide range of other mainstream schools and colleges as well as the community. These links are effective in preparing pupils for leaving school and entering the world of work and further education. Links with mainstream schools, for the re-entry of suitable pupils, are developing and are managed sensitively. At present two pupils spend part of their week in mainstream schools. The school works closely with the local careers service and has built up an impressive list of local employers, including "Age Concern" and the local authority, who are willing to offer work experience placements to pupils.

31. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have access to a wide range of accredited courses including, for higher attaining pupils, GCSE in mathematics. Links with the main primary feeder school are effective in preparing pupils for the transition to Sir Charles Parsons School. These links include detailed liaison with the speech and language service to ensure consistency of staff training in the teaching of the augmentative communication systems which helps the communication of those pupils with little or no speech. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties are also prepared for leaving school through effective collaboration with organisations and charities such as Barnardo's and "Disability North".

32. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. At the end of some religious education lessons students are offered the opportunity for a minute's silent reflection and most make good use of this. In some religious education lessons also the use of a candle as a signifier for the subject both enables pupils to develop an understanding that religious education is the next lesson but also that it involves an element of reflection and contemplation. Music is also well used to ensure pupils develop spiritually both through the taught curriculum and through its use in other subjects. In music lessons the teaching of singing is a communal spiritual experience. In history pupils arrive for a lesson on monks in Tudor times and are greeted by Gregorian Chant music and in geography two lessons about the rain forest were well enhanced by the sounds of the forest.

33. Staff make excellent explicit provision to develop pupils' moral sense through the taught curriculum, the emphasis on pupils individual targets which often focus on moral issues and the general ethos of the school. This is strength of the school. In a Year 11 lesson on "Macbeth", for example, pupils were encouraged to consider the proposition that "truth is not always a good thing". Pupils are also encouraged to consider moral issues in their targets, one pupil for example has the target that he must listen carefully and "respect others' work". Pupils are also encouraged to comment positively on the success of others in

meeting such targets and to celebrate their friends' progress fairly and positively. Staff provide good role models, and relationships support the development of mutual respect.

34. Pupils' social skills are also developed very well. Assemblies create very good opportunities for social and moral interaction, as does the weekly STEPS programme. This programme, which covers the school apart from the sixth form, is very well planned to develop pupils' social skills through a range of activities such as basketball, lifeskills and music. It is carefully monitored through "P" scales and the school hopes to evaluate its effectiveness in this way. The organisation of the breaks and lunchtimes also gives pupils opportunities for social development. One yard offers space for team games and physical interaction while the other offers a place for chat and quieter recreation in pleasant surroundings. Pupils are also keen to help their less able friends. One pupil was observed reminding a teacher that it was time for his friends' medication whilst in a Food technology lesson a pupil was showing his friend how to crimp pastry. Pupils take turns, share with each other and work happily in groups.

35. Pupils' cultural development is well enhanced through the curriculum and special activities. The detailed religious education scheme of work ensures pupils develop formal knowledge of other cultures as well as religions in particular through its use of celebrations and sensory opportunities such as food and music from other religions. Pupils have celebrated Chinese New Year and experienced a wide range of music from other cultures such as Africa, Israel, Ireland and Scotland. They are able to explain correctly in physical education the origins of the term badminton. In art pupils explore the work of a range of artists such as Matisse. Pupils are also given valuable opportunities to experience cultural events by visiting the Peoples' Theatre and having theatre groups visit the school. They are also given the opportunity to experience live music by a range of performers.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

36. Procedures for the support, welfare and guidance for pupils are very good. Staff like their pupils and there is a tangible warmth and very supportive understanding for the difficulties which some pupils face. Good child protection arrangements comply with locally agreed procedures. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal and academic development are very good and pupils feel safe and happy knowing that they are guided and supported by very caring staff. The school has a sufficient number of qualified first-aiders for day to day issues and the school nurse is responsible for the administration of medicines which are recorded appropriately. Health and safety procedures are firmly in place and risk assessments have been undertaken.

37. The personal, social and health education programme, registration periods and planned assemblies give very good opportunities for developing pupils' confidence and maturity. The very well thought out careers education programme, which begins in Year 9 and includes work experience in Years 10 and 11, is very effective in making school education relevant to the world beyond. The school's advice and support to pupils making the transition from school to further education is founded on very good knowledge of the students and of provision both local and regional. Links with local further education colleges and Barnados are used well to ensure that leavers take up a range of opportunities of training or further study. Leavers, including those who opt to go straight in to the workplace or take training, are very well supported by the schools' vocational and careers education.

38. The school has a number of very effective strategies for ensuring that pupils are not only supported very well but are also challenged. The registration periods at the start and

end of the day are well used to remind pupils of their targets and to award points at the end of the day. There is also a social time in which personal tutors and pupils exchange news and pupils are made to feel welcome. The weekly STEPS programmes offer pupils a chance to try their hand at a wide range of different skills but with the emphasis on the development of personal and social skills. The drumming sessions with the musician in residence resulted in an exciting and very good performance.

39. Sessions to raise pupils' self esteem take place as do regular health sessions with a range of specialists including the school nurses and physiotherapy service. Speech therapists and teacher of the visually impaired also give specialist support to pupils and staff and this has a very positive effect on pupils' abilities to learn.

40. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. As many of the targets which pupils are asked to reach include behavioural aspects there is a common understanding between pupils and staff as to when improvement has been reached. The class book points system is understood - and liked - by pupils and applied generally consistently by all teachers and special needs assistants. When involved at lesson evaluation at the end of a lesson most pupils consider very carefully the extent to which their targets have been met and whether or not points are deserved. Very occasionally it was difficult to justify the points awarded and pupils were observed to protest when this happened. In lessons where the whole group was asked to judge the meeting of targets, pupils or students were objective, but at the same time supportive of their peers. At present the school does not monitor behaviour by racial background although it does include racial background in its baseline assessment records. Pupils are confident that any worries or instances of bullying brought to the staff's attention will be dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively. Special needs assistants promote good behaviour as effectively as teachers and this consistency of approach reinforces the message.

41. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. A first day call to parents when pupils are absent has been introduced and has had a positive effect. The education welfare officer has been diligent and also effective in improving attendance in some instances.

42. Procedures are very good for the assessing the progress pupils and students are making. These procedures are used very effectively throughout the school. The assessment policy, and guidance notes for staff, are very good and promote effective monitoring of individual progress. Every pupil and student has an IEP which is specific and realistic. Pupils, students and their parents are involved in the setting of targets, which are based on very good baseline assessments, and perceived priorities. There are also clear links with pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs. Special needs assistants (SNA) play a significant role in this ongoing assessment, especially with pupils or students with complex learning difficulties. They, as well as teachers, are very skilled in interpreting the smallest response, of gesture, sound and facial expression, as part of a systematic form of communication. Prior to a parents' evening when the annual review takes place, each pupil or student is re-assessed and targets are then reviewed with input from parents and pupils or students.

43. Procedures for assessing progress in subjects across the curriculum are good. In English, maths, science, information technology, design and technology, music and physical education they are very good, in swimming, excellent. Recording is simple, consistent, dated, and informative. PIVATS, are used as the base line assessment tool in communication skills, numeracy and personal social education. IEPs, PIVATS and other subject related assessments, with the use of "P" Levels, are used very effectively to inform

planning. Further analysis of assessment results will put the school in a better position to judge the long term impact of their procedures on pupils' progress. In the best lesson planning, they are used to set subject related objectives, for each pupil, which, in turn, leads to efficient evaluation. Teachers and special needs assistants know their pupils and students very well, and have a good understanding of their needs and abilities. Assessment and recording are thorough and generally effective.

