

# INSPECTION REPORT

**TALBOT SCHOOL**

Sheffield

LEA area:Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107178

Headteacher: Mr J Irwin

Reporting inspector: Sarah J Mascal  
20536

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Inspection number: 230114

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	For pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 –19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Matthews Lane Sheffield
Postcode:	S8 8JS
Telephone number:	0114 250 7394
Fax number:	0114 250 7857
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sandra Harrison OBE
Date of previous inspection:	24/11/1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20536	Sarah Mascall	Registered Inspector	Modern foreign language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils and students taught?
9577	Elaine Parrish	Lay Inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils or students? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Attendance
1987	George Davies	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Personal, social and health education	Equal opportunities
7327	Tony Dunsbee	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Religious education	Special educational needs
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English Geography History	English as a second language
19171	Robin Lee	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art Music	How well is the school led?
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students? Post 16

The inspection contractor was:

QICS  
"Ibsley"  
4 West Cliff Road  
Dawlish  
Devon  
EX7 9EB

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<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>11</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>POST 16 PROVISION</b>	<b>23</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**

The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19 who have severe and complex needs. Approximately a third of pupils are on the autistic spectrum or have challenging behaviour. All pupils have statements of Special Educational Need and the attainment on entry is very low. A fifth of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and 18 are supported by funding from the ethnic minorities achievement grant (EMAG). Sixty-four pupils (56%) have free school meals which is high for this type of school. Talbot is the only secondary school in Sheffield of its type and as a consequence pupils travel from all over the city. There are 2 out of county pupils. The school has been through a period of instability and there have been three appointed headteachers and two associate headteachers over the past four year period.

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

Talbot is a good school with many strengths. Over the last five terms the school has entered a period of stability because of the very strong leadership by the headteacher who is well supported by his management team. As a result teaching and pupils' achievements are good and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Good teaching for pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 ensures that the progress they make is good
- Improvements in standards have been effective as a result of the very good leadership by the headteacher and senior management team who are very ably supported by the governing body
- Pupils' social and cultural development are very good
- The very good relationships and effective teamwork, which exists throughout the school, contributes effectively to pupils' progress in lessons.
- Pupils are very well cared for and there are very good procedures to ensure their health and safety
- Parents' confidence in the school's work has been successfully re-built and links with parents are very good
- The very good teaching of art and exciting displays enrich pupils' experiences and the school environment

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

- There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the use of computers
- Opportunities to study a modern foreign language are limited
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory; there is insufficient space and specialist teaching rooms, Post 16 accommodation and changing facilities are inadequate

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in November 1999 when HMI judged the school to have made sufficient progress to be providing a satisfactory education for its pupils and was no longer a failing school. Despite the disruptions in leadership, the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues raised. There is now very effective planning for school developments; teaching and learning have improved and there are good strategies to ensure that pupils with profound learning difficulties achieve at the same rate as their peers. Much work has been done in providing computers but they are still not being used sufficiently to support pupils' and students' learning in lessons.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 16	by age 19	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	B	very good	A
Reading	C	C	good	B
Writing	C	C	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

Overall all pupils between Years 7 to Year 11, regardless of their special needs, achieve well. The school has appropriately focussed on developing pupils' communication skills and as a result they are making good progress in this area. Achievement is good in English because of the wide range of experiences offered to pupils in drama and literature; use of the literacy strategy is also having a positive effect on pupils' achievements. They make good progress in mathematics and numeracy. Achievements are very good in art and good in design and technology, humanities and physical education. The good progress made in personal and social education ensures that pupils' personal development is very good. Progress is satisfactory in science, music and religious education. Achievements are unsatisfactory in information and communication technology because teachers do not use computers enough to support pupils' learning in lessons. Pupils' achievements in a modern foreign language are unsatisfactory because there are limited opportunities to study the subject. Post 16 students' achievement is satisfactory. It is not as effective as in the rest of the school because the work does not meet the needs of all the students.

The school has not set itself targets but has set targets for individual pupils, which are challenging. Using the information gathered over the last two years there are appropriate plans to set whole school targets next year based on P levels.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils and students clearly enjoy coming to school. They work hard and concentrate well during lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils and students behave well both in and out of school. They show respect for each other and are always polite.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and students develop very good social skills and enjoy the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Relationships are very good and pupils support each other well.
Attendance	Good. Pupils and students attend well. They are punctual to school and lessons start on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING



<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 11-16</b>	<b>aged over 16</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory

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

Teaching is good for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory for students in Post 16. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, design technology (particularly food technology) and personal, social and health education. Teaching in art is very good. For pupils up to Year 11 teaching is good in physical education. In all other subjects except information and communication technology, it is satisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been adapted well to meet the needs of pupils and the wide range of experiences that pupils are given together with the strategies for supporting pupils' communication skills, ensures pupils make good progress. One of the main strengths of teaching is the very good teamwork between teachers and student support staff and this contributes a great deal to pupils' progress. Teachers provide a variety of tasks that hold pupils' interest and make lessons interesting. The needs of all pupils are planned for so that regardless of their complex needs all are involved in lessons and as a result achieve well. Within the Post 16 Unit planning and teachers' expectations to ensure that there are a range of tasks that are challenging and varied is not as good as in the rest of the school. Throughout the school homework is not given and as a result the good work in school is not followed through and supported by parents at home.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. It is better for pupils up to Year 11 than for those in Post 16 where it is satisfactory. A great deal of work has been done to improve the curriculum and this is having a very positive affect on standards and the quality of teaching. Nearly all subjects have been reviewed and there is an appropriate timetable to ensure that planning for all subjects is completed. Although Post 16 study modules of work that are accredited through ASDAN these are not always appropriate for those with more complex needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school uses the funds from EMAG well to support pupils. There are appropriate plans to use funding to provide an Asian link worker for families.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils and students' social and cultural development is very good because they are given a lot of opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in these areas. Moral development is good and pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Although there is satisfactory provision for spiritual development opportunities are missed to develop pupils' experiences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The care of pupils and students is very good. Staff are well supported by a wide range of specialist staff. There are good systems in place to check on how well pupils and students are progressing in their work and there are very good processes for supporting pupils' and students' personal development.

Careers education and college links are being developed but at this stage the range of vocational experiences offered is limited. The school has worked extremely hard to re-build parents' confidence after a period of instability. It has succeeded in this and parents have a very high opinion of the school and the staff. Annual reviews are good. However reports to parents have insufficient information about the progress pupils make in all the subjects they study. The local community is used well. The provision of Whirlow Hall Farm is good but teachers' planning for the use of this facility is not effective and does not ensure that activities are appropriately linked to the curriculum.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has ensured that there is a very clear focus on how the school will develop. He is very well supported by his deputy and they, together with the assistant headteacher, are a very effective team. They have achieved much in a very short period of time not least in building up teachers' morale and self-confidence. This has had a very positive effect on the standards of the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. The governing body is very well led and governors have been exceptional in supporting the school through a very difficult time. They continue to ensure that standards are improved and are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses within the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, staff and governors are continually checking and evaluating the work that is done by the school. Although there has been some monitoring of the quality of teaching there are appropriate plans to develop this further to ensure that teaching standards remain high. Development plans are reviewed and achievements are evaluated on a regular basis
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Planning for developments is very good and ensures that finances and resources are used very well. The school has used funding well to develop its provision in a number of areas including sport and key skills. These initiatives are improving standards even further for pupils and students.

Staffing is good and there are sufficient teachers and support staff to work with the pupils and students. Resources are satisfactory, however the library is not well stocked and a number of books need replacing with more up-to-date and age-appropriate texts. The accommodation is unsatisfactory despite the best efforts of the school. A number of areas including those for Post 16 students and facilities for teaching science are inadequate. Toilets and some changing facilities are in need of updating. The school works hard to ensure that it obtains the best value for any purchases it makes.

## 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>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with any questions.</li> <li>• The school works closely with them.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The improvements since the new headteacher has arrived.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views. However many parents are concerned about the lack of homework. Pupils are not provided with work that they could do at home which would support their learning and inspectors agree that this is a cause for concern.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils make good progress and achieve well between Years 7 and 11. This is a direct result of the school developing an effective curriculum which supports teachers in their planning and so ensures pupils progress well in their learning. This is good improvement since the last inspection when standards were satisfactory. Post 16 pupils make satisfactory progress. Their progress is not as effective as for younger pupils because much of the work is based on an accredited course, which does not meet the needs of those with complex difficulties and higher attainers.
2. When they start school pupils' attainment is well below average. By the time they reach Year 11 pupils have made good progress in developing a range of skills. This applies to all pupils regardless of their needs. They benefit from being placed in groups according to their ability for literacy and numeracy enabling teachers to pitch the level of work correctly to ensure that all make progress. The good progress is very evident in the increases pupils make when assessed through P levels and it is evident from this information that certain groups of pupils make very good progress. This represents good improvement since the last inspection when there was concern about the achievements of those pupils with profound and multiple learning needs. The school has been effective in ensuring their needs are met and the sensory curriculum is appropriate in ensuring that pupils achieve well.
3. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' skills in communication and the variety of approaches is appropriate to ensure pupils make good progress in this area. All teachers are learning Makaton on a regular basis and this together with the use of PECS and communication aids is enabling all pupils to participate and develop their skills. There is a very good range of experiences offered to all pupils including studying Macbeth and acting out "The Odyssey" which enable them to make good progress overall in English. In mathematics and numeracy pupils make good progress up to the end of Year 11. In science achievements are satisfactory. Progress is not as good as in maths and English because there are no specialist teaching facilities and the subject does not at present have a permanent co-ordinator to ensure standards are maintained. (However a new co-ordinator has been appointed for January 2002). Pupils achieve well in personal, social and health education. They benefit from good teaching and the work they do ensures that they extend their skills as they move through the school.
4. Throughout the school pupils and students make very good progress in art. The very good quality of teaching enables them to have a range of experiences regardless of their special needs. Pupils' and students' work is displayed around the school and celebrates their achievements well. Pupils make good progress in humanities, design technology, particularly in food technology and physical education. In music and religious education pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils do not study a modern foreign language on a regular basis and as a result their achievements are unsatisfactory. They are given experiences of different cultures such as the focus on France last term which has enabled higher attaining pupils to remember "Bonjour" and "Au revoir". Effective displays act as reminders of the activities pupils and students were involved in. The lack of opportunities to work with and learn how to use information and communication technology results in pupils' achievements being unsatisfactory.
5. Pupils' achievements are good because of the use and adaptation of the planning for the national literacy and numeracy strategies. This has had a significant affect on raising standards and as a result pupils make good progress in developing their skills. Because all teachers have

been trained in these aspects they use them in other subjects which ensures that most lessons have a similar format. This provides pupils with a clear structure for each lesson so that they know that what will happen next and gives them confidence when there are changes. For example in a science lesson for Year 10 there was an introduction and then the class were set different tasks matched to their ability. At the end of the lesson they regrouped and talked about the work they had done.

