

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOHN'S SCHOOL**

Kempston, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109738

Headteacher: Mr R Babbage

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Last  
17171

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 245860

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Foundation special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bedford Road Kempston Bedford
Postcode:	MK42 8AA
Telephone number:	01234 345565
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor A P Hendry, CBE
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17171	Mrs M Last	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages The Foundation Stage	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils' taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19322	Ms J Bedawi	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18261	Mr T Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	Assessment and recording
17530	Mrs M Cureton	Team inspector	English Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27243	Mr I Tatchell	Team inspector	Mathematics	The school's results and pupils' achievements
20024	Mr P Wright	Team inspector	Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
20165	Mr A Lemon	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
16930	Mr J Plumb	Team inspector	Science Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
13623	Mr J Waddington	Team inspector	Provision for students over 16 Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St John's School caters for up to 130 children, pupils and students with severe and complex difficulties from age two to 19 years of age. It also makes specialist provision for nine pupils with multi-sensory impairment. There are currently 128 pupils on roll, an increase of 25 since the last inspection in 1997. There are 77 boys and 51 girls and, of these, 23 are students over 16. Approximately 36 pupils are entitled to free school meals which is lower than in other similar schools. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs, with severe learning difficulties as their major learning problems. There are 14 pupils with English as an additional language who are appropriately supported in class. All pupils' achievements are well below those expected in mainstream schools as a direct result of their learning difficulties. Almost all pupils come to school by taxi or minibus organised by the local education authority which involves travel over a considerable distance to and from school.

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

St John's School is an effective school where pupils enjoy lessons and are well supported by teachers, teaching assistants and learning support assistants. As a result of good, and often very good, teaching pupils work hard and make good progress against targets set for them in their individual education plans. Pupils also make significant gains in their personal and social skills so that they have grown in maturity by the time they leave school. The school provides particularly good opportunities for pupils with multi-sensory impairment, for children under five and for many of its pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school's leadership and management are good and enable the school to run efficiently on a daily basis. The governing body is very effective in supporting the school and includes governors with a very wide range of expertise and commitment. However, the governors have not yet fully developed their monitoring role or their strategies for quantifying the school's strengths and weaknesses, although they have a good sense of what the school should do to improve. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Provides consistently good teaching with motivating activities which engages pupils' interest and helps them make good progress.
- Treats pupils with dignity and provides high standards of support which result in very good relationships, behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- Makes outstanding provision for children under five, for pupils with multi-sensory impairment and for most pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Promotes communication strategies very well so that all pupils, regardless of their difficulties, are able to interact with others, using a comprehensive range of specialist techniques.
- Benefits from the wide expertise, commitment and support of the governing body.
- Initiates valuable work with other establishments to improve the skills and knowledge of many other adults and pupils.

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

- The arrangements for the arrival and departure of the school's pupils so that their time is used more effectively for learning.
- The consistency of the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements.
- Strategies for identifying and analysing the school's overall strengths and weaknesses.
- The accommodation.
- The governors' awareness of their statutory responsibilities.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in addressing the majority of weaknesses found in the last inspection in 1997. Most notably, the governors and staff have raised the standards of teaching and learning. By their understanding and response to the pupils' wide range of learning and personal needs, by broadening the teachers' range of teaching strategies and by encouraging them to be self-critical, the school has raised the percentage of lessons which are good or very good from 51 to 80 per cent. Additionally, the percentage of teaching which is less than satisfactory has dropped from 20 per cent to three per cent. Whilst the curriculum now provides pupils with a good and relevant range of subjects and varied learning activities, some weaknesses remain, particularly in ensuring that all pupils make as much progress as possible in lessons and over time. Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is now secure but their strategies for assessing and recording pupils' progress are inconsistent. Current procedures for monitoring the school's strengths and weaknesses have improved but are still not sufficiently rigorous to inform senior staff and governors of all the areas for improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
Speaking and listening	A	A	B	A	very good A
Reading	B	B	B	B	good B
Writing	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	A	B	poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	B	B	B	

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

In English, pupils' achievements are good overall and very good in speaking and listening. All have good opportunities to communicate in class, and older pupils are learning to adjust their speech according to whom they are addressing. Pupils can understand and enjoy books and stories, and older pupils and students use newspapers and magazines to find information for their work. All pupils are well supported in communication and enabled to speak and sign or otherwise communicate their thoughts and requests. Pupils work hard and enjoy their mathematics lessons and develop useful skills of money recognition and calculation and basic data handling techniques, which they use in practical work and shopping. In science, pupils make good progress and enjoy finding out how things work, but the lack of a science room limits their progress in practical work. In all other subjects, pupils achieve well although some older, higher achieving pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Students over 16 learn well by working on cross-curricular, practical projects in preparation for their youth award portfolios or work. They have grown in confidence and are benefiting from attendance at a local further education college where they concentrate on a mix of courses in preparation for leaving school. Pupils with multi-sensory impairments make especially good progress because of exemplary specialist teaching. Their tasks are broken down into refined steps of

learning and staff make excellent use of technological aids to extend and enhance their communication. Children under five also make very good gains in their social, personal and learning skills; they understand the need to take turns and to pay attention to adults and other pupils.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and work hard. They show pleasure when they meet staff and their involvement and interest in activities are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils work very well alongside each other, their behaviour in and around the school and in the community is often exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The very good relationships and adult role models help pupils develop in maturity and understand the need to co-operate with others.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Pupils genuinely enjoy lessons. They enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent. They show great interest in school life, including talking to visitors and using their practical skills in the community. Students work co-operatively in groups and pairs and help each other spontaneously by opening doors or picking things up from the floor. Staff make learning enjoyable and pupils are therefore highly motivated. During the inspection, the pupils' behaviour was excellent in almost two out of every ten lessons, and very good in almost three out of every ten. Pupils' behaviour was satisfactory in almost all the remaining lessons.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Nursery and Reception</b>	<b>Years 1 – 6</b>	<b>Years 7 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Good	Good