44. Whole school PIVATs data is monitored to measure progress by gender, and in future by ethnic group. Assessment in Key Stage 4 and post 16 is linked to accreditation and most pupils and students achieve accreditation through ASDAN Transition Challenge, Certificate of Achievement and AQA units.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

45. Parents think highly of the school and are pleased with the education it offers their children. The school has established good links with parents and a group, including parent governors, is starting to support the new school well. At present a few parents strengthen the home-school partnership by, for example, offering help in the classroom or accompanying school outings. The school recognises the need to further strengthen the partnership with parents and has identified this as the SIP. Members of staff and governors wish to develop the partnership further and a family learning programme has started which has included lessons for parents in Makaton signing. Parents are invited to watch the after school swimming club and to attend sports and fun days. They have taken part in a sponsored walk to raise funds for the school.

46. A minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire was concerned that there was insufficient homework. Inspectors found this to be the case although the school has plans to introduce regular homework, which reinforces and extends learning, next year. The school makes strenuous efforts at open evenings and annual and transition reviews to inform parents about the progress made by its pupils and many parents attend these meetings. Each pupil and student is reassessed prior to the parents' evening and the annual review and targets are reviewed with input from parents and, wherever relevant, the pupil or student. The end of year written reports, in some instances, clearly cover what has been studied in the National Curriculum but do not always contain sufficient information about the progress made.

47. The range and quality of information that parents receive from the school is good. Parents receive well produced termly newsletters. The prospectus is clear and informative and there is a separate small brochure about the sixth form curriculum. Parents are invited each term to meetings where individual education plans are reviewed and are free to talk to teachers at other times during the school year particularly through use of the home-school book. Overall the partnership between parents and the school strengthens pupils' learning and contributes to their positive attitudes to school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

48. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher has the vision and drive which gives the school a clear educational direction and all staff share this ideal. Each member of the leadership group has a particular area of expertise which is used very well to promote practical skills and broaden the knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils and students in the school. They provide good role models both as classroom practitioners and working partners. An impressive amount of work has been undertaken since the school opened two years ago, giving impetus to the strategic direction of the school. This is testimony to the determination of all staff to make the school a place in which pupils and students receive a high quality education and achieve well. However, the long-term effect they will have on raising standards, and sustaining and further improving the quality of teaching and learning, has yet to be measured because of the newness of the school. All staff who have a specific responsibility work hard with others to ensure a clear understanding of the decision making process. Teamwork is very good across the school and working partnerships are highlighted by the relationships between members of the school staff and the range of support specialists whose particular areas of expertise are an essential part of educating the whole child.

49. The senior management team (SMT) and the curriculum management group undertake their responsibilities very well and all staff are represented; for example, senior

special needs assistants are members of the SMT and have specific roles within their own team. Monitoring the SIP is one role of the SMT and this is effective in ensuring that work is being done to meet the targets. The curriculum management group ensures that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum by monitoring timetables. They also hold the budget for books, stationary and apparatus for which curriculum co-ordinators bid and which must tie in with curriculum action plans. Subject co-ordinators understand their role and have time to support planning and discuss with staff within a department. As yet there is little systematic monitoring of teaching or pupils' work but in-service training is planned for this to ensure a consistency of approach.

50. The school has a caring and very positive ethos which stems from the school aims in which good relationships and respect for each other are emphasised. The aims of the school are clearly stated and demonstrate the school's commitment to giving each pupil and student the best quality education possible and a wish to work with parents as equal partners in the education of their children.

51. Self- evaluation procedures are in place and an initial review in conjunction with the Local Education Authority monitored the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluating important areas of the school's work is linked closely with the school improvement plan. This is clear in its direction and implicit in the targets is the commitment to raising standards and improving the quality of education available to pupils and students. Educational priorities are clear, prioritised over a three year period, and are well supported through the school's prudent financial planning. The SIP gives the school direction and includes, for example, subject action plans as well as targets for further developing a closer working partnership with parents.

52. The governing body supports the work of the school and the present mentoring system, whereby each governor works with a named member of staff, gives members additional knowledge of what is happening in the school and keeps them up to date. It also serves to increase each other's understanding of their particular roles within the school's management structure. Reports from the headteacher also keep members well informed and its role as a "critical friend" is developing well. Questions are asked and decisions are challenged because governors undertake their duties responsibly. Although committees are in place decisions are usually made by the full governing body. Statutory responsibilities are fully met.

53. The school has a good number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. The use of subject specific staff especially in subjects such as physical education and music, for example, considerably enhances pupil's progress. The special needs assistants employed to assist in lessons are well qualified and experienced. Staff in classrooms work together as part of skilled, friendly and collaborative teams. Staff development systems in the school are very good and training for all staff is clearly linked to the SIP and teachers' performance management targets. Whole school development areas, such as augmented communication, for the new school were identified and high quality training for all staff including the lunchtime assistants and caretaker were delivered. The very good monitoring systems in the school ensure that the effectiveness of such training is carefully evaluated. The performance management system for teachers is in place and a similar system exists for SNAs but only on a voluntary basis. There is a high commitment from all members of staff to personal development and to whole school development. The school is committed to working towards the Investors in People standard.

54. Effective formal systems for the induction of new, permanent staff have been introduced and are valued by new colleagues. These helpfully include the identification of a



mentor to the new colleague and a timetable for agreed input for SNAs. These help to ensure that that staff all reach a similar high level of knowledge and skill.

55. Accommodation throughout the school is generally good with high quality subject facilities for most subjects. However the music room is too small to enable all pupils to always join in the instrumental sessions and the timetabling of the science laboratory needs to be reconsidered. In addition the room designated for design and technology is presently not user friendly for some pupils but the SIP has identified funding to make improvements. The large swimming pool is also a valuable resource, which improves the teaching of swimming, and the large hall ensures a range of physical education skills can be taught. Use of the well-equipped hall of a neighbouring school for gymnastics improves opportunities for physical education. However the current outdoor facilities are inadequate. Whilst the two play areas have been well enhanced to provide different environments so pupils can choose at playtime whether to relax and chat or join in with more energetic activities, the area for football is too small and can be restricting. Plans are in hand to improve this following the redevelopment of the playing area. The school's commitment to inclusion is hampered by the very small and slow lifts which means that moving pupils and students in wheelchairs to different floors would take some time and so would not be effective.

56. Learning resources are generally good across the curriculum and very good in some subjects. In English and Science resources are very good enabling the full curriculum to be taught to all pupils. In ICT there is a very good range of PCs with good quality appropriate software. The network system also ensures that the best use can be made of these resources. There is also a very good range of access devices for students with complex learning needs ensuring their opportunities to learn. Music has benefited from additional funding secured by the co-ordinator to pay for a light and sound facility. In history, geography and religious education resources are generally good and have been augmented by borrowing from staff and local establishments such as Bede's World. However more high quality artefacts would ensure that less able pupils gain full benefit from the lessons. Resources for art and design, French and design and technology are only satisfactory but are very good for food technology.