6. The school has set targets for individual pupils, which are sufficiently challenging. It has now gathered sufficient data over the last two years based on P level assessments to use to set targets for improvement and there are appropriate plans in place to ensure that this is done. The school already uses the information to compare standards with similar special schools and this is effective in ensuring that standards are maintained and improved upon.
7. A third of the pupils are on the autistic spectrum and a few have very challenging behaviour. The school has done much to increase staff's knowledge in dealing with pupils and the recent re-organisation of classes has enabled these pupils to make good progress in a structured environment. However where expertise is not secure in working with these pupils progress is less effective because there is insufficient focus on ensuring that they learn to work independently before working as a group. There are a similar number of boys and girls and there is no difference in their rates of achievement.
8. There are eighteen pupils who have English as an additional language and they make the same progress as their peers. They are supported well in lessons and benefit from being provided with vocabulary in their own language which enables them to access the work effectively. For example a Year 8 pupil has the days of the week translated for her so that she can contribute to the greeting session in the morning.

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

9. Pupils and students have a positive attitude to their work and this together with their good behaviour has a positive impact on their progress. Pupils and students thrive on the very good relationships that exist throughout the school and their personal development is carefully supported in all aspects of school life. The good standards seen in the last inspection have been maintained. Attendance is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection.
10. Pupils and students make their enjoyment of school clear when they arrive in the morning; they show that they are happy to be there. In the parents' questionnaires 95% of parents agreed that their children like coming to school. Pupils and students often display high levels of interest in the activities provided for them and are able to stay on task and concentrate well. For example, in a history lesson on Tudor times Year 10 and 11 pupils maintained good levels of interest and enthusiasm when dressing up in the costumes of the day, experiencing the smell of an orange pomander and writing with quill pens. Pupils with more complex needs respond well to tasks that use a sensory approach to stimulate and interest them. This was well illustrated in a literacy lesson on The Christmas Carol where pupils were helped to experience the magic of snow, the fear of the Christmas ghosts, and the excitement of waking up on Christmas Day.
11. Standards of behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and around the school are good. Pupils and students follow the good examples set by staff in showing respect for each other, everyone who works in the school and the school's property. Pupils and students respond well to teachers' praise and reinforcement of good behaviour. They show that they are prepared to stop when asked, even when they are engrossed in something they particularly enjoy, such as playing musical instruments. Behaviour is equally good at break where pupils and students

play together well, with no signs of unruly nor oppressive behaviour. As a result there have been no exclusions.

12. Pupils' and students' personal development is very good. They clearly enjoy taking on responsibilities. Pupils are encouraged to take part in the day-to-day life of the school by helping to take the register to the office and by tidying up after lessons. There are responsibilities within each class, for example, in helping prepare drinks or getting the biscuits. They are helped to show independence by selecting activities, whether in lessons or at play. For example there are very good relationships amongst pupils and students and with staff throughout the school. Pupils and students and staff get on very well together. Such good relationships make pupils happy and secure in their class groups and give them the confidence to join in school activities. More able pupils help others in their class without prompting, for example by helping them to hang their coats up or passing drinks round. In lessons and assemblies pupils will show kindness and appreciation by spontaneously clapping the good work of others.
13. Attendance is good. The school day starts punctually and pupils and students arrive to lessons on times.

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

14. The overall quality of teaching and learning for pupils between Years 7 and 11 is good. A key issue from the last inspection was to improve teaching and learning particularly for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties. The school has been successful in addressing this. For Post 16 students teaching is satisfactory.
15. Improvements have been partly brought about through the development of the school's own "Curriculum 2000". This framework provides teachers with plans of what they should teach and has been effective in ensuring that the work pupils do in class builds upon existing skills and knowledge. Eight subjects have been developed so far and it is clear that these improvements have been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Other subjects such as religious education are due for development; teaching in these is satisfactory rather than good. Additionally where there has been monitoring of teaching this has provided teachers with areas that they can develop and has ensured that they improve their skills further.
16. Arrangements for grouping pupils in ability groups for subjects such as literacy and numeracy help teachers can match the work to the pupils' needs. Teachers now plan well for all pupils. For example in a very good Year 9 numeracy lesson higher attaining pupils are challenged by the task of identifying who is present and who is away. They are expected to develop their counting and this is reinforced well by the use of beating on a drum. Activities such as the use of a parachute which is raised and lowered six times reinforces pupils' counting skills as well as ensuring they learn through enjoyment.
17. Overall teachers manage behaviour well. The very good relationships with pupils together with the good use of praise encourages pupils to behave well. Pupils' behaviour plans are used effectively by staff. For example in a Year 7 class for pupils with challenging behaviour the behaviour plans are displayed on the wall and all staff follow these well. Thus in a maths lesson teachers and student support staff coped very well with the very difficult behaviour of a pupil, providing him with time out when needed but by the end of the lesson ensuring that he had achieved the tasks set for him. On the few occasions where challenging behaviour is not addressed effectively, for example in a Year 8 religious education lesson, there is insufficient structure to lessons and activities to fully involve all pupils.
18. Pupils with autistic and challenging behaviour make better progress where the teacher is experienced in managing their behaviour. For one class in Year 7 the pupils are managed very

well because there are good staffing ratios and student support staff are clear about their roles. Pupils are able to work independently with an appropriate number of opportunities for sitting in a group. In another Year 8 class where teaching is less effective there is too much focus on pupils working together. Pupils have not reached this stage in their development and as a result lessons are often disrupted and pupils do not always progress well.

19. One of the strengths of teaching is the very effective use of the student support staff. Support staff's ability to work with individuals ensures that pupils have a good understanding of what is going on. This was very evident on a number of occasions during the inspection. For example in a good numeracy lesson for Year 7 the teacher made it very clear what each member of the team had to do. Once the group work had finished each member of the team worked with an individual pupil on different aspects. After ten minutes, they covered the same topic but with a different pupil. Support staff knew what was expected of them, knew the pupils well and managed their behaviour effectively. This worked well, pupils benefited from the change and most were able to sustain concentration for a long time because of this routine. In art lessons support staff work well with pupils ensuring that they have a wide range of experiences. In an art lesson linked to a Tudor project for Years 10 and 11 support staff made sure that those pupils with more complex needs felt the paint and were totally involved in their work. In these lessons staff appear to gain as much pleasure from the work as the pupils and this contributes to a very positive atmosphere. In physical education staff watch pupils very carefully but equally do not prevent pupils from trying out activities and so letting them learn independently. In a number of subjects pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible, often learning from their mistakes.
20. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' special needs is good and many use this knowledge well in their planning. There is effective use of sensory work and the sensory room is used well to promote learning. In English the sensory room has been adapted into a theatre so that the facilities can be used by the pupils in acting out "The Tempest" and the witches' scene from "Macbeth". Teachers ensure that those pupils with more complex difficulties participate in lessons through sensory work. For example, in a very good Year 7 music lesson activities and resources are matched well to pupils' ability to ensure that all are involved. They are encouraged to conduct, clap or move in time to the music and clearly enjoy their involvement.
21. Teachers are also secure in their subject knowledge. This is very evident in art, food technology and physical education. In a Year 9 physical education lesson pupils carried out balancing activities. The teacher's very good subject knowledge ensured that he was very aware of safety issues and he made sure the pupils are aware of these as well; for example he encouraged the pupils to point out the lack of a mat where they would need to jump. Teachers have all learnt signing and most are gaining in confidence in this area. Signing is used to give pupils prompts for actions such as sit down, stand up and for vocabulary that is known to the pupils. It is not yet used as much as it should be to give more detailed instructions and support new words. Symbols and PECS are used appropriately however teachers are less confident with communication technology such as touch screens and big macs and these are not used sufficiently often to support pupils and students' learning.
22. For Post 16 students teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching and on a few occasions very good teaching was observed during the inspection. For example in a very good Year 12 independent living skills lesson students are given many opportunities to develop their independence. There are very high expectations that students will carry out tasks such as retrieving a can opener from a draw or slicing cucumbers. Questioning is used well to assess their understanding for example asking "why do you need that?" to encourage students to think about what they are doing. However teachers' planning is not as secure as in the rest of the school. The activities are not always matched to their needs. For example in an Year 12 English lesson there was a range of activities to support work on biographies but they were insufficient to hold students'

interest. Only two sets of photographs were available, which meant not all could participate. Equally the activities for the lower attaining students did not occupy them and one student spent a lot of time doing nothing until the support assistant intervened. The lack of challenge in the work was reflected in the final activity of sticking the pictures on to paper. Planning for those students with more complex needs is not always effective and teachers do not ensure that activities such as those based at the youth club are planned adequately to enable these students to gain from their experiences.

23. Parents have a great deal of confidence in the teaching and this was reflected in the high response in the questionnaire. However both in the meeting with parents and the questionnaire there were concerns about the lack of homework. The team share this concern. Opportunities are missed to support the good work that goes on in school. Reading is not sent home unless requested by parents and work such as the sensory experiences and in personal and social education are not shared with parents to enable them to follow similar activities at home.

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

24. Overall the curriculum is good for pupils in Years 7 to 11. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the curriculum was identified as satisfactory. Since that time the school has undertaken a significant amount of work to improve the learning experiences it offers. This good rate of improvement has been sustained because there is an effective programme for development, which enables the school to focus on a number of subjects each year. The curriculum for students between the ages of sixteen and nineteen is satisfactory and this reflects the findings of the last inspection. The curriculum for students over sixteen has an appropriate focus for development this year and a suitable plan has been established which will help the school to identify what it needs to do to develop and implement any changes.
25. The improvements made to the curriculum have ensured that pupils aged between eleven and sixteen have appropriate learning experiences across nearly all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. There are appropriate opportunities to experience other cultures however a modern foreign language is not taught to pupils. The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. The school has suitably adapted and implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and these are beginning to have a positive impact learning. A good programme of personal, social and health education has been implemented and a suitable programme of work is being developed for citizenship. Opportunities for pupils to learn about careers and the world of work are satisfactory. There are appropriate plans to improve and develop these further. There are satisfactory opportunities for the oldest pupils to have aspects of their learning accredited by ASDAN.
26. The school demonstrates a good commitment to providing opportunities and experiences that are relevant to pupils' needs. Plans effectively support teachers to prepare work that reflects individual pupils' abilities. This enables them to make good progress. There is very clear guidance for teachers on the amount of time each subject will be allocated and this ensures that there is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. Pupils are in class groups with others of the same age but the school enables teachers to more effectively address pupils' needs by grouping those with similar abilities for activities such as English, mathematics, science and physical education. The needs of pupils with more complex difficulties are met well by incorporating specialised provision such as therapies into subject plans and by allocating opportunities to meet pupils' additional difficulties across the timetable. In this way the curriculum planned for each pupil is determined by their individual need and this enables them to make good progress.