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

Teaching and learning are strengths of the school and the school has demonstrated its improvement in teaching which is now good or better in over seven out of every ten lessons. In only three lessons, teaching was less than satisfactory; one in music, one in English and one in science. In these lessons, the lack of structure and the unsatisfactory pace and level of work meant that pupils were not challenged to do their best. Teaching is very good in English, where the school places a major emphasis on communication for all pupils. As a result of strategies adapted from the National Literacy Strategy, pupils develop good, confident speaking and listening skills. The few pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by staff and make the same good progress as all other pupils. In mathematics, teaching is good with very good management of pupils so that little time is lost. Very good and excellent teaching is a feature in all year groups but is more frequent in work with children under five and pupils with multi-sensory impairment. In these lessons, the

teachers have very high expectations of the pupils and persistently challenge them with tasks which are interesting and meaningful, often using quite straightforward resources very

well. All teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to deliver the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies successfully and they are well supported by teaching and learning support assistants. The well-developed skills of all the staff in developing the pupils' communication strategies are pivotal to the pupils' success and build upon the guidance received from the limited amount of speech therapy available.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum offers pupils and students a broad range of worthwhile opportunities that meet their interests, aptitudes and special needs. Provision for early years and multiple sensory impairments are particular strengths. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements, including study of religious education and all subject of the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school ensures communication strategies are sensitive to the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils make the same good progress as the rest.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Pupils have many good opportunities to improve their social skills in the classroom and in the community. All understand right from wrong. Pupils understand that some peoples' lives are different from their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The guidance and help provided to ensure that pupils learn in a secure and supportive environment are very good. However, procedures for assessing the pupils' progress are still developing and are not consistently used across the school.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and now meets statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school also makes good provision for pupils to think about their place in society and about other people and the way in which they live their lives. The school provides good support for pupils and makes efforts to involve parents in the education of their children. The staff sometimes miss opportunities to promote the pupils' awareness of spiritual matters, such as in assembly or during 'reflection' time.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision for raising standards and for meeting the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. The school is led well and runs efficiently.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are fully committed to the school and use their considerable expertise to ensure its success. Some published documents have minor omissions regarding statutory information.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Monitoring of the school's 'work' is satisfactory but evaluation of the effectiveness of all of the school's provision is not sufficiently regular or rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes good use of all its resources through careful financial planning and management. Resources are good; the staff make good use of a wide range of materials to help pupils learn. The use of technological speech equipment is particularly beneficial for pupils with multi-sensory impairments.

The school is well led and managed. The governing body includes members with extensive expertise and experience which are used well for the benefit of the pupils. Although governors are not fully involved in identifying for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of the school, they are in regular touch with parents and staff. Their knowledge of difficulties with the school is illustrated by their current involvement in improving the quantity and quality of speech and language therapy. Despite considerable improvement, extension and renovation, the school's accommodation remains unsatisfactory. There are too few specific classrooms and the school has now run out of space to enlarge further. There are sufficient teachers and assistants to meet the needs of the pupils. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now in good supply and used well to aid pupils' learning.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The commitment of the staff.</li> <li>• That their children enjoy coming to school.</li> <li>• The approachability of the staff and their willingness to discuss parents' and children's problems.</li> <li>• The good progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The parent teacher association.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of speech therapy.</li> <li>• Range of out-of-school activities.</li> <li>• Suspension of signing lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with most of the parents' comments and recognise the support the school provides for the pupils is very good. The lack of speech therapy has been a continuing concern for all, but the governors are currently addressing this issue. Inspectors found that pupils were well supported and guided during lessons, including provision for them to improve their communication skills. Although parents made a few critical comments about transport, their views were generally favourable. However, during the inspection, the journey time and the time waiting to get off and on the bus at the start and finish of the day were judged poor by inspectors. The details have been reported to the headteacher.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils enter the school with low levels of achievement as a result of their learning difficulties. Achievements are very good for many pupils, and good overall, as a direct result of good and often very good teaching. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and some pupils, including children under five and those with multi-sensory impairment and profound and multiple learning difficulties, make very good progress because very good teaching is the norm. Teachers provide consistent and appropriate questions to check the pupils' understanding, and appropriate opportunities ensure that they learn as much as they can during lessons.
2. In English, pupils' achievements are good overall and very good in speaking and listening. All have good opportunities to communicate in class, and older pupils are learning to adjust their speech according to whom they are addressing. Pupils enjoy books and stories and older pupils and students enjoy comics, tabloid newspapers and magazines which reflect their leisure interests. All pupils are helped to express their thoughts in writing and all can sign their name at the end of their school career. Higher attaining pupils can use basic writing skills usefully, for example to complete shopping lists or entering information in their youth award portfolios.
3. In mathematics, pupils make good progress in understanding the uses of number. Higher attaining pupils frequently make good use of the resources to calculate and manipulate numbers and data and, by the time they leave the school, many have developed a sense of value when using money for shopping. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good and sometimes very good progress because of the care taken to provide activities appropriate to their levels of ability. The good uses of communication aids enable these pupils and students to participate and succeed in the tasks set.
4. Pupils' achievements in science are good across all year groups and, despite the limitations on their practical work, they enjoy exploring how materials change and deepen their understanding of light and dark through studying the basic principles of electricity.
5. Pupils also achieve well in art and design, design and technology and religious education, where they enjoy working in groups or individually to complete set tasks. Examination of pupils' work and records show that in relation to their abilities and previous achievements, they make very good progress in personal and social skills, developing their levels of communication and knowledge of how to behave in a larger community. In all other subjects, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.
6. All pupils' individual education plans include literacy and numeracy targets. The pupils make good progress towards the targets set in these areas. However, overall, both literacy and numeracy and other targets are too broad and general to identify specific tasks and skills against which pupils' progress can be accurately assessed. Records show that some pupils' achievements, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, have not been consistently recorded, and progress over time is difficult to identify. The school's procedures for tracking pupils' achievements from admission to leaving are not yet fully effective.