57. The school's administrator is efficient and financial information is available when needed to enable forward planning to take place. Its use of new technology to support learning and administration is excellent. The day to day management of the school's financial procedures is very good and appropriate strategies are in place to ensure the security of the system. Grants are used very effectively and the school is well resourced. The principles of best value are understood and applied well by the governors and the senior management team to all items of expenditure. The recommendations of the recent auditors' report have been noted and either have been or are to be, acted upon.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

58. In order to build on existing strengths and achievements the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- Ensure that the policies, systems and structures in place since the opening of the new school on the present site have a sustained impact on teaching and learning, and raising standards in the longer term; for example, the role of the subject coordinator in monitoring the short term planning and teaching of their subject and further analysis of pupils' progress and accreditation results. \*

\* much of this is contained in the School Improvement Plan

In addition to the above key issue the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Consider the views of parents about the need for regular homework.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	106
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	33	33	22	2	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	125
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	65

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	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	8.66	School data	2.64

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	
White	115
Any other minority ethnic group	

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	6

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y14**

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	726

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1391602
Total expenditure	1411828
Expenditure per pupil	11294
Balance brought forward from previous year	130952
Balance carried forward to next year	110726

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	125
Number of questionnaires returned	74

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	19	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	38	7	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	26	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	27	11	15	0
The teaching is good.	64	28	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	27	5	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	26	3	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	28	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	31	8	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	65	28	4	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	27	3	3	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	26	8	9	0

- because some parents did not complete all the questions, these may not add up to 100%

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

### **ENGLISH**

59. At all key stages and post-16, pupils' overall achievement in English is very good. At Key Stage 3, the achievement of almost one quarter of pupils is excellent. However, the achievement of a small minority of pupils at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory because work is not always well-matched to their needs.

60. The National Literacy Strategy has been well adapted by the school to meet the specific needs of the pupils. There has been a noticeable effect on pupils' skills in speaking and listening and in their confidence as readers. Many pupils, including those who are not yet ready to read formally, can identify that an author is the person who writes a book. Pupils have an emerging sense of grammar and identify capital letters, full stops and more complex punctuation. Higher attaining pupils know that a full stop, "Helps you to breathe."

61. Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening are very good throughout the school. At Key Stage 3, pupils with difficulties in speech and articulation make very good attempts to pronounce complex words such as "deodorant" and "shampoo" when discussing what they would pack for their holidays. Pupils are confident speakers and they try very hard to respond to teachers' questioning and to the theme of the lesson. A higher attaining pupil, for example, provides a very good description of a holiday in Mecca. Pupils try to describe the differences between a postcard and a letter by saying that: "postcards are square and letters are long." Most pupils at Key Stage 3 are at the early stages of reading although some are not yet reading the printed word. Their achievement in reading is very good. They understand that text and pictures can convey meaning and they try very hard even when their skills are limited. One pupil in Year 7, for example, who is not yet reading, discusses a reading book with a classroom assistant and says: "I'll read it myself." After completing the book, he says: "Can I try that again?" Lower attaining pupils select between two cards to identify the month. They choose the correct symbol for the day and they follow the class timetable from appropriate symbols. Higher attaining pupils develop their accuracy and confidence. They show recall of simple facts and have emerging skills of inference as they describe the circumstances that might lead a character to be happy or sad. When reading formally to an adult they correct themselves, as for example when one pupil pronounces "mark" as "make" then realises it does not make sense and corrects it. Pupils' achievements in writing at Key Stage 3 are very good. They use a variety of methods including symbols and photographs to record their work. Higher attaining pupils compose and write sentences using capital letters and full stops appropriately. The majority of higher attaining pupils print their work but a few begin to make good attempts at joined writing. They begin to show simple research skills using a word wall to check their spellings. Pupils of all abilities use computers well to develop their writing and the school provides very well adapted equipment and software to help them. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes including book studies, magazines and recipes based on "The Witches" by Dahl. The magazine is entitled "Witches Weekly (The magazine for the modern witch)" and there are some imaginative recipes including one for "Boiled Head of Child". Pupils with additional difficulties, such as visual impairment, develop their writing skills through the support of specialist staff and through the use of equipment such as a Braille writing machine.

62. Pupils' achievements at Key Stage 4 are very good overall in speaking and listening, reading and writing. In speaking and listening, higher attaining pupils are happy to ask questions or request help. In Year 10, for example, pupils participate in a good discussion on the contents and layout of a poster. In another lesson discussing a scene from "Macbeth", in which the body of the murdered king is about to be discovered, pupils are asked to put themselves in Macbeth's place and decide what to say. One pupil thinks very hard for a moment, then says, "I'd say it wasn't me." Lower attaining pupils make very good attempts to express themselves, as for example when they re-enact scenes from "The Odyssey." They verbalise, sign or participate in role play with enthusiasm and integrity to the scene showing an ability to come in and out of character. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 have well-developed reading skills. They correctly identify the author and title of a book and point out a range of punctuation including speech marks, commas and question marks. They show good recall of the content of a story and make very good attempts to pronounce complex words such as "ventriloquist". They guess words from their initial sounds and begin to observe punctuation and read with some expression raising their voice when a character is asking a question. Lower attaining pupils correctly identify signs, symbols and photographs to show an understanding of simple events such as the timetable for the day. Pupils in Key Stage 4 use writing for a wide variety of purposes including diaries, lists, labels, menus and news. Higher attaining pupils regularly use a cursive script although there is often a mixture of printing and joined writing. Pupils' writing generally shows consistent use of capital letters and full stops although there is little evidence of the use of other punctuation. Pupils' work folders show evidence of the very good use of information technology in the production of written work. They import photographs and alter the size and style of font. They extract information from text and understand how to prioritise that information for maximum impact.

63. Pupils' achievements at post 16 are very good in speaking and listening and good in reading and writing where the focus of much of their work is related to the world of work. In speaking and listening, pupils listen carefully to the teacher and make very good attempts at difficult pronunciations such as "business park". Pupils communicate through signing and through speech and learn how to respond to simple instructions following a sequence, as for example when they discuss the location of the bridges on the Tyne. They show good recall of a trip they have made by correctly identifying the Quayside as a specific location on the Tyne and the house of Bessie Surtees as a place of interest. Pupils' skills in reading at post 16 are good. They understand and recognise signs and labels related to place names, instructions and safety procedures, for example "No Smoking" and "Ladies". Lower attaining pupils match pictures and symbols to bridges and businesses they have identified during a field trip along the Tyne. Pupils' achievements in writing are good. They complete self assessment sheets on tasks they have been given and write simple diaries on experiences or activities related to college or work experience.

64. The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is very good throughout the school and pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic and many show clear enjoyment of their activities, as for example when they re-enact the adventures of Odysseus. All pupils, including those with severe and complex learning difficulties, try very hard to complete the work and tasks they are given. They know what is expected of them through the regular routine of rehearsing their targets at the beginning and ends of every lesson and they take very seriously the marks awarded for effort in the class book. Very occasionally at Key Stage 3, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory when they are unable to sustain their concentration because the work they have been given is too hard and the teacher's expectations are unrealistically high. In these circumstances, their behaviour and participation deteriorates. However, this serves to highlight that in the vast majority of cases, work is well-planned and matched to pupils' needs thereby ensuring their

enthusiasm and concentration. In a significant minority of lessons at Key Stage 3, pupils' learning is excellent because of the very good match of work to their needs.

65. The best teaching, which is excellent at Key Stage 3, is based on very well structured planning which identifies specific learning outcomes for each pupil. Teachers' methods are well suited to pupils' needs, as for example when a class of pupils with more severe and complex difficulties are taken on an imaginary holiday and experience the sights, sounds, smells, touch and tastes associated with being on holiday. Teaching is often very sensitively adapted to the age and ability of the pupils, as for example in a lesson on "Romeo and Juliet". The teacher skilfully recreates the scene in the market place of the battle between the Montagues and Capulets through the use of visual aids and a video. Pupils join in enthusiastically playing the parts of the rival families. When one pupil develops the theme and shouts, "All Capulets are ugly," the teacher praises him but then asks, "Even the girls?" The pupil pauses and thinks hard before replying, "I'm confused now." A small amount of teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory because planning does not clearly identify what individual pupils are expected to learn and work is given which is not achievable for some pupils.