27. The school uses the community appropriately to extend pupils' and students' experiences. There are a suitable range of visitors to the school and pupils and students use local facilities such as the sports and leisure centre, shops and places of local interest appropriately to enhance learning, which has taken place in the classroom.
28. Links with other institutions are also satisfactory. The school uses the local Youth Club Service to extend students experiences particularly in the area of sports and leisure and this enables students to gain skills and understanding and complete modules of work for accreditation. However, activities organised through the Youth Club Service do not provide opportunities for students to mix socially with those from other schools and the use of these experiences to promote social skills is therefore limited. It is also unclear how appropriate these opportunities are for students with more complex needs.
29. The school has a satisfactory link with Whirlow Hall Farm. A substantial amount of time is spent at this facility for Post 16 students and pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 but there is inadequate planning to ensure that the experiences pupils and students are given are linked to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with complex needs. This facility is however used effectively along with others to provide pupils with good residential experiences.
30. The school has developed satisfactory links with other institutions and students over sixteen attend a local college for one afternoon a week where they are taught by college staff. This opportunity enables them to develop the independence skills they will need when they transfer from school to college at nineteen and to develop an awareness of college opportunities. There are also opportunities for a very small number of students to take part in a physical education lesson with Year 11 pupils from a local secondary school. However, the school has rightly recognised that these experiences are at present not age-appropriate and there are suitable plans to review this arrangement. The school provides suitable work experience placements for students from local colleges and secondary schools.
31. Overall the school's provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, with regular opportunities for reflection in religious education and school and class assemblies. However, assemblies held in the school hall are not always organised to ensure the effective inclusion of all pupils, particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. There is a valued link with the local church, which pupils visit and use as a source of inspiration for print-making in art lessons. In return the local vicar assists with annual religious celebrations at school such as the Christmas carol service. All year groups contribute to the design of displays in the school hall, and other classroom displays reflect pupils' learning about the religious significance of Christmas. The school is aware of and sensitive to the individual religious needs of its pupils of other faiths, for example those from Muslim families in their observance of Ramadan.
32. Provision for pupils' and students' moral development is good. This is well fostered in the school by the mutual respect shown between staff and between staff and pupils. The use of individual programmes to manage more effectively those pupils who display particularly challenging behaviour helps to set clear boundaries for all as to what is acceptable and unacceptable throughout each school day. As a result, staff work well with pupils in and out of lessons to encourage them to consider the effect of their actions on others and to be more aware of others' needs.
33. Provision for pupils' and students' social and cultural development is very good. As pupils progress through the school, they are helped to develop personal and social skills that will contribute towards their more independent living after they have left school. One important aspect of this provision is an effective programme of personal and social education. All pupils are actively encouraged to attend and take part in the annual meetings to review their

statements of special educational needs. Pupils of all ages are also involved in a range of activities off the school site. These include opportunities to compete in local sporting events, notably through membership of the school's own football team. Regular supervised outings into the wider locality to venues such as the Meadow Hall Shopping Centre build up pupils' confidence, understanding and self-assurance in a variety of settings. The good range of residential trips provide more intensive practice in key social skills such as planning leisure activities together, listening to each other and making new friends.

34. Art and drama provide pupils' and students' with good experience of other cultures. There are prominent displays of younger pupils' own two- and three-dimensional art work to illustrate the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Elsewhere pupils have contributed their own decorations to 'welcome' signs in English and at least ten other European and Asian languages. In places, pupils' work is deliberately contrasted with the work of famous painters. For example, where the 'picture of the week' by Paul Klee is framed and displayed, alongside it is an identical frame showing off the 'pupil's picture of the week'. Years 7 to 9 and Post 16 students take part in drama productions, such as the school's recent adaptation of Homer's 'Odyssey', but also visit the Crucible Theatre to see a multi-media production staged specially for young people with disabilities. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from twice-yearly visits from a separate theatre group, which looks at developing their awareness of the world of work. Pupils' recreational experiences and cultural awareness are both extended well by visits to museums and galleries, a country park, a zoo and other places of interest.

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

35. The school has developed very good procedures which ensure high levels of care for all pupils and students. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well and they respond to their physical and emotional needs in a very calm and gentle way. Staff are very conscious of the need to pay close attention to protecting pupils from harm and to promoting their health, safety and general well-being. The good standards of care identified in the last inspection report have been built on and improved.
36. Very good induction procedures and regular training ensure that all staff have a good awareness of child protection issues. The health and safety policy is effective and reviewed regularly. There are very good practices in place for first aid and for administering medicines, and fire drills are held regularly. Risk assessments are in place and staff training completed in manual handling techniques. The arrangements for pupils' arrival and departure by organised transport are good. There are thoughtful and caring routines in place at lunchtime where staff help pupils and students choose their meals and where patience and respect is shown to pupils needing help with feeding.
37. There is very good liaison with outside support agencies and with the nurses and therapists based in the school. Student support assistants are patient and encouraging and make a very good contribution to the overall quality of care pupils receive. There are very good admission and transition arrangements. When less confident pupils move class, their support assistant stays with them to help them settle down. As pupils and students leave the school, they have varying transition programmes according to their individual needs.
38. The procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour are good. This judgement supports the view of a large majority of parents. Most pupils and students understand the effects of their behaviour and they are helped to ignore inappropriate behaviour resulting from others' special needs. Pupils and students receive regular praise and encouragement which reinforces their good behaviour. All staff have received training on managing difficult behaviour using the 'TeamTeach' approach. With the consent and involvement of parents, individual behaviour management plans are set up for pupils with challenging behaviour. However, although staff

record more serious incidents they do not record all of them. This makes it difficult to establish the effectiveness of the behaviour plan or to track any problems encountered by staff and other pupils and students. There are effective procedures to identify and address any incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour. There are good procedures in place to monitor and promote good attendance.

39. The monitoring and support of pupils' and students' personal development is very good. Teachers have a clear picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and these are carefully recorded. Staff take care to provide effective support by including personal targets in pupils' individual education plans. These targets are relevant to pupils' needs and promote their independence and their personal and social development well. All pupils are actively helped to take part in their annual review. Pupils' and students' contributions in lessons are always valued and teachers work hard to encourage pupils and students to participate in order to raise their self esteem. The school takes care to acknowledge pupils' achievements, and these are celebrated in weekly assemblies.
40. The school has developed and implemented good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' achievement and progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection in 1999 when assessment procedures were judged to be satisfactory. Pupils' action plans are reviewed every term and are used appropriately to ensure that pupils needs are considered when teachers plan lessons and work. This enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils' responses to the learning experiences they have are recorded and each lesson is evaluated. Although these records show what pupils achieve, the information is not consistently used to plan what pupils should learn next. However, there is an acknowledged need for further development, particularly in using assessment information to inform planning for pupils to make better progress. All pupils have been assessed using nationally recognised assessment criteria and the school is beginning to use this information effectively to monitor progress and identify patterns in achievement which can help it to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The achievement and progress of Post 16 students is effectively measured and monitored through the procedures required by accreditation.
41. Every pupil and students has a well constructed individual education plan with targets for gaining key skills in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Progress towards meeting these targets is carefully recorded and reported to parents when statements are reviewed. Setting new targets for the next twelve months is also discussed and agreed with parents at the same time. The school's present arrangements for carrying out annual reviews of statements are effective in making information for parents accessible and review meetings are well planned and conducted. Including all pupils themselves in these meetings is a good recent development.
42. The school has recently introduced individual progress files and pupils are beginning to contribute regularly to assembling a record of their achievements during their time in school. These records contain examples of work and certificates for achievements in key skills, which will build to form a good record of pupils' success in school.

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

43. The school shows very good commitment to building a strong and effective partnership with parents and carers. In the questionnaires, at the pre-inspection meeting and at other times during the inspection, parents registered their very strong support for the school. Parents were particularly keen to point out the many improvements that have recently been made. The good links that were reported in the last inspection report have been commendably improved.

44. The school gives a great deal of thought to the way it works with parents. In the questionnaires 94% of parents said they feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or with a problem. Several parents seen during the inspection said that staff are very responsive to their phone calls and they particularly like the school's open door policy. The school is sensitive to the needs of parents who do not speak English and uses a member of the support staff to help with translations. However the school is aware that communication with parents of pupils with English as an additional language could be improved, as attendance at annual reviews is significantly lower for this group. To address this, the school has translated letters home to parents into Punjabi. Plans are in place to employ an Asian home/school link worker.
45. The quality of information provided for parents is good. 91% of parents feel well informed about how their child is getting on. Letters, newsletters and the governors' annual report are written in a clear and accessible style and keep parents up to date with day-to-day routines and with school activities. The school provides an excellent home/school diary for teachers to tell parents about aspects of the day which have gone well and if any difficulties have arisen. Teachers often make good use of digital photographs to give parents a very clear idea of what their child has achieved. In the questionnaires a significant number of parents, 31%, expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of homework children receive.
46. Parents are invited to meet teachers termly to discuss the individual education plan, and then again in the summer term for their child's annual review. Attendance at both these meetings is good. At the end of the summer term parents are given a written annual report of their child's progress. Although these are well written, providing parents with good information on what pupils know, understand and can do, they do not comment on all subjects of the National Curriculum.
47. Parents and carers make a good impact on the life of the school. The school encourages parents to become involved and provides a warm welcome for them. One or two parents make a regular commitment to help in class and to accompany pupils on outdoor trips. Several parents joined in the school's recent French immersion day. All parents are invited to join a parents' support group which meets at least monthly and the school is currently running a Makaton signing course which parents highly praise. There is a Friends of Talbot School which raises important funds for the school and helps parents and staff maintain good relationships through social events.

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

48. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has a clear view of the direction the school should take in the future. He has successfully improved the morale of the staff and developed high expectations of pupils' performance and achievement. The school has experienced a disrupted period of leadership over the last four years. The present headteacher, who was appointed in September 2000 after acting as associate headteacher for two terms, became the fifth to hold the position within a period of two years. His success in developing a strong and capable staff team, committed to promoting high standards, represents a considerable professional and personal achievement.
49. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who have distinct and well-defined roles. They form a very effective senior management team. The school's finance officer now usefully attends their meetings to contribute on the financial implications of their strategic planning. The role of the extended management group (EMG) has also been revised to become a more efficient part of middle management. They have been given additional time, which they use well, in order to fulfil their responsibilities. Under the guidance of the senior management team, its members are becoming increasingly influential and confident in implementing the developments that they have helped to plan.