7. Students in Years 10 and 11, and over the age of 16, follow aspects of a youth award scheme. Higher attaining pupils successfully complete the course to gain an accredited award. Students over 16 achieve particularly well in their personal development. They show they are mature enough to cope with the move to the school's further education department and behave appropriately when visiting other schools and colleges. Further education students continue those courses at college. Last year, all who completed were successful in gaining a certificate. Further education students also improve their number skills by completing modules of the OCR accredited numeracy course.

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

8. The very good attitudes and behaviour shown by pupils are strengths of the school and have a significant impact on the progress they make. Pupils also benefit from the very good relationships throughout the school and their personal development is carefully nurtured in all aspects of school life. This shows a good improvement since the previous inspection.
9. Pupils are extremely keen to attend school and eagerly anticipate being greeted by staff as they enter the school building. This is confirmed by the parents responding to the questionnaire who were almost unanimous about this. Pupils, regardless of their special needs, persevere with activities, even if they are having initial problems, and show great pleasure and delight in their achievements. Teachers work hard to include imaginative activities in sessions, and the response of pupils is clearly seen in the enthusiastic way they participate. For example, pupils in a Year 2 science lesson respond excitedly to the teacher's very imaginative silhouette puppet show and enthusiastically take part in creating their own silhouettes.
10. Standards of behaviour in and out of lessons are generally very good but, occasionally, due to their special needs, a small minority of pupils do not behave as well as they could. When they misbehave, the behaviour management strategies are effectively used by staff, and the very good example set by other pupils has a very positive effect on helping them to improve. The school rarely uses exclusions and there has been only one fixed-term exclusion in the past year. Pupils follow the very good examples of staff in showing respect for each other and everyone who works in the school. Most pupils understand rules and routines and respond positively. Older pupils and students respond very well to the trust placed in them to behave during breaks. They sit and chat with each other and staff in a relaxed atmosphere listening to music. Behaviour is equally good at lunchtime, where pupils play together well, with no signs of unruly or oppressive behaviour.
11. Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils and staff get on together very well and, as a result of these very good relationships, pupils and students are willing to participate fully in lessons knowing that their contributions will be acknowledged and valued. The pupils show developing independence by making the most of the opportunities provided to make choices and think for themselves. Pupils support and care for each other very well. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties showed great pleasure when another member of the class responded to the teacher's question correctly, using his speech output device. Throughout the school, pupils take on responsibilities and this is a key expectation set for them from the earliest stage. They begin by doing small jobs, such as taking registers to the office and tidying the classroom and the dining room after activities. They progress by supporting other pupils, such as taking them to

the dining room or pushing them in their wheelchairs. Pupils in a Years 3 and 4 class take turns to prepare and give out drinks at snack time. Students in Years 12 and 13 show the effectiveness of their personal development by the way in which they attend college and cope very well in new situations.

12. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils enjoy coming to school. Registers show an increase in unauthorised absence since last year, but most absence is due to illness or medical treatment.
13. The punctuality of transport is unsatisfactory at each end of the day, as it was at the last inspection. When combined with the school's system for starting the day, the situation for pupils is totally unsatisfactory. For example, one pupil endured two hours in travel, from collection at home to disembarkation at school. This pupil was able to leave the bus promptly but many pupils experience a lengthy wait when school staff are not ready to start unloading them in the mornings. This situation is exacerbated when pupil transport arrives early and it is not uncommon for pupils to have to sit in buses or taxis for 30 minutes or more, even though staff are already in the school. Pupils start to disembark after 9.00 am when lessons are due to begin at 9.05 am so this restricts learning time and a smooth, settled start to the day. Many of the transport services are regularly late, sometimes not arriving until 9.45 am or later. This causes the fragmented start of the day to continue, as late arrivals disturb lessons. There is a similar pattern at the end of the day, with unpunctual transport and an ineffective embarkation system, so that some pupils are still waiting to leave the school at 4.00 pm or even 4.10 pm. These delays mean that pupils and students have an unacceptably long, extended day, which is detrimental to their wellbeing. Parents are somewhat concerned about the transport, particularly when arrangements change without due notice. Inspectors feel that as the current system is unsatisfactory, any further concerns are justified.

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

14. A major strength of the school is the large proportion of high quality teaching and learning which ensures that all pupils are included in activities regardless of their level of learning difficulty or need. Good quality teaching enables pupils to make good, short-term progress in lessons and, over time, to improve their abilities, achievements and concentration. In well over nine out of every ten lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. In almost eight out of ten lessons, teaching and learning are at least good and, in over four out of every ten, they are very good or outstanding. Only three lessons were unsatisfactory, one each in English, music and science. The major weakness in unsatisfactory teaching is the mismatch between the tasks provided to the pupils' abilities, with the result that the pupils achieved less than they should because the work was either too difficult or too easy.
15. In the core subjects of mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), teaching is good overall and very good in English. Teaching is also good in art and design, design and technology, physical education and religious education. Teaching and learning in all other subjects are satisfactory. Teaching in English is particularly good because it has a clear focus upon the pupils' individual needs and planned activities to ensure they work at an appropriate level. Techniques derived from the literacy hour ensure that each pupil works as hard as possible and has achieved well by the end of lessons.
16. One clear strength of all good teaching is the attention paid to the pupils' personal development through the very good relationships they enjoy with adults. The culture of

praise is such that pupils increase their self-confidence and their maturity so that the teachers' high expectations are generally well met. The whole school emphasis on communication also promotes good progress. All lessons embrace the use of spoken, signed and technology-assisted communication as the norm and pupils therefore make very good progress in their speaking and listening.