66. The English policy and curriculum meet all statutory requirements and the subject is very well co-ordinated and managed. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs including their preparation for the world of work. However, the curriculum also recognises pupils' entitlement to experience more formal literature such as works by Shakespeare and Homer. The co-ordinator has ensured that staff have received training in the implementation of the National Literacy strategy and has ensured that the strategy has been well adapted for use throughout the school. She has also set up a very useful working group with other schools and with the Speech and Language Therapy service in the city which has resulted in a consistent approach to signing throughout the school which pupils will also find useful in other settings. The curriculum has been well adapted to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and for those pupils with specific difficulties such as visual impairment. A good range of extra-curricular activities such as visits to amateur theatre groups and story-telling activities broadens and enriches the English curriculum. Pupils' achievements are very carefully assessed and recorded using a commercially produced scheme and the results of these assessments are being analysed to identify whole-school as well as individual targets for future teaching. Resources for the subject are good and there are good plans to reorganise the library to ensure that it is more user-friendly for pupils. A good feature of this initiative is that pupils are being directly consulted and involved in the reorganisation.

## **MATHEMATICS**

67. Overall, progress in mathematics is very good, and achievement is good overall and sometimes better than what is expected for pupils and students with this level of ability. In Key Stage 3, pupils are set in ability groups in years 7 and 8, and are taught in pastoral groups in Year 9. Pupils achieve very well in this key stage. Work is well presented and covers all areas of the National Curriculum, in a series of modules. During the key stage, higher attainers learn to recognise and sort 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional shapes, write and order numbers to 50, understand simple fractions, handle data and recognise attributes. By the end of the key stage they achieve National Curriculum level 2 to 3, counting in twos, fives and tens to 100, recognising the pattern in the nine times table, and enjoy the work they are doing. Other pupils count and order numbers to 10, work on number bonds to 10, recognise common shapes. By the end of the key stage pupils are



working within National Curriculum level 1. Lower attaining pupils experience a range of mathematical experiences. They learn, in a very practical, sometimes multi-sensory way, about big and small, heavy and light etc. Progress and achievement are recorded on "P" Scales, some pupils reaching level 8.

68. During Key Stage 4, numeracy is very closely linked to life skills. Pupils achieve well for their level of ability. The range of ability in this key stage is very wide. Higher attainers can count in twos, use three, four and five times tables, sort according to criteria, and use their numeracy skills to make everyday life decisions. By the end of the key stage the highest attainers are working at level 3 to 4 of the National Curriculum. Others can make choices, count and record those choices, some with symbols, some with numbers. They experience a variety of mathematical activities and make appropriate progress.

69. Post 16 students cover a wide ability range, and achieve appropriately, and sometimes very well. They learn to recognise coins and notes, know their value, and understand what they will buy. They learn to estimate the comparative cost of items in a shopping basket, to discriminate between essential and luxury items, and use an index to find a named product. The highest attainers can access the internet with support. Others experience the exchange of money for goods as they shop for food technology, which then provides other experiences of numeracy as they count, weigh etc.

70. Overall the teaching of mathematics is very good, occasionally it is excellent, and never less than good. Very good, consistent, planning, assessment and recording results in very good learning in most lessons, and very good progress over time. PIVATs are used for base line assessment, and planning is based on Small Steps scheme. Lesson plans include individual objectives for lower attaining pupils, and ongoing assessment informs planning. Higher attainers are challenged; for example in a lesson on division, in Year 9, two boys worked on problem-solving cards which involved applying the use of division.

71. The Numeracy Strategy has been adapted very well to meet the needs and ability of the pupils and students. As a result lessons are well structured, with good use of time, sustaining pupils' attention and enthusiasm. The oral, mental, section at the beginning of lessons was observed to be especially good, and all lessons were well rounded off with a good plenary. Pupils were usually able to say what they had learned during the lesson. Teachers have high expectations and pupils come in to lessons expecting to work, and well motivated. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and their understanding of pupils' needs and abilities very good, ensuring good teaching strategies which enable pupils to learn at an appropriate level. In the best lessons the teachers' enthusiasm led to exciting lessons, in which pupils' mathematical understanding was advanced. Examples of very good use of resources were observed during the inspection, for example the use of the shopping trolley and basket filled with real goods, and the handling of real money in a post 16 class. In a Year 9 lesson number cards and symbol cards enabled a pupil with physical difficulties to participate fully. Special needs assistants play a significant role in lessons supporting less able pupils, promoting good behaviour, noting small responses from pupils with communication difficulties.

72. The subject is very well managed, and staff work well as a team, meeting regularly and developing a consistent approach to mathematics across the ability range and the Key Stages.

## **SCIENCE**

73. Achievements in science are good, staff know the pupils well and the curriculum is adapted to their particular needs. In lessons, staff ensure that the learning environment is interesting and supportive which builds pupils' confidence and self esteem so that everyone is willing to take part to the best of their ability, work hard and make good progress.

74. In Key Stage 3 pupils learn about living things, explore the properties of different materials and investigate sound and light, including looking at our solar system. Pupils with complex learning needs are provided with the same experiences through a multi-sensory approach. In the majority of lessons pupils enjoy science and are keen to explore for themselves; such as deciding whether rocks are smooth or rough or what causes shadows to occur. Just occasionally teaching is less effective where the tasks provided are not sufficiently focused on the scientific content and opportunities are limited for pupils to investigate for themselves, all of which reflects on the progress they make. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils know the basic essentials required for life in either plants or animals, can identify materials by their properties and develop an understanding of what some objects are made of and how they are formed. For example, they enjoy looking in a microscope to see that rocks are made of crystals while the higher attainers can explain that “some rocks are made from sand and water and some come out of volcanoes”. Pupils study light and sound and can recognise that shadows occur when “light can’t get through” and a few use the correct word “opaque”.

75. In Key Stage 4 pupils are following various courses for national accreditation although, for this year, the school has not been open long enough for any students to have completed all the units required, all pupils will have completed at least one AQA unit. In most lessons the clear, detailed planning, which is shared with the pupils, ensures that everyone understands the tasks, knows what is expected and encourages everyone to listen, concentrate and make their own individual effort, so achieving well. Occasionally the pace of the lesson slows, particularly when copying work from the board. This results in pupils losing interest and the difference in writing skills and speed of writing means that the challenge for the higher attainers cannot be maintained. By the end of Key Stage 4 the majority are developing independent life skills. They can identify differences between themselves and their friends; for example, people all look different and enjoy different things. They know they must look after their bodies and through the cross-curricular programme in PSHE consider what is meant by healthy eating and the need for exercise. Pupils develop an understanding of the scientific process of making predictions and testing the findings. For example they enjoyed checking what happened to chocolate when it was heated. Pupils with complex learning needs explore changes in materials by squeezing plasticene and feeling how it becomes soft as it gets warm. The majority of pupils can test for acids and alkalis using indicator fluids or litmus paper, recognising the strength of acidity by the colour. They explore what happens to iron filings when brought close to a magnet, while the higher attainers understand that “sticking to” equates to magnetism.