50. The school has developed a good range of documentation to support the work it does and which ensures that there are high expectations for the future. The comprehensive targets contained within the school development plan are often ambitious, but have been carefully considered by the staff and the governing body and are realistic and achievable. They help maintain the positive ethos within the school that anticipates a continued improvement in all areas of the school's work.
51. The headteacher is aware of the school's responsibility to develop whole-school targets for pupil performance. In order to meet this requirement, information about pupil performance, largely based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's P scales, has been actively collected during the last two years. This will allow the senior management team to generate appropriate annual targets for improvement in pupil performance.
52. A great majority of parents recognise the stability that the headteacher and the leadership team provide. They appreciate the values the school maintains, particularly the emphasis given to ensuring the equality of opportunity for all pupils. The number of parents now naming the school as their preference at secondary transfer, makes it likely that places will become increasingly sought after in the future.
53. The strength of the governing body was recognised during the inspection by HMI in 1999. It has maintained this high quality and its role in shaping the educational direction of the school has been outstanding. The breadth of knowledge, expertise and commitment of its members is exceptional and has been effective in supporting staff through a very difficult period when the school was led by a succession of headteachers. The governing body has complete confidence in the present headteacher and although it has been able to take a step back recently, remains very aware of its important responsibility of being a 'critical friend'.
54. All the statutory duties of the governing body are fulfilled to a very high standard and the school's policies, documents and targets are all carefully reviewed and approved. The committees take their duties seriously and meet regularly. The detailed records that are maintained reflect their level of commitment to the school. Although there is no timetable or programme for formal visits, all the governors are regular visitors and both the literacy governor and chair of governors have observed lessons. The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Sheffield City Council was invited to conduct an 'Index of Governance' earlier this year. The subsequent report was extremely favourable.
55. The school's evaluation of its performance is very good overall. The headteacher, staff and governors are continually checking and evaluating the work done by the school. There have been many important changes made to improve the educational practice and detailed policy and planning documents have been introduced in most subjects. However the pace of change has been such that the school has not given itself time to ensure that all the documentation and good practice is properly embedded and consistent throughout the school. The intention to monitor the quality of teaching remains an important priority. Although the deputy headteacher maintains a very good oversight of the curriculum content and the teachers' individual planning files, there has been little formal assessment of the effectiveness of teaching in the classroom. There is a stated aim that at least one observation of each teacher by a member of the senior management team will be carried out each term. At this stage there is no plan to include other teachers with responsibilities in this development. The school recognises that this will be necessary in the longer term to ensure teaching standards remain high and the subject content remains appropriate.

56. The performance management arrangements are good. All staff have had personal targets set and the training needs that this process identifies are considered alongside other priorities for development. This enables the school to take effective action to secure improvement. For example, the Post 16 and key stage co-ordinators have met with an outside trainer who will help them to develop the management skills necessary for their roles, whilst all the teachers are receiving New Opportunities Funding (NOF) training to develop the computer skills necessary to deliver the information technology curriculum.
57. New members of staff have a good introduction to the school. They receive a very informative staff handbook, which quickly makes them familiar with the pupils and the normal routines and practices. The policy documentation available also provides detailed advice in all school matters. The key stage co-ordinators have an important role in helping new teachers and support staff to become established and, as HMI noted in 1999, still remain the key element in the induction of staff. A formal process has yet to be established. Briefing meetings for all the members of the key stage and Post 16 teams are held at the beginning of the week. This not only keeps all staff aware of and involved in developments, but also offers valued support and guidance. The number of staff leaving after the last inspection and the changes of headteachers left existing staff with very low morale. Parents, governors and the senior management team recognise that staff now feel more optimistic and confident in their ability to succeed. Similarly, the rate of absence amongst the staff was a cause for concern to the school managers. This too has improved.
58. Financial planning is very good and fully supports school improvements. All the school's activities, whether routine or developmental, are accurately costed in the annual budget plan. Very efficient financial procedures are employed and the regular monitoring of expenditure by the finance officer, who reports on a monthly basis to the senior management team and the governing body, is very good practice. The governing body maintains a very good strategic control of the school's finances and a budget forecast is maintained for at least two years ahead. This allows the school to identify key areas for attention in the school development plan and to prepare accordingly. The school has managed to attract additional funding, such as the Seed Challenge Funding, which is being used to upgrade the toilets, and the New Opportunities Funding, which supports staff development. These specific grants are always used well for their designated purpose.
59. Educational priorities are clearly identified by the senior management team and governing body after consultation with the staff. This year there are four curriculum subjects that have been given precedence for additional funding and development. The key stage and subject co-ordinators recognise that this as an efficient means of allocating the curriculum budget.
60. The school makes good use of new technology. An office network was introduced during the summer and the computers in the head and deputy headteachers' offices have been connected to it. It is also planned to put the pupil database on the main server, so teachers can also obtain data and records necessary for their work from either their classroom or the staff room computers. An appropriate emphasis has been placed on maintaining pupils' confidentiality and restricting access to only those staff who need the information.
61. The school has very good procedures for ensuring that it receives best value from the services it uses. The contract for supplying the new secure front doors, for example, was awarded following rigorous research into the quality of various suppliers. Likewise, the quality of the planning and the active involvement of all the management teams in the decision-making process, ensures that all major developments are founded on the best value advice.
62. There are sufficient teachers for the number of pupils in the school and the very good ratio of learning support staff to pupils represents a good improvement since the previous inspection.

Support staff are well deployed and they have a very clear understanding of their role. New members of staff are supported by mentors from the senior management team and a very comprehensive and very well organised staff handbook plays an important part in the school's induction process. This process also represents a good improvement since the last inspection. Annual staff development interviews, as part of the performance management, involve personal target setting and the identification of training needs. Such training needs are carefully interwoven with training requirements identified in the school development plan and are having an impact upon the effectiveness of staff, such as when they teach and work with children who have challenging behaviour or have complex learning difficulties. The "Team Teach" training session that was provided for all staff by a member of the support staff during the week of the inspection exemplifies the very strong teamwork ethos that exists in the school.

63. Currently, the school has the equivalent of two teachers on temporary contracts. The posts in question are due to be filled with two permanent teachers in the near future (January 2002). The school does not find it difficult to recruit good quality student support staff but is finding it increasingly more difficult to appoint suitably qualified and experienced teachers.
64. Overall, the level of resources for learning is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection there has been significant improvement in resourcing. In areas such as religious education and mathematics resources are now very good however the resourcing of music is unsatisfactory. The overall level and quality of resources available for Post 16 students is satisfactory.
65. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are a sufficient number of class bases but several of the classrooms are too small for the groups taught. There are enough toilets and suitably equipped personal management facilities to meet with the needs of the pupils and students. However, all the toilets and personal management facilities are in need of refurbishing. In varying degrees they need re-decorating, for example in some tiles need to be replaced, bare wood painted and stronger extractor fans provided. Although hot water is provided at a safe temperature, exposed pipes are not boxed in. The school's governing body is very aware of this need and has included a very carefully costed rolling programme of refurbishment in the school development plan. In addition, there is no specialist provision for teaching science, design and technology and information and communication technology; the art room is too small and the library is not big enough for whole class teaching of library routines. The large multi-purpose hall continues to be a through route. At times this has a negative effect upon distractible pupils when they are in the hall for music or physical education. Its use as a dining hall places limits its use at the end of the morning or as a venue for after-dinner activities. There is no common room provided for Post 16 students and the school does not have access to all of its rooms.
66. The new food technology room represents a very good improvement since the last inspection, as does the very well equipped sensory room. The school also benefits from having a dedicated room for speech and language therapy and the shared use of a large swimming pool for hydrotherapy. The school as a whole, both inside and outside shows evidence of care by pupils, students and staff. It is litter free; minor accidental damage is responded to immediately by the site manager and the very good quality of displays in classrooms and around the school contributes to the school presenting as a colourful and purposeful learning environment.

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

67. In order to improve the school's provision the headteacher, staff and governors should:-
  - I. Improve teachers' expertise in teaching ICT skills and ensure that ICT is taught throughout the school. (paragraphs 4,21,25,113,115).\*
  - II. Extend pupils' opportunities to study a modern foreign language (paragraphs 4,25,119).

- III. Ensure that, in line with present plans, the accommodation and facilities are improved and developed and a range of specialist accommodation and for Post 16 students (paragraphs 65,74,83)\*.

The school should also consider:

- o Providing homework for pupils and students that supports the work they do in school (paragraph 23).
- o Ensuring that the school provides parents with reports on all the subjects they are taught (paragraph 19).
- o Ensuring that teachers' planning is more effective in using Whirlow Hall Farm to extend pupils' and students' learning across the curriculum (paragraph 29,72).

*\* These areas for improvement have already been identified in the school's development plan.*

#### **PROVISION FOR POST 16 STUDENTS.**

68. The range of learning opportunities and experiences provided for students over sixteen is satisfactory. This reflects the findings of the last inspection in 1999. The department has identified suitable elements of work from the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' programme such as 'out in the community' and 'meal preparation and cooking' and these are taught as modules of work throughout students' time in the post sixteen provision. Since the last inspection the department has also developed a basic skills, communication course which enables students learning to be accredited through the Open College Network. This has effectively extended the range of opportunities available to students and provides them with good opportunities to study modules of work in media studies, poetry and drama. This course, because it has been developed by the school to reflect students' needs enables those with more complex learning difficulties to have the same opportunities as others. The requirements for the modules of learning accredited by ASDAN are not always easy for students with complex needs to achieve.
69. The curriculum is appropriately enhanced by opportunities for careers education and guidance including work experience. The careers curriculum and work experience opportunities are still at an early stage of development but the oldest students have good opportunities to learn about the jobs people do in school and there have been a very small number of students who have experienced working out in the community in places such as a local supermarket.
70. School facilities such as the bungalow provide appropriate opportunities for students to learn independent living skills in a more suitable environment than the classroom and there are links with the local Youth Club Service and a community farm which provide opportunities for learning in the community. However, teachers do not always plan the use of these resources so that time is used effectively to support and extend learning. The community is used appropriately to develop students' social and independence skills when they learn to use local facilities such as the sports centre.
71. The curriculum prepares students adequately for the next stage of their life. There are suitable opportunities for them to take part in courses at the local college but the school does not have enough say in what is going to be provided. The college offers students opportunities to take part in courses such as art and food technology but the school does not know what will be offered in terms of experiences or time. This does not enable the school to plan effectively to



use these opportunities to extend or reinforce students' learning. These opportunities are not always suitable for students with more complex difficulties but there are appropriate opportunities for students to visit alternative post school placements such as residential care homes, which enables them to develop an awareness of alternative provision.