17. Whilst the very best teaching is a feature of lessons across all year groups, it is most consistent in the Foundation Stage for children under five and for pupils with multi-sensory impairment. Employing contrasting styles, these teachers illustrate how effectively pupils' needs can be met. In a science lesson with the latter group, the teachers and assistants gave the pupils boots and shoes to feel so that they could differentiate between 'rough' and 'smooth'. The variation in texture of a knee-length boot, a shoe, a trainer and a walking boot provided excellent and meaningful stimuli for the pupils who were then able to express their choice by the use of pre-programmed speech aids. Pupils made their choices by eye-pointing or gesture which is a regular and valued form of communication. Near the end of an excellent lesson with children under five, the early years teacher further challenged their understanding when she gathered them together to review their morning's activities. By using small objects to refer to in each activity, all the pupils understood that the work they had done was completed (riding a bicycle, listening to a story, having a drink) and that it was time for lunch.
18. Teachers are conscious of the need to reinforce and emphasise the use of literacy and numeracy in all their subjects so that pupils understand the use and purpose of these skills whenever possible. In classes for the youngest pupils, there is an excellent focus on the specific vocabulary for lessons. From the youngest to the oldest, their approach to understanding is reinforced so, while children under five are developing their understanding of words such as 'push' and 'pull', students in Year 13 are learning the definition of such terms as 'monoprint'. In lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to use and reinforce their reading, writing and use of English. They fill in worksheets and report their thoughts and opinions in writing, with good support from teaching assistants, where necessary. The teachers' emphasis on the use of numeracy is not quite so strong and opportunities are sometimes missed through consolidating pupils' use of number and, in some classes, the use of computers as a tool for learning.
19. Teachers know their subjects well and regularly share the aims and purpose of the lesson with the pupils. This strategy helps them understand what they will be learning and doing but, more importantly, what is expected of them. When the lesson's aims are linked to self-assessment, the teachers are able to boost the pupils' self-confidence by helping them to identify precisely how much they have learnt. For younger pupils, these good assessment techniques are informally included in discussion and by reference to daily schedules, whereas older pupils are beginning to identify for themselves what they have experienced.
20. However, there are weaknesses in the school's procedures for identifying pupils' achievements as the school does not use a consistent recording format. As a result, although all staff know the pupils very well, a minority miss opportunities to record their small, and sometimes unplanned, steps of progress in lessons. As a result, they sometimes have no detailed record of every small achievement which would be of interest to parents. The inconsistency also makes the role of senior staff in monitoring the effectiveness of assessment across the school more difficult as they have to extract information from several different formats.

21. When teaching is only satisfactory in promoting the pupils' interest, motivation and progress, teachers are less skilled in identifying activities which are matched to the pupils' individual education plans. Some also experience problems in challenging behaviour. Most teachers apply the school's agreed behaviour management policy effectively and follow individual guidelines for each pupil. However, some do not manage unacceptable behaviour, such as refusal to work, in the manner specified with the result that for short periods of the lesson, these pupils are not included well. As a result, a few pupils are not sufficiently well challenged by tasks which help them to improve their knowledge and understanding. However, the effective management of pupils' behaviour is a common factor in almost all the lessons observed and promotes good will and very good relationships in the classroom.
22. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning between the ages, gender, ethnic or social backgrounds and ability ranges of the pupils. The wide social mix of the pupils is recognised well in lessons, and the pupils' individual lifestyles are reflected in meaningful activities whenever possible. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by trained support. The needs of pupils with additional specific needs, such as visual or physical difficulties, are well promoted by the school and they achieve equally as well as other pupils. The pupils who achieve less well in lessons are those who are not sufficiently well challenged to do more or better work. In some lessons, particularly those for Year 7 and above, teachers occasionally accept too readily the pupils' first attempts at a task without reviewing with them how to improve. For example, in a design and technology lesson, the teacher accepted the work of a lower attaining pupil and gave him the choice of staying at the table or 'going over there' on his own. The alternatives represented very little choice as the pupil had already finished his work at the table. He chose to work in the corner and amused himself with a box of tissues until the end of the lesson.
23. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and how they are expected to behave in classrooms. Pupils then behave very well and, during the occasional incident of unacceptable behaviour, the staff are ready to provide alternative activities or to remove the pupil from the class. Where teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and understand them well, they are also able to manage any incident of unacceptable or off-task behaviour effectively and lessons usually proceed very well. Pupils know that listening to instructions and working hard is good behaviour. Their good levels of behaviour are instrumental in helping the pupils and students listen and in maintaining their concentration.
24. Teachers generally pay attention to the targets in the pupils' individual education plans. For example, where the pupil's target was to anticipate objects and actions, the teacher repeatedly asked him where he thought the next sign would be during a geography trail. However, in some cases, this is because they know their pupils very well and use this informal knowledge to stimulate, motivate and amuse them. There are significant weaknesses in the consistency with which teachers record the pupils' achievements. Some subjects still require clearer assessment, such as in geography, history and music. Where there is relevant assessment, it is not consistently recorded in sufficient detail to enable long-term judgements on progress to be made. The best examples of the impact on teaching of regular assessment and recording are in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with multi-sensory impairment because the teaching is precisely matched to the very fine shades of the individual pupils' needs and abilities.
25. When the quality of teaching is good, learning and achievement are also good and pupils are developing an understanding of how well they have achieved. However,

because there are weaknesses in the assessment and recording systems and not all of the pupils' achievements are noted down as they happen, valuable information can be missed. The school has improved the standards of teaching and learning significantly since the last inspection by improving its monitoring of lessons and encouraging teachers to become more self-critical. However, the issue of recording pupils' achievements and in ensuring good, linked targets from one individual education plan to the next remain a weakness which the school has acknowledged.