76. Post 16 students continue studying for the Certificates of Accreditation. They are encouraged to relate their learning to their own experiences as a preparation for independent living in the world after school. By the time they leave school students know about the human digestive system and the need for healthy eating and exercise to keep the body functioning properly. However, in one class students found it very difficult to name many fruit or vegetables and most wouldn’t choose to eat them. They are aware of the need for safety in the home and how to wire an electric plug. Most are able to plan an investigation from prediction through experiment to recording results and reaching a conclusion, for example exploring what happens to our pulse rate during exercise.

77. The quality of teaching is variable. In lessons where the planning is clear and detailed and is shared with the pupils, this ensures that they understand the task and know what is expected. This leads to good achievement because everyone is encouraged to listen, to concentrate and to make their own individual effort. The pace of lessons is brisk and there are a sufficient number of activities so that pupils’ interest is maintained ensuring good levels of concentration and hard work. Resources are well chosen and used so that

pupils are well motivated and interested. Special needs assistants support pupils well ensuring that they are focused on the task and have the confidence to contribute. All staff work well as a team. In many lessons the supportive and encouraging atmosphere enables pupils to concentrate well and work hard. Relationships in lessons are very good and support the learning process. Where teaching is less effective the tasks are not sufficiently related to the scientific content of the lesson, the pace of the lesson is slow so that pupils lose interest and there is insufficient challenge for the higher attainers.

78. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. The curriculum is very good and the schemes of work provide teaching staff with guidelines for activities and the use of resources. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and the results of the assessments are used to inform future planning. The introduction of a variety of accreditation courses provides the older students with the incentive to work hard so that in the future everyone will leave school with AQA units or ASDAN Transition Challenge. The accommodation is good and resources are very good but due to the structure of the timetable some classes are not able to use the laboratory facilities on a regular basis, although all the classrooms used have access to any equipment necessary to teach the curriculum.

## **ART**

79. Art is taught on a modular basis with design and technology but because of an unforeseen staff absence the planned timetable was adjusted during the week of the inspection with a supply teacher taking the lessons. Pupils' learning in art is satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons were observed in Key Stage 3 only and judgements made about Key Stage 4 came from analysis of pupils' work, the scheme of work and discussion with staff. In Year 7 higher attaining pupils in develop the theme by overlapping material which enhances the effect resulting in the finished montages showing a variation in colour and shape. The teacher reminds pupils of primary and secondary colours and many remember successfully. In Year 8 careful observation of facial features enables pupils to produce a self portrait following good use of a flannelgraph to demonstrate features in relation to others. Some pupils' perception of facial features is immature and underdeveloped and this helped them to visualise and make improvements to their pencil drawings. Throughout this lesson pupils concentrated well and worked hard. In Year 9 the theme of "texture" is used well when pupils make a collage nature strip using a range of leaves and flowers following a visit to a local park. They select materials and carefully arrange them making very attractive pictures. In another lesson using the theme of textures, pupils with complex learning needs make patterns by exploring different paint consistencies and using wheels or their hands to make patterns on different textured paper. They enjoy this and are very well supported by all staff who reinforce the theme by using appropriate language. Each pupil is helped to make a print after responding well to all the stimuli presented during the lesson. Some pupils become bored when not supported by an adult but can be coaxed back on to the task. At the end they enjoy relaxing by smelling paint mixed with lavender or dewberry. Analysis of some work from Key Stage 4 pupils showed they were making satisfactory progress and demonstrated an understanding of the work of Matisse. A visit to a local art gallery had inspired some work and further research on the internet about the artist. A folder of work was being built up and pupils identified their favourite pieces of work. They had also looked at the work of Van Gogh, notably his "Sunflowers" painting.

80. Teaching is sound with some good features. Clear explanations of tasks at the start of lessons ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and demonstrations of technique further support this. Good management skills always preserve a calm atmosphere in which pupils work well and very good teamwork amongst all staff ensures

that all pupils are well supported and can produce their best work. Pupils respond very positively to this and are attentive and concentrate on tasks for some time. Lessons are well planned and prepared which keeps a momentum to lessons and ensures that time is generally well used. It is only when pupils are given too long for an activity, sometimes with insufficient guidance, that they lose some interest and don't know how to improve their work. Good use of signing in lessons by all staff supports pupils' understanding and this, along with the very good relationships, results in all pupils being involved. This was very evident in a lesson with pupils with complex learning needs who enjoyed the tactile explorations with paint and showed preferences for smells.

81. The co-ordinator for art does not teach the subject but gives good support to staff. The scheme of work is appropriate for the needs and abilities of pupils and meets statutory requirements. Medium term planning is very detailed and shows progression and an improvement in skills and experiences. Assessment procedures are in place but it is planned to review these in line with other subjects. Resources are satisfactory for what is being taught at the moment but having to share space with design and technology is not ideal especially when the overall accommodation needs reviewing.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

82. Design and technology is taught separately as design technology (DT) and food technology (FT). Because of an unforeseen and unavoidable staff absence at very short notice it was possible to observe only a very small amount of teaching in design technology and it was not possible to observe pupils using the equipment requiring the supervision of a fully qualified member of staff. Judgements therefore are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with staff, including the supply teacher.

83. Achievement in DT throughout the school is satisfactory overall, although in the limited range of activities seen in lessons, pupils' achievement is good at both Key Stages. Examples of work were seen in which pupils had designed and made small wooden containers. The standard of finish was high with clear evidence of pupils' skills in designing, cutting, smoothing and painting. Scrutiny of teachers' planning showed pupils to have been engaged in designing and making "puzzle faces" in which they had listed the materials and tools needed and some of the processes involved. Other pupils had designed and made identity cards using the digital camera and laminator. Teachers' planning also showed work to have taken place in the design and making of a steady hand game, metal badges, plastic key fobs, bird feeders and pencil holders. In the small number of lessons observed, pupils were engaged in planning and designing a bedsit. They work within a budget of £750 and after discussing the requirements, they begin to identify suitable sources for the furniture and materials they might need. Higher attaining pupils write lists of what they need and read advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Other pupils choose from a range of symbols provided by staff and from pictures and photographs in catalogues and magazines. Pupils begin to appreciate technical terms used by the teacher such as "sample board" and "design brief." Most pupils manage a realistic idea of the basic requirements of what is possible within their budget but a minority compile unrealistic lists including DVD players, videos and video games and deciding that they will not need essential items such as beds and tables.

84. Pupils' achievement in food technology is very good at Key Stage 3 and excellent at Key Stage 4. No direct teaching was observed post 16 because it is incorporated into the Life Skills programme and evidence showed that pupils access a wide range of courses at local colleges of further education both in commercial catering and basic cookery. At Key Stage 3, pupils design and make a range of foods including assorted scones of cheese,

cherry and carrot. Pupils observe correct hygiene and safety procedures and develop skills of cutting, chopping, kneading and mixing. Pupils follow instructions which are given verbally or in writing using symbols or words. In a lesson on making sausage rolls, pupils develop a range of skills and knowledge including the technique of rolling pastry in opposite directions to avoid sticking.

85. At Key Stage 4, pupils develop their skills of weighing and measuring in the preparation and cooking of pasta. They refine their knowledge and begin to learn advanced techniques such as the use of herbs for flavouring and decoration.