72. The learning opportunities for students with complex learning difficulties are not sufficiently well focused on developing the skills or providing the experiences they will need to equip them for the next stage of their lives. For example, students, who after school will transfer to a residential setting need to develop very different skills and have different experiences to students who will transfer onto college courses. An insistence that all students have the same range of experiences is not enabling the department to develop an approach to learning which more closely reflects the experiences students have in sixth form college, where, for example, all students have a curriculum which reflects their individual needs and interests. There has been no evaluation of the relevance and impact on the needs of these students in terms of visits to the farm or the Youth club.
73. Leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. The co-ordinator, effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, has established a plan which identifies suitable priorities for development and will help to identify further areas for improvement. The provision for students over sixteen is a focus for school development this year and a significant amount of work has already been undertaken to improve the curriculum offered to students and to re-organise the department so that it can develop a more distinct identity. It is now appropriate that what is being offered is reviewed and improved further.
74. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Students do not have access to age appropriate facilities such as a common room and this restricts opportunities for the development of their social skills and their independence.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	72

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		10	40	20	3		
Percentage		14	55	27	4		

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	115
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	64

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

Authorised absence

%
---

Unauthorised absence

%
---

School data	7
-------------	---

School data	0.4
-------------	-----

*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	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	14
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	90
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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

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

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.6
Average class size	8

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	45
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1358

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
Total income	1531278
Total expenditure	1508737
Expenditure per pupil	14369
Balance brought forward from previous year	36354
Balance carried forward to next year	58895

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	115
Number of questionnaires returned	72

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	25	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	49	35	7	3	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	47	6	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	21	21	10	36
The teaching is good.	51	40	0	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	28	7	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	42	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	57	39	3	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	3	3	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	32	7	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	31	8	3	10

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

### **English**

75. Pupils' and students' make good progress and achieve well in English . This is because of the good overall quality of teaching and the flexible introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. This has been effective in improving teachers' planning to ensure that pupils build on what they have already learned. This reflects satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection report in 1999 when progress was good in all areas of this subject.
76. Pupils make good progress in developing their communication because there are many opportunities for pupils and students to develop their skills. Teachers are becoming more confident in the use of signing and communication aids and this supports pupils' learning further. All pupils and students listen carefully and respond with enthusiasm to questions during lessons. The effective support provided by teachers and student support staff enables all pupils to be involved. For instance, in a Year 7 literacy class, pupils with multiple and complex difficulties follow a story and song about Robin Hood, supported by gesture and sign from staff. Teachers extend pupils knowledge and listening skills well. For example in a Year 8/9 lesson looking at "e" as the letter of the week, the teacher made good use of various items beginning with the letter "e". As a result one higher attaining pupil referred to a globe as a planet and knew that we live on "earth". Pupils in Years 10 and 11 listen carefully to the teacher and respond well to questions recalling that "A Christmas Carol" is the story they have been studying and that the writer is Charles Dickens. Many Post 16 students are confident communicators and are keen to involve visitors in discussions. In lessons led by the speech and language therapist specially prepared materials are successfully used to involve Post 16 students in identifying their likes and dislikes through discussion or signing. Such lessons together with opportunities to discuss during lessons enables students to make good progress. A good range of dramatic activities, including school productions of "The Odyssey" and "Grease" enriches the English curriculum.
77. All year groups make satisfactory progress in reading. Pupils in Year 7 make appropriate progress in reading from the structured reading scheme. Higher attaining pupils show pleasure, enthusiasm and understanding when they read back stories they have written with encouraging support from support staff. Clear progress was made during a literacy session for Post 16 students using shared text where most pupils could recognise a symbol by pointing to it from a choice of three. During the following individual reading session, one pupil could put a sign to symbols linked to text. In a very good Year 7 lesson, one pupil could recognise the words "jobs", "cooking", "break" and "science" and put the words into a sequence. One lower attaining pupil could pick out the symbol and object for "cooking", "music" and "dinner". Autistic pupils are beginning to recognise symbols and objects of reference. For example in identifying areas around the school and matching these well with the relevant pictures. The school recognises that it needs to develop its reading schemes so that they are more age-appropriate for pupils and students throughout the school.
78. Teachers ensure that those pupils with English as a second language are given written words that are in their own language. This ensures that they are able to make the same progress as their peers.
79. Pupils make satisfactory progress in writing. Pupils are encouraged to hold pens and pencils correctly Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 practice writing words and sentences independently, linked to work on "All about Robin Hood". Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop their handwriting skills by copy writing and other pupils by following a variety of lines, horizontal,

vertical and circular. Although most pupils have significant hand control difficulties, individual pupils are beginning to copy under their teachers' writing and from commercially produced handwriting worksheets, and most are being systematically supported to track patterns with pencils and crayons. Pupils take care with such work and, because of the sensitive and encouraging support they receive, try their best and remain on-task for considerable periods of time. Students in Post 16 complete biography work in files and have produced a magazine scrapbook on world and current affairs writing about people in the national news. However, although pupils are given opportunities to write independently, the needs of those pupils with complex and multiple difficulties are not consistently met. Better planned use of information communication technology and switches would benefit this group of pupils.

80. Literacy is promoted appropriately across the curriculum. There is a very good focus on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening. There are opportunities in subjects such as humanities to develop reading and writing skills through identification of key words. The use of signing and communication aids ensures that pupils have access to new vocabulary in all lessons.
81. The whole area of communication is currently under review at the school. There is a newly appointed well qualified communication co-ordinator who is in the process of standardising the use of objects of reference throughout the school. Although staff use signing, this is not used consistently throughout the school and tends to be very limited for example to giving instructions such as stand up, sit down. Communication symbols for all school subjects have also been introduced. However, the symbol communication is not yet implemented consistently across the school. A Communication At Talbot School (CATS) project has been set up with the communication co-ordinator, speech and language therapist and ICT consultant to promote unified approaches throughout the school. Development in this area would be more effective if the school-based ICT co-ordinator was involved in this project so that there is a more school-specific focus.
82. Most teachers set high but realistic expectations. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of resources such as music, sensory equipment, acting and dressing up to enhance the pupils' learning. For instance, in a literacy lesson on the witches scene in Macbeth, the scene was set with the teacher and support staff dressed up as witches and with candles, incense and atmospheric music in the background. The pupils were given objects such as plastic snakes and plastic eyes to touch and squeeze. In most lessons, pupils including those with complex and multiple difficulties are encouraged towards independence for taking responsibility for organising their own folders and writing equipment. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and there is very little poor behaviour.
83. The library is currently being used as a temporary teaching room. It is too small for most whole class groups and the limited stock of books needs expanding and updating to include age-appropriate magazines and books for Post16 pupils.
84. There is currently a co-ordinator for literacy and one for English, both of whom manage their specific areas. However, this dual responsibility does not always ensure consistency of development and monitoring across the subject.

## **MATHEMATICS**

85. The standards of achievement and progress made in mathematics are good up to Year 11 because teaching is good. Progress for Post 16 students is satisfactory and this reflects the overall satisfactory quality of teaching. This represents a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection



86. In Years 7 to 9 teachers share their planning with student support staff and make sure that the objectives for lessons reflect the pupils' different learning styles and abilities. For example, pupils in Year 7 with complex learning difficulties responded very positively to the activity which had them touch and explore the roundness of a large ball. They also reacted with enjoyment to the "feel" for the number five when the teacher and support staff beat the ball to produce five vibrations. In another lesson pupils in Year 9 reacted with clear enjoyment to the teacher's very well structured use of a parachute to develop their understanding of under and over. Pupils make progress in their ability to recognise numbers up to 10; they match the correct number of objects to verbal and written prompts and are developing an understanding of the properties of simple geometric shapes such as squares, circles and triangles. Higher attainers recognise numbers up to 20 and enjoy counting in 10s up to 50. Pupils understand how to count down; they participate in this task with enjoyment and in particular show that they can anticipate the final "blast off." The teachers' effective use of number lines helps pupils to sequence numbers and find missing numbers while practical activities using different containers develops their understanding of quantity, including the use of correct mathematical words such as full, empty and half. The spontaneous singing of "Ten Green Bottles" by a pupil on the autistic spectrum confirmed that he not only enjoyed the activity but also knew the difference between full and empty. By Year 9 higher attainers add up two numbers between one and ten and can subtract using cubes. Additionally, pupils are more consistent in their ability to recognise written numbers; are able to identify the "next" number without a number line to help them and can move the hour hand on a clock to a named time.
87. For older pupils in Years 10 and 11 teachers successfully build on pupils' previous learning as they extend their counting skills and ability to recognise the properties of more complex 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional shapes. Their understanding of time has improved as a consequence of teachers' regular use of class time-tables; their ongoing references to time available for different activities and specific lessons on telling the time. Pupils particularly enjoy mental arithmetic activities at the start of lessons. In one lesson for Year 11 pupils demonstrated total involvement when the teacher's rapid-fire questions had them match written numbers to numbers called out. They also responded well to the task of subtracting from their number using their fingers and higher attaining pupils responded particularly well to questions such as "Show me the number if I add two, three etc to this number." Pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties extend their awareness of shape when the teacher has them exploring the shape and colour of their tooth brush and toothpaste tube. In addition, they enjoyed the carefully organised "subtraction" activity, using pictures of the class, which enabled them to identify who was not present. Continuing work on quantity results in pupils understanding the difference between light, heavy and same while a simple understanding of area is promoted through covering sheets of paper with similar shapes and identifying which sheet needed more stick-on shapes. The pupils' ability to write correct number legibly is improving and higher attaining pupils are more consistent in their ability to link written numbers to the correct number of real objects such as coins, sweets and cubes.
88. Post 16 students make satisfactory progress overall but higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged in all lessons. For example mathematics was well used in an English lesson for Year 12 as students classified the various materials that they were going to use to produce a magazine about Christmas but the cut and stick element of this lesson did not sufficiently challenge higher attainers. The teachers' use of a good range of devices, including an egg timer, metronome and kitchen alarm clock, improved Year 14 lower attaining students' ability to understand the passage of time and in particular had them listening to the tick of the metronome with significant wonder. However opportunities were missed to enable pupils to learn the difference between the sounds which would have enabled them to make more progress and complete the task successfully. A lesson to promote the students' ability to budget had them use real money, scales and sweets with all students, a few with help, being

able to divide 9p by three using real piles of money. As a result of previous work and increasing use of real money in mathematics and personal and social education lessons students recognise coins up to £1. Additionally, their knowledge of the days of the week is more secure as a consequence of responding to questions such as “On which day do we go shopping?” or “Which day comes before/after the day we go to the Youth Club?”

89. Mathematics is used well across the curriculum. Opportunities for developing number skills are well promoted in personal and social lessons when pupils talk about the times of lessons and count who is present. Pupils and students are often encouraged to count as they move around the school, for example, counting the number of pillars in the hall. On occasions staff fail to take advantage of situations such as on the farm when pupils put eggs into boxes but were not encouraged to count them.
90. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and has made sure that it is well resourced. Selected items are held as “basic” class based stock and a good range of relevant materials and equipment is held in the carefully catalogued and accessible central store. A well-considered policy is underpinned by good planning. These plans, which effectively incorporate the National Numeracy Strategy, have resulted in a plan of work that covers all areas of mathematics. However, there continues to be a need for the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching of the subject in order to ensure that what is planned is taught and to further promote the use of information and communication technology within the subject.