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

26. The curriculum is good overall and very good for children under five and pupils with multi-sensory impairment. However, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, it is no more than satisfactory because they are taught alongside students over 16. This arrangement limits the progression that the pupils in Years 10 and 11 can make at the end of Key Stage 4. There is no specifically targeted and individual vocational curriculum for students over 16. However, the curriculum meets statutory requirements for pupils aged five to 16 and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The lessons offer pupils and students a broad range of worthwhile opportunities which meet their interests, aptitudes and special needs. The school makes good arrangements for the organisation of the annual reviews of pupils' statements and most parents attend. It meets all requirements for the latest Code of Practice and all parents and older pupils are consulted over the content of learning targets.
27. The school has improved its curriculum since the last inspection and has introduced an appropriate amount of accreditation for students over 16. The school recognises however, that further acknowledgement of pupils' achievements would be beneficial for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. The teaching of communication skills, literacy and numeracy is at the heart of the school's work and the school has developed good systems for ensuring that these skills are emphasised in all other subjects of the curriculum. However, many pupils exhibit difficulties with their speech and language development and the limited amount of speech therapy available is not effective in meeting the needs of such pupils.
28. As with literacy, the importance of numeracy is emphasised in a range of subjects and is a particularly strong feature in practical work, for example where pupils and students go shopping or use their mathematical skills to measure or analyse data.
29. The curriculum for children under five is firmly based upon the latest guidance for the Foundation Stage and provides many rich experiences, preparing the children well for compulsory education as they reach five. Similarly, the curriculum for pupils with multi-sensory impairment is very good and places a strong focus upon a sensory approach with language and communication being fully promoted. The school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils are included in its activities and operates from a sound equal opportunities policy. There is good provision for those pupils with other additional special needs. The school ensures communication strategies are sensitive to the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has good procedures for reviewing pupils' statements and setting targets for them in their individual education plans. These arrangements are in line with the Code of Practice and support pupils' learning very well. The only exception is the difficulty over speech therapy provision which is outside the school's immediate control.
30. Arrangements for extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and, although parents would like more, inspectors feel that the school does all that it can because of transport

arrangements and the difficult journey some pupils make to school. There have been theatre trips and the school has welcomed professional entertainers. The school and parents' association hold family discos from time to time. The swimming pool is opened for family use on Saturdays and welcomes pupils and their siblings, so that the pupils' friends are known to the family. This arrangement helps the whole family appreciate the friendships forged at school. Older pupils and students have the opportunity to attend a weekly youth club run by a national charity. Most pupils have opportunities during their school career to undertake residential experience and these are being improved to include all. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit each year, and the school organises regular visits to France.

31. The school places a major emphasis on personal, social and health education, and provides very good opportunities both in lessons and at other times of the school day. For example, at lunchtimes, pupils are encouraged to wait their turn, be polite to others and use good table manners. In lessons, pupils help each other and work co-operatively in pairs and groups and, as they get older, speak confidently and maturely about their feelings. There are good arrangements for health education with regular sex education sessions. A nurse is available to give additional advice. Pupils are taught well about the effects of drug abuse and understand the difference between useful and dangerous drugs.
32. The provision for pupils' and students' spiritual development is satisfactory, while the provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. The school provides good arrangements for religious education which are linked to the locally agreed syllabus. It promotes the pupils' spiritual awareness in assemblies where they are encouraged to reflect on the lives and beliefs of other. However, some opportunities are missed and, in an assembly for the senior pupils, the candle flame used as a stimulus was too small to be seen by most pupils and the teacher stopped a spontaneous response of clapping by stating that such a response was not appropriate in worship and so stifled an opportunity for spiritual development. In the primary department assembly, the work of pupils was celebrated but the teacher leading the occasion positioned herself so that she could not see all of the pupils in the room, therefore, the response of one pupil who sat behind the teacher was not valued because it was missed by the teacher.
33. Provision for the pupils' moral and social development is good and opportunities to help one another, to differentiate between right and wrong and to work as part of a group or team are regular features of the curriculum. There are clear policies and guidelines for behaviour so that pupils know what is expected of them. The school makes good use of the local community to develop pupils' social awareness so that they know how to behave in public places, such as at the local gym and shops.
34. Provision for cultural development is good with opportunities to study the work of other artists, music from other countries and to learn about other people's lifestyles and preferences. Several displays feature other societies and some pupils' artwork reflects their study of other artists. The school has improved its provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and has improved resources to support learning.
35. The school has made a satisfactory range of worthwhile links with the community which contribute to pupils' learning, and these continue to develop. Pupils and students make regular and worthwhile trips into the community and welcome a range of visitors. Older pupils undertake work experience placements in local businesses. Pupils of primary school age are given good opportunities to recognise 'people who help us' such as police officers and firemen. Pupils learn what these people do, and meet them on a personal level at social events. Pupils of secondary school age have opportunities to

visit local cafes and restaurants where they can practice their numeracy and money skills. They plan and purchase food in preparation for cooking meals for adult guests. Students over 16 benefit from various effective visits to a local gym where they mix with members of the public and have to take their turn queuing for machines and other sports facilities. The community in general is supportive of the school's work and visit the school for special occasions, such as the annual Christmas shows.

36. The school has a small but effective programme of integration to provide pupils with the opportunity to extend their learning in mainstream schools. The placements are well managed with good support from staff in both schools. They are effective in promoting the pupils' confidence and in their social development as well as providing them with a taster of working with a mainstream class. Where pupils transfer to other schools, arrangements are well planned and the new school is provided with a summary report on progress and details of the pupils' current individual education plan. At the age of 16, pupils are given a summary of their academic and personal achievements as a basis for future choices. Pupils receive impartial, professional advice at this stage regarding what comes next. This is based on sound knowledge of what is available. Students over 16 are able to extend their learning by attending classes in a local college of further education where they sample courses and activities which they may undertake in the future. This facility helps them to prepare for the next stage of their education. However, these students are not currently included in other aspects of college life and do not mix with other mainstream students which would provide an even greater insight into college life – an omission which the school is currently addressing.
37. The school has satisfactory procedures for careers education which begin in Year 9 and it puts initial plans in place for the pupils' future. The work includes a contribution from local careers officers. The curriculum for students over 16 is good and provides a broad range of relevant experiences covering preparation for life after school and work-related education. All students have some experience of the world of work within the school and higher attaining students are supported on work experience placements in the local community. The emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills continues but is not always sufficiently well tracked to ensure that their progress is identified. Pupils study for national accreditation which is due to be extended. All these initiatives are supported by work from the local careers officer.
38. Since the last inspection, there has been a good level of improvement in the curriculum. Arrangements for delivering the National Curriculum are fully in place and all statutory requirements are now met. Some inconsistencies remain in the setting of individual targets for pupils' learning because these are not regularly or consistently reviewed. Curriculum planning has improved and teachers and assistants are now more highly skilled in the content of the National Curriculum, in teaching literacy and numeracy and in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Subject co-ordinators are in place but their effectiveness in identifying strengths and weaknesses by monitoring their subjects remains inconsistent and, in some cases, unsatisfactory.