86. The quality of teaching seen in the small number of DT lessons is good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. It is very good in food technology at Key Stage 3 and excellent at Key Stage 4. The best teaching shows excellent subject knowledge and a thorough knowledge of the pupils and their individual capabilities and targets which results in pupils learning well and making very good progress. Teaching makes very good use of questioning to promote pupils' skills and knowledge and teachers ensure that health, safety and hygiene procedures are scrupulously followed. Pupils learn hygiene procedures and they realise that clearing up and washing up are an essential part of the lesson which they complete without complaint. Lessons are very well organised so that no time is wasted between activities and pupils are always usefully and enjoyably engaged. Teachers makes very good use of time in lessons, sometimes preparing ingredients in advance to enable pupils to focus on the process and at other times making the weighing and measuring of ingredients the main focus of the lesson. Pupils' attitudes to design technology, and in particular to food technology, mirror the high quality of the teaching as does the quality of their learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and work hard. They listen carefully to instructions and they try their best to complete tasks to the highest possible standard. They work very successfully in pairs sharing equipment and helping each other where necessary, as for example in the crimping of pastry where one pupil with less well developed fine motor skills was carefully helped by another.

87. The curriculum in design and technology is good and very good in food technology. It is well planned and managed by the very capable and knowledgeable co-ordinator for the subject. Pupils' achievements are very carefully monitored and assessed using national assessment procedures. The outcomes of the assessment are then used carefully to plan future work in the subject. Pupils have the opportunity to achieve accreditation in various aspects of the subject through a good range of national and local accreditation schemes. Facilities for food technology are very good but those for design technology are less suitable for the needs of pupils with more severe and complex learning difficulties. This is acknowledged by the subject co-ordinator and very good plans are in place with available funding to make more suitable provision in the new academic year. The curriculum for food technology is considerably enriched by a range of activities including a very good after school cookery club which teaches pupils to prepare and cook simple meals suitable for independent living.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

88. Geography is only taught to pupils in Key Stage 3 and their achievements are good. Pupils label different countries on a map and describe the effect of different environments, especially their own. In a lesson about weather pupils correctly identify which clothes could keep you dry and which would not. They know not to wear sunglasses in the rain. A pupil in Year 9 with complex learning needs is able to track and reach out for a spider in a lesson about the rain forest. Some pupils know that trees grow tall because they are searching for light and that there are other creatures who live in the rain forest.

89. Teaching in geography is always satisfactory and often good. In a good lesson for pupils in Year 7 the good use by the teacher of signs and symbols slowed down communication, restricted the teachers' vocabulary and so improved the opportunities for pupils to understand the main points of the lesson. Pupils' interest was caught by the use of water spray to simulate rain and a calm insistence on good behaviour ensured that the fun did not get out of hand. In a lesson where teaching was less effective, whilst the activities chosen were interesting and pupils were involved in the lesson, the geographical content of the lesson was overwhelmed by a scientific experiment so opportunities to develop pupils' geographical understanding were missed. The pace of some parts of lessons was also slow resulting in a loss of attention by pupils. Pupils generally work well in geography when the task is interesting and settle well to work on worksheets. They join in with enthusiasm to the preparation of an experiment to see the effect of dye on a flower. However, individuals also wander round the room if they have finished their task or are not motivated by it but don't distract others.

90. The specialist co-ordinator for geography has prepared a useful scheme of work which supports the teaching of non-specialists. It also usefully includes many opportunities for learning in the local community. However it does not specify sufficient differentiation for pupils with complex learning needs. Assessment in geography has recently been extended by the use of "P" Scales to ensure that pupils' progress in geography is carefully monitored.

## **HISTORY**

91. History is only taught to pupils in Key Stage 3 and their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils learn about the role of monks, how they lived and how their habits were made. Good use of resources, such as a bone needle, raw wool and woollen cloth give pupils an understanding of what a monk's life might have been like. Pupils are able to role-play the silence of a monastery during meal times in the Tudor era and enter into it seriously, concentrating for a good length of time. Very good use of signing involved all pupils, especially if they were asking for food. A planned visit to "Bede's World" has been chosen to bring their learning to life. A pupil in Year 7 was able to describe his feelings when building Hadrian's Wall in an imaginary letter home to his family, and a pupil in Year 9 was also able to remember how many wives Henry VIII had and how many he had beheaded and why.

92. Teaching in history is always satisfactory. Resources are well prepared, relevant and interesting to a range of pupils. Signing and symbols were consistently used and enabled pupils to understand the basic learning of the lesson. Artefacts were used to enhance pupils' understanding and differentiate the lesson for the less able pupils. However there was also a lack of pace in lessons so that pupils became restless and inattentive and follow-up activities such as colouring in a work sheet or copying a sequence of four pictures were not as stimulating as the opening sessions and did not develop pupils' understanding. Pupils generally settled well to the tasks in hand and responded well to the more interesting opening sections of the lesson when they were maybe dressing up as monks or feeling the woollen fabric of Tudor times, however their attention waned and some became restless when the pace slowed down and the teacher's direct involvement was reduced.

93. History is well co-ordinated by a subject specialist who has developed a good scheme of work that effectively covers the National Curriculum, and plans for regular use of local community resources such as Segedunum and Bede's World. However the scheme of work does not always make clear the differentiation necessary for pupils with complex

learning needs. The assessment of history has recently been usefully extended to cover the new "P" Scales for history. However, pupils' work is not always fully annotated and marked, reducing its effectiveness in the assessment of pupils' knowledge. Resources in history are generally good and the co-ordinator ensures specialist resources are available through the use of loans from community facilities. This is a very effective way of ensuring and extending of the resources currently available.

## **INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

94. Overall, achievement is good, often very good, and for some pupils, excellent. All pupils and students have folders holding examples of work, and assessment records. The files contain well documented, small steps of progress through the curriculum, in which all strands of the National Curriculum are covered. There is evidence of steady progress through basic computer skills, such as mouse control, keyboard skill, word processing, desk top publishing, drawing, use of drop down menus, drag and drop, accessing the internet. Files show good progress within and through the key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attainers can log on to the network independently, using their own password, and select the programme they need. Mouse and keyboard skills are good. They understand the way the computer works, about folders and files, hard and floppy drives, saving and loading using floppy discs, and have a basic understanding of the network. They know what a database is, and understand that data comes in many forms, as words, numbers, dates, pictures and sounds, and can enter data correctly into a database. Pupils use the digital camera, and understand that the floppy disc holds photographic data. Lower attainers complete the same tasks but with support. Where necessary, access devices are provided, and symbol programmes, used in scan mode, make it possible for all pupils to take part.

95. No ICT lessons were observed at Key Stage 4, but pupils were observed using ICT in lessons across the curriculum, and in the Computer Club. Work in folders, and displayed in the ICT suite, was also analysed. There is clear evidence that pupils are attaining as well as could be expected, and in some cases very much better. A pupil observed during a Year 10 English lesson could import photos or clipart, set up text boxes, re-shape, re-size, and move them, enter text, change size and type of font, use drop down menus, save his work, and close down the computer. He worked independently, and with confidence. Pupils in this Key Stage use the internet to access information for projects across the curriculum, often doing this during the lunch hour at the Computer Club. Only one lesson was observed in post 16, during which students showed good understanding of computer language, and computer functions. They were able to use the digital camera, and knew that the photograph was stored on the floppy, and transferred to a file on the computer. They understand what a database is, and how to use it.

96. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Lessons observed ranged from satisfactory, at the beginning of the inspection, to excellent by the end. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, and together with the ability to give very clear explanations and instructions, at just the right level, leads to good learning. Whilst some planning lacks detail in terms of lesson objectives and individual aims, the lessons are well structured and aims are clear in practice. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and lessons are sufficiently motivating to ensure very good attitudes and behaviour. Assessment and recording are very good and work in pupil folders shows good progress. Very good work is put into a "Good work folder" or displayed, providing reward and motivation. Use of time and resources is very good. In one lesson in Year 9, resources included laptops, interactive whiteboard, digital camera, multimedia projector, switches and



printers. Pupils were familiar with the equipment, and understood its functions. One pupil could access drop down menus using the touch facility of the whiteboard. This was an excellent example of use of ICT, where the message was what came through, not the method. In another excellent lesson in Year 9, pupils were fascinated as they learned about the workings of the computer and the network. Evaluation of individual achievement at the end of each lesson is good, and pupils can say what they have learned during the lesson.

97. The Computer Club, which runs every day for the whole of the lunch hour, is a very impressive activity. It is very well supported, resulting in the need for pupils and students to share computers. This they do very well, also sharing, at the same time, expertise and interests. The club is open to all pupils and students and is an invaluable resource, contributing to skills, providing information and entertainment, increasing independence, and encouraging collaboration. There is a busy, happy atmosphere, which contributes to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. Behaviour is excellent, pupils treat the equipment with respect, know the rules and abide by them.

98. Management of the subject is good. Long term planning is very good. Support for staff includes plans for training special needs assistants, and guidance for the use of equipment, such as mouse control, keyboard skills and programmes. ICT was seen being used well in lessons across the curriculum.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

99. Achievements in French are good and pupils learn well but make only satisfactory progress over time because for Key Stage 3 pupils French is taught on a six week rotation with swimming and some time has to be spent on assessing what pupils have remembered before new work is introduced. However, pupils enjoy learning French which is a result of the good teaching they receive. In Key Stage 4 pupils learn French on a modular basis as part of the ASDAN Transition Challenge and no lessons at this stage were seen during the inspection.

100. In all lessons pupils understand instructions, use simple greetings and know some colours and numbers quite confidently. Many can count up ten and can recognise the number, for example, “un, deux, trois etc” and know “rouge and bleu” and some know “jaune and orange”. On entering the room they respond to “Bonjour, la classe” and understand the instruction to “levez la main” or “regardez” and “écoutez” and respond appropriately. When new vocabulary is introduced which relates to everyday objects they use, such as, “gomme, règle, stylo and crayon”, they try very hard to say the word as they use the object. In each lesson pupils record one-word answers on worksheets and higher attaining pupils enjoy doing “wordsearches “ and try very hard to complete them. They each have a French name, for example Juliette or Guy, and identify them and most can also copy them correctly. All pupils particularly enjoy recording their own voices during an oral session and this boosts their confidence and helps to improve their skills. They listen attentively to each other, supporting those who have some difficulty or who are shy of speaking out loud. When playing a game they use the correct words for missing objects and are enthusiastic and keen to answer, making learning fun.

101. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Organisation of the lesson is good when prior learning is reviewed and current learning is assessed at the end. The content of the lessons is well within the pupils’ knowledge and understanding and as a result they remember vocabulary and use it in appropriate situations. A variation in pace and activities

maintains pupils' motivation and concentration. Some lack of confidence in subject knowledge results in missed opportunities for extending pupils' learning; for instance, lessons could be taught in the target language because pupils have demonstrated that they can learn and use simple instructions which are used regularly. More emphasis could be given to listening so that initial and final sounds are more clearly defined. Nevertheless, good use is made of audio-visual materials which introduces new vocabulary as well as consolidating prior learning. Good commentary and intervention by the teacher ensures that pupils are listening and understanding the theme of the video. Praise and encouragement are used well for improving pupils' confidence whilst also giving them positive feedback about their learning. Special needs assistants are well deployed and support pupils well so they keep on task and their attention doesn't wander.

102. An appropriate scheme of work is in place but as it has only been in use a year it is not possible to judge how effective it is and an evaluation at the end of the year would be very useful. The teacher is not a language specialist but, to her credit, has undertaken courses which have improved and broadened her own knowledge and practice of the subject. There is no formal monitoring by the teacher of work in Key Stage 4 through the ASDSAN Transition Challenge and this is another area which needs to be reviewed. A basic assessment and recording system is in place which indicates pupils progress through the subject. A good start has been made in establishing the subject and resources are satisfactory overall though there are not enough audio-visual aids to extend pupils' learning opportunities.

## **MUSIC**

103. Pupils' achievements in music are very good because of the high quality of teaching, an excellent and relevant curriculum and excellent detailed lesson planning. Music is planned to meet the particular needs of all pupils and students developing in their interests and skills that will be relevant in the adult world, after they have left school.

104. As a result of very good and often excellent teaching pupils throughout Key Stage 3 begin to develop an interest in music and learn the skills needed to enjoy taking a full and active part in singing and playing a variety of instruments. By Year 9 pupils are developing a sense of rhythm, can recognise and keep a beat when playing together or as an accompaniment to the keyboard or taped music and sing together, sometimes performing individually. The higher attainers listen carefully to a piece of music and describe their feelings, recognising the mood being conveyed, for example sad or happy. They understand there are different elements in music and can identify and name some of them, in particular recognising pitch and tempo. The activities provided during lessons are very well devised so that everyone, including pupils with complex learning difficulties, take a full and active part. Everyone learns to make sounds using percussion instruments but also learns that there is no necessity to buy expensive instruments to make music. By using imagination everyday objects can do a similar thing even for public performances. Pupils are currently practising for their part in the forthcoming Samba Festival using 'instruments' they have made themselves from plastic bottles and tins.

105. In Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils and students continue to develop their skills in playing and singing and also learning more about the basics of music. The majority can compose a simple melody choosing appropriate instruments to illustrate mood, for example based on a photograph or a story. They develop confidence in performing to an audience and feel comfortable using a microphone. Pupils explore music from other cultures such as India and Africa and begin to express their likes and dislikes, the higher attainers understanding their reasons, for instance "I like the drum tones" and "I like the beat".

106. Pupils musical experiences are enhanced through the music clubs, in particular the excellent “drumming” group organised during the Wednesday activity sessions and taught by a very skilled Musician in Residence. During the inspection this group performed for the whole school at the Friday assembly. In addition the school provides a variety of opportunities to listen to professional musicians either when they visit the school or organised trips to outside concerts.

107. The quality of teaching is always of a very high standard. Excellent lesson planning and knowledge of both the subject and the individual pupil ensures that everyone, whatever their ability, is appropriately challenged and extended. The very good relationships and consistently high expectations for behaviour and learning builds pupils’ confidence and self esteem, so inspiring them to work hard and take a full and active part in all the tasks. The very skilled classroom organisation, excellent use of question and answer techniques, sensitive awareness of the right pace for a lesson based on the needs of the pupils and an enthusiastic teaching style helps to maintain pupils’ attention and concentration so that all but a very few enjoy music, make very good progress and achieve very well.

108. The subject is extremely well managed and organised. The curriculum is excellent and resources are very good. Assessment is in the process of development but once fully in place will provide a clear indication of every individual level of achievement and progress. The only difficulty is the accommodation, which is too small and does not provide adequate storage space.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

109. Pupils’ achievements at both key stages are very good. In all year groups pupils are making very good progress with their learning across a full range of physical education activities. Pupils also have agreed targets for their individual education plans and in swimming these targets are available on cards for them to use in the pool area.

110. Pupils experience a wide range of physical education activities, throughout their time at the school and also benefit from inter-school and residential activities such as swimming, athletics, football, climbing, canoeing and abseiling. Although some of these activities have currently been suspended due to the changing nature of the school, suitable plans are in place to resume them.