## **SCIENCE**

91. Achievement and progress in science throughout the school is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is satisfactory; As a result, pupils’ learning and overall progress in the subject are satisfactory. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.
92. In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about light, forces and motion. They recognise the difference between light and darkness and know that sunlight and moonlight are not the same. Pupils learn that the acts of pulling and pushing can set simple forces in motion. They observe and discuss the way in which various materials are attracted to magnets. Teachers set pupils appropriate challenges to extend their learning and provide a good variety of activities to develop their knowledge and understanding. They match resources in lessons well to the needs of individual pupils. For example, in a lesson for Year 9, the teacher provides pupils with good opportunities to experiment with magnets. Pupils are well supported to test the power of magnets on different surfaces. From this they learn that magnets are more likely to be attracted to metallic objects than to other surfaces like their own skin. The teacher provides a higher attaining pupil with additional materials to examine on his own. In this way pupils observe at first hand the power of magnetic attraction, learning quickly and showing how to use a magnet to bring iron filings together and shape and reshape them.
93. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils extend their knowledge of light by learning about how it creates shadows of objects in its path. They study living things by looking at flowers and trees and record a plant’s rate of growth from week to week. Those with more complex needs gain from sensory experiences which develop their knowledge. They know that electricity is the source of power for familiar objects in the classroom and at home. Tasks are well matched to pupils’ abilities. The teacher makes good use of effective questioning to help pupils learn and ensure they understand what they are doing. For example, at the start of a lesson for Year 10, pupils the teacher sets clear expectations by identifying the activity for them and reviewing previous learning about light and shadow with them. The teacher then maintains the pupils’ attention well by blacking out the classroom and projecting the shadows of various familiar objects such as scissors, a knife and a button onto the wall. Turning the activity of naming these objects correctly into a guessing game amongst the pupils promotes good concentration and effective

learning. The teacher takes good care to ensure that all the pupils have a turn at responding and stretches higher attaining pupils by asking them to name more than one object at a time.

94. Post 16 students know about sound and how they can make loud and soft sounds from a variety of percussion instruments and other everyday materials. In one lesson the teacher's good preparation ensures that suitable resources and additional support are in place to have a positive impact on the learning of a group of students with challenging behaviour. The teacher sets the students the task of making loud noises from a variety of everyday objects. They either select these for themselves or are guided into choosing by close individual support from the teacher and teaching assistants. They try hard to create different sounds, for example by making a hooting noise with a party blower or rattling a stick inside a tin. The teacher then reinforces their learning well by tape-recording their sounds in turn. When the completed tape is played back to the whole group, all the students show interest and attention. They show by their facial expressions that they recognise not only the sounds they have made themselves but also the sounds made by others in the group.
95. Less effective teaching was observed when lesson planning takes insufficient account of the diversity of pupils' individual needs. The purpose of lessons is not always clearly explained and over-direction of activities by the teacher leads to repetition and lack of pace. Resources chosen to illustrate a topic are on occasions not well matched either to the scientific concept being explored or the pupils' level of understanding. For example in a Year 7 lesson when the teacher blows a candle out to represent the sun setting, as a result pupils are unclear about the teacher's expectations of them, lose concentration and are not stretched in their learning.
96. At present there is no permanent subject co-ordinator in post. Nevertheless, recent good development work has resulted in a detailed programme of topics pupils in each year are to cover, to which all staff teaching the subject can refer to aid their individual lesson planning. There is no specialist teaching accommodation for science in the school. All lessons seen during the inspection took place in ordinary classrooms and this limits the extent to which teachers can help pupils and students to pursue scientific enquiry into the topics presented to them. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, no direct use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in science was observed in any lesson seen.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

97. Achievement and progress throughout the school are very good. This is because teaching is very good and ensures that, regardless of ability pupils experience success because each lesson is carefully organised to enable them appropriate opportunities to develop their ability. This reflects good improvement since the previous inspection.
98. The acquisition of skills and confidence as pupils' progress through the school is impressive. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 show an understanding of the task as they prepare a winter scene inspired by the work of Monet. They use brushes, sponges or rollers, depending on their ability, to add paint to glue in order to make an attractive decoration. Several pupils demonstrate an ability to sign 'white' and 'silver' in response to their teacher's questions. The art work for the pupils in Years 10 and 11 often reinforces work being carried out in other subjects. Heads of the Tudor monarchs are being constructed to support a humanities project. The models are constructed in papier maché and painted and appropriate headwear made. The involvement of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is excellent and they are well supported by their support assistants to enable them to work as independently as possible. A more able pupil is able to tell a visitor that she is making a model of Elizabeth I, while others show the ability to cut shapes accurately to decorate the headwear of their chosen monarch. Post 16

pupils show greater awareness of their project work and display a wider range of techniques and skills. They share ideas and work collaboratively on a joint project to develop a tapestry. Several can recognise the differences in style between the work of Voysey and more traditional medieval tapestries. They paint accurately and often delicately. They also recognise that some materials can be used to create a desired effect and that certain colours are often associated with heat.

99. Art makes an important contribution to the life of the school. The displays around the school are often excellent and considerably enhance the corridors and classrooms. A rich diversity of techniques is evident, with younger pupils experimenting by painting with their hands, creating collages and decorating their 'Excalibur' sword hilts. Older pupils have created townscapes in the style of Lowry and have made papier maché fruitbowls. There is a very good emphasis on bringing professional artists into the school on a regular basis to work with the pupils. A recent visitor worked with the pupils to produce paintings using water colours. These have been digitally scanned by a local printer and turned into very striking Christmas cards that parents and friends will be able to buy.
100. The teaching of art is very good throughout the school. Lessons are well structured with precise learning objectives and expectations of pupil performance are consistently high. The work is matched well to pupils' abilities. The emphasis placed on including pupils with more significant difficulties, whether profound and multiple difficulties or autistic spectrum difficulties, is excellent. Behaviour is managed very well and pupils are highly motivated by the enthusiasm and skill of the teacher and the support assistants. Signing is used where appropriate and more able pupils are encouraged to discuss ways in which their work can be improved. The pupils obviously enjoy their art lessons and their responses are always good. The willingness of more able pupils to help those less able than themselves, often spontaneously, is very good. The lack of planning was criticised in the previous inspection report. This has been addressed to good effect and there is a clearly defined pathway for the progression of skills and experience. The benefit to pupils is apparent in the progress they make.
101. The art room remains unsatisfactory. There is too little space for full classes and unsatisfactory access for pupils in wheelchairs. It is often overcrowded which makes certain activities, such as clay work, difficult to teach. There is also only limited amount of storage and display space and materials that are drying are often in the way or immediately accessible to following classes. Pupils have access to only one sink, located in a small adjoining room, which is an unsatisfactory arrangement. The art resources are satisfactory overall, but are still limited for the effective delivery of many parts of the planned curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. Achievement and progress in design and technology are good throughout the school because teaching is good. Teachers plan well, set achievable objectives and use methods and plan well to ensure pupils have full access to the tasks undertaken. This reflects good improvement since the previous inspection.
103. Teachers focus appropriately on activities that develop pupils' practical skills and encourage their independence as they become older. Many of these learning opportunities occur in food technology lessons, where teachers emphasise the importance of safety, hygiene and confidence in preparing nutritious snacks and meals. The good use of the new specialist food technology room contributes positively to learning by providing well adapted teaching accommodation equipped to a high standard for all pupils. Good learning in design and technology other than in food-related work takes place through practical activities using simple materials such as coloured papers and a variety of fabrics.

104. In Years 7 to 9, teachers choose activities in food technology carefully and structure them well based on good knowledge of the full range of pupils' needs. They ensure that those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autism receive effective additional in-class support. These arrangements give all pupils good opportunities to learn how to follow instructions in a logical sequence, use simple tools correctly and complete tasks successfully and safely. This approach works well and has a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve. For example, in a good lesson seen with pupils in Years 8 and 9, the teacher maintains a brisk pace in explaining clearly step by step how to prepare the ingredients for an individual Christmas cake. With very careful supervision and effective support all pupils have access to the sensory experience of smelling each new ingredient as it is added to the mixture. One higher attaining pupil is able to recall that one of the ingredients is cinnamon and describe it as 'delicious'. The teacher makes another pupil responsible for breaking and whisking six eggs, which he does confidently and competently under close individual supervision. A lower attaining pupil is helped hand over hand to stir the cake mixture with a wooden spoon. At the end of the lesson, good routines well established by the teacher result in pupils working well together to dry up and wipe over work surfaces.
105. In Years 10 and 11, teachers set clear objectives for pupils' learning, based on secure knowledge of their individual abilities, and manage the available resources well to allow pupils' learning and social development to progress. In a good lesson, pupils work hard to prepare individual bread-and-butter puddings to a recipe the teacher has imaginatively adapted to their needs. A lower attaining pupil is able to identify measuring spoons correctly as the kitchen utensils needed next and is helpful to the group by opening a packet of currant buns and passing them round to other pupils at the same table. A higher attaining pupil goes independently to various locations around the room to collect the correct utensils and bring them back to his workspace. The teacher repeatedly checks the pupil's understanding by effective questioning and tests his ability to predict what will happen next. The pupil knows that the milk and cream in the saucepan will get hot when the electric hob is switched on and that it will bubble and steam as it gets even hotter. The pupil shows good understanding and initiative by voluntarily pointing out that a jug will be needed for the mixture when it has boiled and fetching one from the cupboard. Well focussed additional support from student support assistants helps autistic pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties in the same group to practise skills such as cutting and whisking and to experience the distinctive smell of the dried fruit ingredients.
106. In a design and technology lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11, teaching is good because the tasks are appropriately challenging. Year 10 and 11 pupils have to solve the problem of how to make a gift bag that is both attractive and functional to hold an object that would otherwise be awkward to wrap. The teacher skilfully takes a commercially produced bag apart to show how it is made from a single sheet of folded stiff paper with handles attached, explaining its construction well in language that the pupils find easy to follow. As a result of the teacher's clear explanation and insistence that the pupils can make choices themselves in selecting and shaping materials to solve the problem set, they all make good progress. One autistic pupil is very successful in producing a bag complete with handles by the end of the lesson, with sensitive support and guidance from student support assistants.
107. In the Post 16 department, good teaching in design and technology lessons helps students to develop greater concentration and effort through practical activities using textiles. For example, in one lesson seen, the teacher maintains high expectations of students by encouraging them to be as independent as possible in carrying out the design brief for making decorated cushion covers. The teacher demonstrates well how to use a template to mark out the shape of the

cloth for the cover and the students are then able to find and use the necessary tools to follow this example. They then identify that the next step is to cut the shape out and use scissors accurately to do this. Teachers use their knowledge of students' individual needs well to secure the effective collaboration of students with diverse and complex needs. The teacher makes good use of sensory stimulation through light and touch to involve and motivate two students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Through touch one indicates a preference for one piece of fabric rather than another. The teacher allows the other student to switch coloured lights on and off as a reward for his attention to the tasks of cutting out pieces of fabric and pasting them onto card. In this way, the teacher also skilfully captures the interest of two autistic students, who show their own interest and preferences by pointing to and touching some of the fabrics. The outcome for this group of students at the end of the lesson is a completed fabric 'tile' as their contribution to a class wall hanging.