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

39. The staff pay good attention to pupils' personal needs. They offer positive, individual support and guidance aided by the very good relationships that pervade the school's work. The monitoring of behaviour and the prevention of bullying and discrimination, including racism, are very good. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The use of assessment to refine subjects and plan pupils' individual learning needs and the monitoring of pupils' academic progress are inconsistent. Where there is good practice, for example with children in the Foundation Stage or

those with multi-sensory impairments, it is not sufficiently well shared within the school. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory. Child protection practices are satisfactory. Some aspects of health and safety-related procedures and practices are unsatisfactory.

40. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' progress, but they are not used systematically throughout the school. These procedures have emerged from subject planning, but teachers and teaching assistants have not had sufficient time to consider and implement all the changes. Subject co-ordinators have been unable to quantify the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and, as a result, the assessment of pupils' coverage of the curriculum and their progress within it is insecure. Following whole-staff training in target setting, the school established a system for identifying exactly what pupils could do as a baseline and used the recently published P-scales. These procedures have not yet been in place long enough to provide useful data for the school. However, the senior leadership team plans to review the baseline targets in July 2002, but it is not yet clear how successful this will be in establishing a secure and rigorous system of monitoring progress over time. The curriculum co-ordinator is currently re-drafting the assessment, recording and reporting policy, which will make clear the procedural requirements. In the meantime, the school is considering revision of its unnecessarily complex system which goes through four stages of targeting, from statement and annual review targets to medium-term targets, set out in individual education plans, which were a priority area of learning (PAL).
41. The assessment of pupils with more severe and complex special needs in the primary and middle phases of the school is very good and of high quality, enabling the consolidation of very small gains in learning to be recorded through the teaching day and built on over time. In the best practice, the monitoring of progress is built into lesson planning and both teaching and support staff are clear about the aims and the outcomes of their work with individual pupils. Targets may be achieved using varying degrees of support. As the support is reduced, the target is changed to ensure that there is always an appropriate level of challenge to the pupils' abilities and needs.
42. In the senior school, assessment is satisfactory but inconsistent, with subjects such as English, design and technology and personal, social and health education making good use of assessment. Procedures for assessing progress in mathematics, science and ICT and the majority of foundation subjects include some strengths but are generally unsatisfactory. The use of individual education plans at this stage is variable, with the result that targets do not effectively cover the very wide spectrum of special needs that teachers face in their classes. Lessons are well planned and often provide a rich, multi-sensory experience for the pupils, but their achievements are not properly recorded and hence their progress is not effectively monitored.
43. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who are on the ASDAN transition course, benefit from the assessment procedures built into the course. They are required to evaluate their own achievements at the end of each module and their progress is tracked systematically through the course.
44. The data generated from the monitoring of progress is not yet used effectively to raise standards. It is not analysed by gender, ethnicity or by special needs grouping. Such an analysis would yield information that would sharpen the focus on individual and group learning and give a clearer picture of the impact of teaching on learning. It would serve to guide curricular planning and thereby raise standards.

45. The support staff know and understand the pupils and students very well. They have a good awareness of pupils' individual and often complex needs, strengths and weaknesses, often built up through the close one-to-one support and quality of relationships. As a result, pupils and students are frequently able to make good progress in relation to their disabilities, for example, a pupil with profound physical and speech difficulties managed to indicate a preferred choice by touching the appropriate 'Big Mac' recorder button.
46. The monitoring of behaviour and the prevention of bullying and racism are very good. There is a very detailed, positive behaviour policy. The school also has a policy on physical restraint and staff have been trained to use restraint properly. When there is occasionally need to use these procedures, they are sensitive to the self-esteem and dignity of the pupil concerned and incidents are recorded, with parents informed. Pupils and students are made aware of how they are expected to behave and relate to others. The staff are firm but fair in ensuring that all pupils behave and act appropriately and are adept at defusing any potential difficulties before they can escalate. Very effective strategies have been developed for dealing successfully with individual behaviour and actions, so that many pupils show very good improvement and are able to work positively together in groups, such as in the mixed-age, primary art and design class, involving pupils with profound difficulties. They can, increasingly, tolerate the presence of adults who are not well known to them. Detailed records of pupil behaviour are kept, including circumstances that may trigger inappropriate behaviour or actions; these are easily accessible and used by staff in the classrooms. Pupils and students are provided with behaviour targets and work hard towards achieving them. Parents are fully involved in the setting of targets through the very good review system. On a daily basis, the good use of home/school contact diaries enables parents to be fully aware of any behaviour difficulties. All pupils are treated as individuals and their diverse backgrounds and cultures are acknowledged. Pupils and students show pleasure in others' achievements and are encouraged to be kind to each other.
47. The monitoring of personal development is good. The staff encourage pupils to do as much as possible for themselves to foster confidence and self-esteem. This was particularly evident when a group of further education students visited a gym in the grounds of a local school. The students followed their individual exercise plans, sharing the facilities with members of the community also using the gym. The staff kept a watchful eye, but gave enough space for the students to enjoy their independence. Visiting specialists, including physiotherapists, contribute very well by providing exercise programmes that enable less mobile pupils to develop their skills and co-ordination. Many pupils require speech therapy, but provision to meet all their needs is insufficient. Inspectors agree with parents about their concerns. Careful records of pupils' personal development are kept and regularly discussed at review meetings. Personal achievement is celebrated and valued. There are, however, far fewer opportunities to challenge the higher attaining pupils and this is an area for development.
48. The monitoring of attendance is satisfactory. However, school registers do not comply with regulations because some individual pupils' marks are missed, some unexplained marks are used and daily and termly absence totals and dates are not always completed; this hinders the effectiveness of absence monitoring. The registers show an increase in unauthorised absences in the last year. Parents are expected to notify the school of any absence or when taking a holiday. The education welfare officer visits the school regularly to support families with attendance-related difficulties. The school keeps clear records of the progress made.

49. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory overall. Local education authority guidance is followed. However, the school's own policy has not been updated since April 1998 and does not reflect the school's current practice and procedures. The designated person has had recent training and all staff have annual 'top up' training. A very few children are either 'looked after' or on the 'at risk' register. Their records are kept securely with restricted access to protect confidentiality. Links with outside agencies, such as social services, are good. There is good practice in the opportunity for parents to learn about child protection issues in training about to start on 'Keeping your child safe'.
50. Pupils' medical needs are looked after very well. There is a school nurse who visits daily and the school doctor visits regularly, often attending reviews. When a pupil was taken ill during inspection, the emergency services were rapidly alerted. A considerable number of staff are qualified first-aiders. Some are trained in resuscitation procedures and always present when the hydro-pool is being used. This has resolved the issue from the last inspection. Accident books and other records are maintained properly.
51. The school has a clear set of health and safety related policies. However, some of the school's procedures and practices are unsatisfactory because they do not meet stated policy requirements.
52. Provision for pupils' and students' personal and social development is good. The provision is embedded in relevant contexts to promote pupils' independence and build their confidence and self-esteem. Daily routines, such as counting the number of cartons of milk required for the class and the fetching of the milk independently, are used effectively for developing higher attaining pupils in the primary department. Older students assist pupils in wheelchairs and they have developed important life skills, such as holding the door open, so that a visitor can pass through. Opportunities are provided for collaborative learning in lessons. These opportunities are well organised and underpinned by the good relationships between all concerned. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught alongside their more able peers and are fully included in almost all lessons in activities reflecting their age. The ethos of acceptance adds to the understanding shown by all pupils for each other, and this in turn assists in the development of a socially mature environment which benefits everyone. As part of the youth award work programme for students over 16, they are provided with opportunities to promote their personal and social development. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to further develop their independence. For example, they do not have the opportunity to make a short journey independently and so an opportunity for taking initiative for their own learning is missed. Those pupils with additional special educational needs are encouraged to make informed and independent choices. For example, a pupil with autism was encouraged through his picture exchange programme to make a real choice about his drink and snack. Big Macs and other switches are introduced appropriately to enable pupils with more complex needs to make independent responses.
53. The provision for pupils' cultural development, including the raising of their awareness of cultural diversity, is good. The school makes good use of the local community by, for example visiting shops and the swimming pool, and visits further afield have included trips to France. Provision is further enhanced by visiting musicians. Religious education supports the raising of pupils' awareness of cultural diversity through visits to the gurdwara and by enabling pupils to participate in the experience of religious festivals. A recent exciting development is a link with a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties in Tanzania. Pupils taste French food and experience French customs as part of their modern foreign languages curriculum. The focus on equality of opportunity

ensures that all pupils, regardless of the complexity of their difficulty, participate as fully as possible in visits, drama, dancing, singing and art events that take place within the school and outside. Quite understandably, some pupils are allowed to sleep through some activities because of the severity of their medical condition, but when awake, they are stimulated by and included in the event as far as it is possible for them to have the experience. These activities support the pupils' good cultural development.

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

54. The school has a good partnership with its parents. They are supportive and express generally positive views about their children's educational experiences and progress.
55. Few parents live near enough to be regularly involved in the daily work of the school. However, the parent school association holds regular social and fundraising events so that parents can meet and enjoy socialising whilst helping the school. The fundraising side of the association is particularly successful, having paid for the refurbishment of the excellent new hydro-pool. Current fundraising is underway to provide a wheelchair accessible minibus so that more pupils can be included on trips. The parental fundraising has a significant impact on improving the quality of pupils' education.
56. The quality of information provided to parents is good, overall. Parents are fully involved in the very good review process and their views heard. A report on pupils' academic progress is included in the annual review. If there is need, parents are able to see staff at other times. Newsletters are regular and friendly. However, the prospectus and the annual governors' report do not comply with statutory requirements because a few required items are not included.
57. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. School meetings are popular, and parents welcome the opportunity to improve their signing through taught classes at school. Parents are keen to work with the school to achieve the best outcomes for their children. The home/school contact diaries provide a good means of daily two-way communication between school staff and parents and are highly valued. Homework is provided where appropriate and can include, for example, speech or physiotherapy exercises.
58. The views expressed about the school are generally good. Parents feel secure in knowing that their children are happy and settled in school. They are pleased with their children's improved progress in learning and in their behaviour and personal development. They feel that the school has a friendly approach and that the teaching is good. Parents have genuine concerns about the provision of speech therapy and associated communication difficulties, and about pupil transport punctuality. Inspectors endorse parents concerns and, during the inspection, found both to be areas of significant weakness.

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

59. The headteacher gives consistently good leadership to the school. In the past, he has successfully managed the change involved in the school taking full charge of its own affairs as a grant-maintained school and recently its return, in line with national policy on grant-maintained schools, to the control of the local education authority as a foundation school. Throughout this period of substantial change, the school has sustained a clear direction on its primary task of providing well for all of its pupils. The headteacher demonstrates a strong and enduring commitment to the development of the best provision for meeting all of the special educational needs of pupils. This is manifest not

only in the energy invested in achieving the successful organisation of the school, but equally by maintaining close contact with the widest networks of best practice and by him collaborating in research in this respect. This is a positive influence on all of the staff, and particularly those making up the senior leadership group, adopting a professional manner towards their work in the classroom and their other responsibilities. Another consequence is the constructive engagement in local and national initiatives. For example, the school's advanced skills teacher and counterpart in the local high school are beginning to develop a programme in design and technology so that pupils from both schools will work together in this area. It is intended to discover what would make this collaboration a success for all of the pupils and, to that end, the initiative is being supported through research by the Bedfordshire School Improvement Project.