111. Physical education lessons are of high quality both in terms of teaching and pupils’ learning. During the inspection games, swimming, gymnastics, and trampolining lessons were observed. Pupils make particularly good improvements in all activities including swimming. The highest attaining pupils have an understanding of basic tactics when playing games such as short tennis and many pupils in hockey are improving their passing, controlling and striking skills. Pupils swim with confidence on their fronts and backs and many are attaining a range of nationally recognised certificates for distance swimming up to 1,000 metres, water skills and life saving activities. In gymnastics some pupils are able to demonstrate flight using a trampette, while on the trampoline some are completing routines including seat drops. Pupils in wheelchairs and those physically less able, also make very good progress with their learning. With the assistance of teaching and support staff they fully participate in all physical education activities. In an excellent trampolining lesson observed, all pupils participated as much as they could, which for some involved standing on the trampoline for the first time or moving with the support and assistance of the teacher.

112. During the lessons observed and in conversation with pupils, it is very clear that they thoroughly enjoy their lessons. Pupils change for activities quickly and sensibly and, when time allows, shower afterwards before returning to their classroom. All pupils show good levels of concentration and interest and many show considerable perseverance to succeed in their set tasks. However, for some pupils lessons are too short and only allow a limited amount of time to work on apparatus. For example, once they have changed and been moved from their wheelchair to the trampoline, via a hoist, they only have a very limited amount of time using the equipment. In spite of this pupils continue to make very good progress. Behaviour is always very positive and relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent. Pupils treat equipment and resources with care, with many showing a good awareness of health and safety procedures when using apparatus and in the swimming pool.

113. All physical education lessons, including swimming, are taught by physical education specialists with considerable experience and the quality of teaching is very good overall and occasionally outstanding. Both members of staff are knowledgeable, confident and obviously enjoy teaching which inspires pupils to attempt new skills, which in turn has a significant impact on the quality of their learning. Lessons are taught in a structured, progressive way that enables all pupils to clearly understand what is expected of them. Lessons are very busy and pupils work very hard, yet there is always time to reinforce new techniques and answer pupils' questions. Opportunities are also taken to enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers also assess pupils' understanding through challenging questions which are suitably different for the level of each child's understanding. Pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their work and lessons often finish with the teacher asking pupils what they have learnt and what could be improved further.

114. There are very detailed policies for both physical education and swimming and these also reflect the changing nature of the school and pupils' abilities. A detailed subject development plan clearly outlines the future development of physical education in the school. The co-ordinator regularly meets with the swimming teacher to monitor pupils' progress and evaluate their learning. There is, however, a need for the co-ordinator to be aware of how certain physical skills are being taught during personal, social and health education activities. Assessment overall is very good. Each pupil has his/her own learning targets for physical education and swimming and these are regularly reviewed and updated. Learning resources are good and careful attention has been given to purchasing equipment to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, different coloured shuttlecocks enable all pupils to see the shuttlecock in flight during a game, thus helping to improve their hand-eye co-ordination. The hall is spacious, although crowded with chairs, and the swimming pool is an excellent resource. There are recently refurbished changing rooms which are very well used and also enhance pupils' personal, social and health education skills. The school also has access to a gymnasium which is used for some games activities, although outdoor facilities are very limited.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

115. Pupils make very good progress in religious education throughout the school. In Key Stage 3 pupils learn about Hinduism and can remember that a temple is where Hindus worship, and a more able pupil knew that Diwali was a Hindu festival and that Hinduism was an old religion. Some can remember the sequence of the Diwali celebration correctly. In Key Stage 4 pupils can say that Christians go to church to say thank you to God and to meet their friends. They also recognise subject specific vocabulary and signs such as church, god, bible and organ. Higher attaining pupils can respond positively to an opportunity for stillness and reflection. They learn about sacred books such as the Old and New Testaments and understand some of the story of David and Goliath. A description of how David killed Goliath with a sling demonstrated how much pupils had remembered and they also knew that " God was on David's side". The story of Noah's Ark was also remembered well.

116. Teaching in religious education ranges from satisfactory to excellent and is mostly good. In a very good lesson, pupils in Year 7 were fully involved in a noisy, wet role-play of Noah's Ark in which very good teacher knowledge and relationships ensured that an exciting session did not become out of hand. This lesson also successfully included a pupil with complex learning needs by giving her a switch to start the rain and act out the part of the dove that found the land. In a satisfactory lesson for pupils in Year 8, limited teacher knowledge left pupils with a narrow understanding of the true religious concept of Easter. In

an excellent lesson for pupils in Year 11 very effective use was made of an interactive white board and projector to remind pupils about a visit to a local church the previous week. The teacher constantly quickly reminded the pupils of the main learning for the lesson. “ We are listening and learning about Christians who say thank you to god and meet their friends in a church”. Signing and symbols were also very well used to check on and ensure pupils’ understanding and a pupil with complex learning needs was kept fully involved in the lesson by very good use of a skilled SNA. In a very good lesson for pupils in Year 10 on the story of David and Goliath, which contained many of the features above, a slow pace at the end of the lesson resulted in some loss of concentration. Pupils across the school enjoy religious education and respond well to the good teaching. They generally move well to a new task following clear instructions and one less able pupil was thrilled that he answered a question correctly. A class of pupils in Year 7 excitedly joined in an enactment of the story of Noah but were able to settle quickly and calmly at the end of the lesson. Pupils’ very good attitudes to the subject were shown by the way a Year 9 class became silent and listened to some Hindu music, and by the response of 16-year-olds to a candle lit as a signifier of a religious education lesson.

117. Religious education is very well co-ordinated across the school and has benefited from the introduction of a very good detailed scheme of work which ensures that non-specialist teachers are clear about lesson content, opportunities for differentiation and the resources which are available. The recent introduction of “P” scales for religious education has ensured that staff carefully assesses pupils’ progress in this subject. Resources for the subject are generally good and have been enhanced by artefacts borrowed from school staff but more high quality artefacts are needed to ensure the equal access to the curriculum for all pupils.

## **POST 16 EDUCATION**

118. The post 16 curriculum is well planned and relevant. It represents a definite progression from the students’ previous work and is aimed carefully at the needs of those students who choose to stay on to continue their education. The curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences and extends as well as adds a range of new opportunities, all of which prepare students very well for life after school. Students are offered programmes in the core curriculum of numeracy, communication, PSHE and ICT as well as complementary studies in life skills, vocational studies, leisure and recreation, and art and music. Students benefit in particular from the skills of subject specialists in physical education, ICT and music. Students continue to benefit from support from other services, such as physiotherapy and speech therapy.

119. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on students learning in the community, including local colleges. The programmes offered at these colleges help students to make a successful transition to post 19 education. The weekly students’ council is very well organised and provides all students, including those who use augmented communication, to make decisions about their work and gather information about future activities. For example a student using a head switch was able to ask a visiting lecturer from Newcastle College whether the needs of students with visual impairment could be met. All students in the sixth form also have access to a very wide and carefully targeted range of work experience placements which enables them to develop and practise their skills outside the school setting and also to sample possible after-school placements. This aspect of their education is very well organised and is well supported by training agencies. Students also all have the opportunity to achieve external accreditation for their vocational work, for example, ASDAN Towards Independence.

120. Post 16 students benefit from the skilled and knowledgeable leadership of the assistant headteacher who monitors the work of the department and has ensured that newly appointed staff work to a high standard.