108. The co-ordinators for design and technology and food technology have a good overview of their individual aspects of the subject. In design and technology, good development work has resulted in a detailed programme of topics pupils in each year are to cover, to which all staff teaching the subject can refer to aid their individual lesson planning. Further work is now needed to devise an effective method of recording pupils' and students' achievements, so that teachers can consistently assess progress and measure the impact of teaching from year to year. In food technology, similar development work is planned. There is no evidence to show that information and communication technology is used to support pupils' learning in any aspect of design and technology was observed.

### **Humanities (history and geography)**

109. During the inspection no lessons in humanities were seen for Years 7, 8 and 9. However evidence from teachers' files and pupils' work shows that pupils make good progress. This is because there are detailed planning of the work pupils should be doing which provides clear guidance for teachers. Resources are well used, but there is a lack of relevant computer software to enhance learning opportunities. History and geography were inspected separately in the last inspection and progress was judged to be poor in both subjects. This represents very good improvement since the previous inspection.
110. In geography a scrutiny of pupils' work, records and teachers' files and planning indicate that pupils' progress is good. Teachers ensure that the work is matched well to pupils' abilities and that there are a range of activities that enable pupils to learn through practical tasks. For example pupils in year 7 extend their knowledge of the immediate environment and take part in classroom orientation exercises in order to learn how to locate key places. Good use of resources enables teachers to keep records of places within the school using digital cameras and pupils are able to follow visual clues to the hall using coloured footprints. Year 8 and 9 pupils explore and learn about the effects of water on the environment. They also learn about the different types of water, for example, ice, sea water, clean water, polluted water. Pupils with more complex difficulties are given a range of sensory experiences based on the same theme.
111. In history a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' records of pupils up to the age of fourteen shows that they work towards developing and understanding that they and all others have a past and a present. Higher attaining pupil produced their own personal history books containing photographs and drawings of themselves and their families. In years 10 and 11, teachers involve all the pupils well, for example, two pupils with complex needs were given the opportunity to dress up in Tudor costume and then make a collage of a Tudor dress. Higher attaining pupils in one class of fifteen and sixteen year olds were given

opportunities to produce written work using quill and modern pens. From doing this they could list the advantages and disadvantages of using quill pens as opposed to modern pens.

112. Staff miss opportunities for teaching humanities when they are out of school. Journeys to and from the farm for example are not used to highlight different geographical features. For example, pupils are not encouraged to consider how buildings have changed and reasons why they are built as they are now.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

113. Pupils' progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. The previous inspection highlighted the need to improve pupils' skills and to give them access to a wider curriculum. During this inspection no teaching was observed and only one instance of a pupil using a computer independently was noted. There is little evidence to show that pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in the use of ICT.
114. A policy document was developed prior to the inspection of 1999 that detailed the statutory requirements and tentatively suggested means by which ICT could be used throughout the curriculum. Unfortunately, the guidance has not been followed. The only evidence in the pupils' files of ICT being used more consistently is in the Post 16 classes where a limited amount of students' work has been certificated by the school.
115. The resources available to deliver ICT are good throughout the school. There is a computer in every class and a number have been recently upgraded. The particular needs of all the Year 7 pupils have been identified and the appropriate equipment to access the computers, such as switch technology, has been purchased. All these resources remain largely unused by the pupils. The previous subject co-ordinator identified the lack of subject knowledge and confidence within the staff as the main issue to be addressed before teaching can take place. A New Opportunities Funding (NOF) course has been arranged for all the teaching staff to help develop the necessary skills. The display work on the classroom walls and the use of ICT in the teachers' planning documents across the curriculum however, suggest that most teachers already have sufficient familiarity with ICT to be able to introduce the pupils to basic computing.
116. The school has invested considerable time and energy into ensuring all the computers in the classrooms are networked. The rationale behind this step was to allow teachers access to a wider range of internet resources. Unfortunately this has been at the expense of developing a range of software that pupils can use on an everyday basis within the classroom.
117. The subject co-ordinator, who has been in post since September, is aware of the limitations of ICT within the present curriculum. The targets that are set at annual reviews for pupils, for example, are not achievable without a considerable change of approach and attitude towards the subject. She is presently developing a skills checklist, which will give teachers specific learning objectives for every pupil.
118. The school has a well equipped sensory room and good use is made of this resource for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They show signs of independent exploration of the equipment and demonstrate an understanding that their actions have an effect. For example one pupil could show repeatedly, with great pleasure, how a single switch would operate a light wall. Staff who use this facility monitor their pupils closely and have good expectations for performance.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

119. There is no discrete timetabling for modern foreign languages and the school is in the process of reviewing the curriculum to look at its provision for a modern foreign language. Because it is aware of the need to give pupils appropriate experiences the school organises a termly event based on a foreign country. At the time of the previous inspection pupils were taught French and the majority made satisfactory progress. Improvement in provision has been unsatisfactory since then.
120. Last term pupils were immersed in the French culture for a full day having been involved in planning over the previous week. They dressed up in French clothes, tasted French food, studied a map of France and looked at the history of the country. They learnt a small number of French words including "Bonjour" and a few more able pupils can still recall the meaning of hello in French.
121. There are appropriate plans to promote pupils' own cultures and immersion days planned include China and Pakistan. The subject is due for review within the school development plan and this is appropriate to ensure that present arrangements provide sufficient experiences for all pupils. Resources are good for the teaching of French.

## **MUSIC**

122. Achievement and progress in music are satisfactory overall for pupils in Years 7 to 11. No teaching of music for pupils in the Post 16 age group was seen and there is insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement for this group of pupils. The youngest pupils demonstrated an ability to appreciate rhythm and clap in time to a metronome and clap out their names. Higher attaining pupils lead a clapping rhythm and 'conduct' the other pupils in the group. They all listen to a variety of different types of music and express an opinion about their preferences. Pupils recognise, and use appropriately, a range of percussion instruments and the highest attainers can maintain a three beat pattern.
123. Year 10 and 11 pupils identify percussion instruments for symbols on a chart and collect the correct instrument from the store. They are all familiar with the bongo drum, thumb piano, barrel drum, rattles, jingles and rain sticks and use them properly. Pupils wait until they are prompted to play by the teacher. They listen intently and recognise the improvement in quality of performances they have recorded onto tape. The involvement and achievement of pupils with autistic spectrum difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties is excellent; the least able respond positively to the sounds that the support staff help them create.
124. The teaching of music is satisfactory overall. During the inspection there were isolated examples of very good teaching of younger pupils and good teaching of those in Years 10 and 11. In these lessons pupils were given a wide range of experiences and teachers were confident to try different approaches. However following the departure of the co-ordinator in the summer, music is taught by non-specialist teachers. Although they have a very good knowledge of the needs of their individual pupils, they are not always confident in their subject knowledge. This sometimes leads to an emphasis being placed on passively experiencing music rather than actively learning during lessons. In the best lessons during the inspection, teachers ensure that the pupils are fully involved, had opportunities to reflect on what they were hearing and attempting to achieve, and there were clearly defined learning objectives.
125. In a few subjects teachers use music well to support learning. For example, in a physical education lesson for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, music of different tempos was used well as in integral part of the lesson. However, other opportunities are missed, such as assemblies, where it could be used to good effect. Many of the school productions have made a full and important contribution to the pupils' experience of music and



performance. They include ambitious productions of 'The Tempest' and 'The Odyssey', as well as more light-hearted presentations of 'Stars In Their Eyes' and 'Grease'. It is also an aim of the school to invite a professional musician to work with pupils every term. This is achieved through the 'Live Music Now' programme.

126. The previous inspection noted that the planning and assessment of music throughout the school was weak. This has been addressed well and there are now comprehensive policy documents and schemes of work. These provide important support and guidance to non-specialist teachers. The temporary co-ordinator also evaluates the units of work that have been completed at the end of term with the music teachers, but this is an informal process at present.
127. The resources for music are just satisfactory. The central focus has been on improving the library music resources by purchasing CD's and simple percussion instruments from around the world to allow all the pupils to participate in creating music and sound. This has been an appropriate focus and the number and quality of the instruments purchased has been high. However more resources and specialist equipment are now required. During two lessons, a teacher was reliant on a pocket-sized, battery operated tape recorder to record the music the class was making. The quality of recording and the volume at which it could be played back did not do justice to the efforts of the pupils. Likewise, many of the teachers are reliant on their personal music collections to bring breadth to their teaching.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

128. Overall, pupils' achievements and progress in physical education are good. They make good progress in lessons and over time because of consistently good teaching. Lessons are well planned; teachers have high expectations and they make sure that through carefully directed additional support all pupils, including those with severe and complex learning difficulties, have opportunities to succeed. The good teaching observed represents a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory.
129. In Years 7 to 11 pupils develop an increasingly more mature understanding of the routines, including safety routines, that apply to working in the hall and local swimming pool, They attend well to the teachers' clear instructions and guidance about the purpose of lessons and in the one lesson, in response to the teacher's "deliberate mistake"; a younger pupil identified the need to have a soft mat to land on. The praise received from the teacher and the respect shown by his peers had an obvious effect upon his self-esteem. Pupils enjoy physical education and arrive at the hall and swimming pool full of enthusiasm. They work hard, do not waste time and maintain their concentration and effort throughout their lessons.
130. In Years 7 to 9 pupils understand the purpose of warm up activities and show that they can twist their bodies, stretch their arms and stretch and bend their legs. Pupils with more complex and severe difficulties also respond positively to warm up activities with the carefully planned individual help provided by support staff ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to enjoy having their arms moved and body parts identified. Mobile pupils also identify their body parts, move at different speeds and can stop and start with good control. They particularly enjoy and respond enthusiastically to the teacher's more dramatic examples of stopping and starting. In gymnastics Year 10 pupils work well independently as they move forward, backwards and sideways and are carefully introduced to working in pairs as they move slowly towards each other. Older pupils build on previous skills as they use their increasing awareness of their own bodies to move around a carefully contrived obstacle course. With varying degrees of help they climb low-level agility towers, balance on soft and hard surfaces of different widths and can crawl through a long tunnel. Higher attainers performed the same course moving backwards. The teacher's skill in persuading a reluctant autistic pupil to take part in this activity not only had

him complete the course but also balance successfully on the rungs of a ladder for the first time. The teacher's use of the pupil's performance as an example of good practice had a very positive effect upon his confidence. This is a strong feature of all lessons as is the use of plenary sessions to provide pupils with the opportunity to recall what they have done and how they could do better.

131. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work together in activities such as mirroring moves. They are more precise and extend such work into simple creative dance routines. Such routines are enhanced by the pupils' improved ability to work independently or in pairs. The simple "static dance" sequence performed by two higher attaining girls bore very favourable comparison with national standards. Previous work on body awareness and movement is built upon with the result that pupils move about the hall with a greater degree of control and awareness of the space around them. Their improved awareness of space and early work on the skills of rolling, throwing and catching balls and bean bags is applied in games activities such as quick cricket and tennis as well as in athletic activities such as sprinting, relay races and throwing. Pupils understanding of the rules of simple games has improved to the point whereby games have a clear form and are enjoyed for their own sake and the competition involved.
132. By Year 11 pupils are confident in and enjoy lessons in the local swimming pool. They respond very well to the changing room and pool routines, particularly pupils on the autistic spectrum, and listen carefully to the instructor's and teacher's guidance both in and out of the pool. Well-planned lessons involving constant encouragement and carefully focussed feedback ensures that pupils work with real effort either independently or under direct supervision. Carefully structured warm up activities are tackled with enjoyment; they move from one activity to another with no time wasted and because of the effective deployment of all staff – in the pool and on the pool side – every pupil has the required physical and verbal support. Non-swimmers walk across the pool using a breast stroke; more advanced swimmers progress to crossing the pool using some leg kicking while "swimmers" cross the pool using both arms and legs. Most pupils kick with confidence while holding the poolside and use a recognisable breaststroke when using floatation aids. The staff's very detailed understanding of the pupils' learning styles was put to very good effect as they carefully and sensitively "persuaded" one very diffident autistic pupil to enter the pool. Good lesson planning married to the staff's constant and carefully targeted support and encouragement results in pupils making observable gains in lessons and over time. Pupils who are unable to use the facilities at the local swimming pool are effectively catered for through the use of the on site shared pool for hydrotherapy sessions.
133. Post 16 students have appropriate opportunities to participate in sporting activities such as playing table tennis, bowling and football as part of their ASDAN sport and leisure module. They continue to build their skills.
134. The subject is well led and is underpinned by effective planning that provides pupils with opportunities to make progress in a systematic manner. Ongoing assessment during lessons is good because teachers and support staff respond quickly to pupils who are having difficulties and equally quickly when higher attainers' performance indicate that they can be challenged further. However, the good assessment of progress in lessons has not yet been developed to the point where it is used as a tool to help with curriculum development. The satisfactory improvement in the level and quality of resources available and the development of a coherent plan of work for the subject has had a positive impact upon pupils' learning and the progress that they make.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

135. Pupils' progress and achievements are satisfactory overall. This is as a result of satisfactory and, on occasions, good teaching, using the well structured programme of work developed by the co-ordinator. Teaching is good particularly in Years 7 and 9. These findings reflect a steady improvement since the previous inspection, when the regular teaching of religious education as part of the curriculum was still new in the school. There is insufficient evidence to reach a judgement on standards and achievement in the Post 16 department.
136. Where teaching is good, pupils learn more effectively because of the teacher's good knowledge of pupils' individual needs. The teacher builds on this well to develop new understanding through the good choice and use of resources closely matched to those needs. The teacher also shows skill in being able to give these resources symbolic significance and to convey this to pupils. For example, in a good lesson with pupils in Year 7, the teacher retells the story of the birth of Jesus and by using drama develops the pupils' imagination and sense of wonder. The pupils dress up as shepherds, kings and angels. The teacher gives each pupil the experience of handling straw, to appreciate what sleeping on it in the stable must have felt like. The doll representing the Baby Jesus is passed round the pupils and they each hold it very carefully. When the teacher shines a light on the pupil playing the Angel Gabriel, the combined visual and dramatic effect causes other pupils to gasp aloud.
137. In another good lesson seen in Year 9, the teacher uses a variety of sensory experiences well to convey to pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties key aspects of the religious significance of Christmas to Christians. For example, the teacher represents the journey of the three kings effectively in simple terms of light sources such as a candle or torchlight shining on a jewel decoration. The pupils are shown these in turn and watch as they move round the room. They respond positively with smiles and gestures that show their pleasure and interest. Music is another particularly effective medium that the teacher uses well. Pupils respond very clearly to the ringing sound of miniature bells when they are helped to touch and handle tinsel garlands. The teacher skilfully anticipates the needs of a higher attaining pupil in the group by playing softly in the background a modern instrumental recording of 'Silent Night'. The pupil is immediately engaged by this and remains closely attentive to it as it plays. The music also has the effect of introducing a significantly different and calming atmosphere for all the pupils to experience at a key point in the lesson.
138. Where teaching is less effective, however, this is because the teacher's planning of the lesson is not suitably modified to take sufficient account of the individual learning needs of all pupils. As a result, expectations of pupils can be inappropriate. Opportunities to allow the whole class to reflect on and respond positively to the stimulus the teacher offers are lost. For example, in one lesson for Year 8 pupils the management of the challenging behaviour of a few pupils is not effective and the resources the teacher has brought to use with them in the lesson have no additional meaning for these pupils. They quickly become the focus of disagreement between them rather than arousing the interest and further questioning the teacher intends.
139. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop a wider awareness of religions other than Christianity. For example, in one lesson seen, the teacher uses knowledge of pupils' individual circumstances well to set the scene for talking about the observance of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid. The teacher refers respectfully and sensitively to the family experiences of a Muslim pupil in the class. This leads the other pupils well into studying with interest a selection of Eid cards that the teacher has brought. They then work co-operatively and attentively to adapt the designs they have seen in making cards of their own.
140. None of the staff teaching religious education in the school has specialist expertise in the subject but the co-ordinator has worked hard to review the current programme of work for all year groups, soundly based on the local Agreed Syllabus. Teachers are well supported in their lesson planning by good suggestions for suitable activities arising from the topics to be covered

and sources of reference materials. Learning about religions is predominant in the topics presented to pupils. Given the complexity of many pupils' needs, few opportunities for learning in more depth from religions are provided. Since the last inspection, resources for the subject have been significantly improved by the purchase of a very good collection of artefacts linked to the six major world faiths. Similarly no direct use of information and communication technology to support and extend pupils' knowledge and learning was observed in lessons. There are plans to further develop the programme of work for religious education and procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress in learning in the subject as they move through the school.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

141. Overall, pupils' and students' achievements in personal, social and health education are good. They make good progress in lessons because the quality of teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. Pupils' and students achievements are significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection because of the satisfactory improvement in teaching and the provision of a well considered and carefully planned scheme of work.
142. All classes have at least one discrete lesson of personal, social and health education per week and these lessons are supplemented and complemented by a good range of other formal and informal activities. For example, teachers use register time, drinks time and getting ready for playtimes to promote the development of social and personal skills and the new system for dining in the hall provides many opportunities for learning, consolidating and applying the social skills required in such a setting. The pupils' and students application of personal and social skills during the midday meal is very good. Where able, and with the minimum of indirect supervision, they queue up in an orderly manner; move around the hall carrying their plates with due regard for the needs and safety of others and eat their meal in a mature manner. Pupils' and students personal and social skills are equally well promoted by teaching and support staff as they escort them around the school. In addition, the many off-site visits that are linked to other subjects enable pupils and students to apply the knowledge, understanding and skills gained in school in the wider community. Targets linked to the pupils' and students personal and social development are clearly identified in their individual education plans.
143. Pupils between the ages of 11 years and 14 years make good progress in the development of personal and social skills and in their understanding of the basic elements of health education and personal hygiene. As a result of the "my new school" module they develop an understanding of how their new school is organised. They identify the staff in their own class as well as staff in other classes; are gradually introduced to other rooms such as the art room and food technology room and, through a variety of experiences including taking the register back to the office they become more aware of the lay-out of what is a complex building. Lessons about days of the week are carefully linked to considering the weather and appropriate clothes and teachers effectively link such activities to mathematics as they question pupils about yesterday, tomorrow and in the case of higher attainers last week and next week. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties to learn to recognise favourite adults and their peers in "hello" activities and additionally make very good use of objects of reference to help pupils understand what lesson is coming next. By the age of 14 years pupils have a better understanding of the need to look after the environment such as when they collect dead leaves and, as a consequence of carefully graded experiences about personal hygiene and safety in school and in the home, they are more aware of the need to look after their own bodies. Citizenship lessons about people's work are exciting and interesting when they interview different people, such as the landlady of the local public house, with this activity having added value because of the teacher's insistence that they read their typed/symbol questions.

144. Pupils between the ages of 14 years and 16 years continue to make progress. They improve in their understanding of the need to take care of their bodies as they study what is considered to be a good diet and receive visits from “people who help us keep fit”, such as the nurse. They extend their early work on appropriate clothing into an understanding of the need for different clothes for different leisure activities and extend their knowledge of the world of work as they list who does what at home and who does what in school, such as identifying the role of the office staff and the work of cleaners and the site manager. Sensitive lessons about feelings, such as feeling happy, sad or angry, help pupils explore their own emotions. Because teachers are very effective in creating situations that help those with severe and complex learning difficulties to initiate interactions these pupils consequently show more interest in adults and their peers. All pupils responded well to the Citizenship lesson about “how we use the sea” and, because of the teacher’s careful linking of the lesson to previous work about land and water, they responded with enthusiasm as they recognised, and handled towels, a cardboard fish and the picture of a boat. Lower attaining pupils responded particularly well to feeling the water (sea) in the bowl and listening to the sound of waves as they rocked a container containing very small beads. The teacher handled the autistic pupils’ insistence that the sea was full of sharks with sensitivity and humour.
145. Overall, Post 16 students continue to make good progress but when lessons are only satisfactory students, particularly higher attaining students, are not sufficiently challenged. As part of their ASDAN work students tackle a range of modules including Out in the Community, Sports and Leisure, Going to College and Independent Living Skills and use previously acquired skills, knowledge and understanding at a higher level. Teachers make sure that they have increasing opportunities to make choices such as when working in the bungalow helping to decorate the kitchen area. In addition they make decisions when involved in various mini enterprise schemes, such as the one that had them making jam for sale at Whirlow Hall, and make very personal choices when discussing deodorants. Decision making was also a positive feature of the visit to a local shopping complex where the teacher made sure that students paid for and selected their own drink, gave them the option of carrying it aided or unaided and gave them the right to choose where they wanted to sit. The lesson about symptoms associated with illness was responded to with enthusiasm and effort because of the teacher’s selection of an interesting range of equipment – stethoscope and “body suit” – and the use of previous learning to serve as a base for current learning. Students concentrated well for the whole session and as a result of the teacher providing students with different ways of recording what they had learnt, including an autistic pupil, all finished the lesson with a clear record of the progress that they had made. Independent living skills are well developed. In the lesson involving students preparing a simple snack the staff’s ability to stand back before helping contributed significantly to the pupils learning and self-esteem – they knew that their success was significantly due to their own effort and skill. The programme for the final year in school is firmly based upon previous learning and represents the culmination of all previous work on the family, safety, social and leisure skills, emotions and feelings and a healthy life style including sex education and substance misuse.
146. The school’s provision for personal, social and health education and sex education is well led. Planning reflects the current and future post-school needs of the pupils and students and incorporates the school’s carefully considered sex education policy as well as recognising the contents of the recently developed policy and associated plans for Citizenship. The subject is well resourced. There has been significant improvement in the provision for personal, social and health education since the last inspection.