60. The school is managed well and consequently runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There is a good atmosphere and a shared sense of purpose among staff. Communication throughout the school is well structured and, since the staff are a large multi-disciplinary team, it succeeds in ensuring the school works effectively in the best interests of its pupils. The line of management through the school is clear. Those with roles of responsibility, for example the leaders of the primary and secondary departments, understand what is required of them and provide good leadership in their respective areas. Teamwork is very often of a high quality. Physiotherapists, for example, frequently observe pupils in lessons, assessing progress and giving advice to teachers, support staff and parents on approaches to address pupils' physical needs. The large group of learning support staff and other classroom assistants work effectively with teachers in planning and carrying out work with pupils. At times, they take the lead in teaching and do so in a professional manner, for example when a group of them delivered an excellent session of physical exercises and movement for pupils with complex learning difficulties.
61. The practice of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work with pupils is satisfactory. There are policies and procedures set out to inform this work. Teachers are observed by senior staff while they are teaching, as this is a necessary part of good arrangements for performance management. However, the extent of monitoring is currently limited because the time required is not at present available. The result is that the school is not entirely in a good position for looking at how well it is working and assessing strengths and weaknesses. The length of time it takes pupils to arrive and settle before teaching begins each morning and the usefulness of the long lunchtime period are two issues worth scrutiny but not being tackled.
62. Governors are fully committed to the success of the school and are effective in helping to shape its direction; they are fully involved in drawing up and prioritising the content of the school's strategic planning. The value of their contribution was consolidated when the school, as grant-maintained, was fully in charge of its own affairs and this has carried on. Collectively, the governors have considerable expertise, particularly in financial, legal and personnel matters, and use their knowledge and skills much to the benefit of the school. A current priority is to finalise arrangements for governors to play their part in monitoring the work of the school. They are kept well informed about the school's development through the work of governors' committees and the reports made by the headteacher and staff. However, procedures to ensure the governing body meets all of its statutory responsibilities are inadequate, for example some requirements related to fire precautions and the contents of the school's prospectus have been overlooked.

63. The school makes good use of its resources and, in particular, its annual income, which is thoroughly well managed and monitored by the governors' finance committee and through the school's financial procedures. As a consequence, it is capable of generating small surpluses to fund developments, for example an additional investment recently to boost learning resources. The school also attracts voluntary funds and, in this way, has been able to build a swimming pool, which is an essential resource for the pupils it caters for. The school is gaining very good results from its investment in an excellent resource, which supports highly effective teaching and leads to pupils achieving much more than expected in the water. The school does well in applying the principles of best value in regard to how it spends its money and uses its resources. While more extensive monitoring of the school's work would increase this and provide more information on the long-term impact and effect of such expenditure, there is a thorough review of achievements in relation to the priorities of the school development plan, which confirms such things as the success of investing in a very high level of support staff to aid teachers. There is a sufficient number of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. The accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection by the innovative use of some remaining space to create more learning areas. The school has now reached a stage where little further expansion is possible and is currently seeking new ways of improving its organisation, for example the arrival and departure of transport.

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

64. In order to further improve the overall standards at St John's School, the headteacher and governors should:

- a) Improve arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils at the beginning and end of the school day by:
- i. continuing to liaise with transport providers to improve punctuality;
  - ii. initiating urgent discussions concerning the pupils' journeys which exceed the agreed contract time;
  - iii. ensuring that pupils are unloaded from buses immediately upon arrival at school;
  - iv. improving parking and the access from the school's main entrance to the taxis, buses and cars; and
  - v. reducing the time that pupils waste while waiting for transport at the end of the school day.

(Paragraphs: 13, 58, 73)

- b) Continue to seek ways of extending and enhancing the services available to pupils so that their needs are fully met in terms of:
- i. speech and language therapy.

(Paragraphs: 27, 29, 72)

- c) Improve its methods for identifying the school's overall strengths and weaknesses by all senior managers and governors by:
- i. improving the quality of individual education plans and targets and the link from one to another;
  - ii. increasing the amount and rigour of classroom monitoring and observations; and
  - iii. continuing to follow national development for identifying and recording pupils' learning.

(Paragraphs: 8, 20, 24, 36, 40, 41)

- d) The governors should ensure that all the following documents meet current requirements for:

- i. the annual governors' report;
- ii. the school prospectus;
- iii. the child protection policy; and
- iv. the completion of registers.

(Paragraphs: 60-63)

- e) Improve assessment and recording procedures by:

- i. Introducing consistent procedures and formats for targets, assessment records and recording of pupils' work;
- ii. improving the monitoring of teachers' records so that inconsistencies are quickly identified;
- iii. ensuring all planning assessment documents identify not only what pupils have learnt, but also their resulting knowledge and skills; and
- iv. sharing good practice throughout the school.

(Paragraphs: 8, 20, 21, 39, 81, 99, 114, 119, 129, 134)

## **PROVISION FOR STUDENTS OVER 16**

65. The provision for students in further education is good overall. Opportunities for students to be included in social events within the local community are a strong feature, and students mix with those of other abilities and from other educational and non-educational settings, particularly in Years 13 and 14. The school is aware that inclusion for some groups is not so comprehensive, particularly for those attending a nearby upper school. The opportunities provided include study at a nearby further education college and Randall's Farm, an environmental education centre owned by the Wildlife Trust. A number of activities bring students into direct contact with the community, for example fieldwork undertaken in retail shopping areas as part of the ICT course followed by students in Year 14. Students of all ages attend a local gym, a public leisure facility as well as a municipal swimming pool. These arrangements serve to raise the self-esteem of students of all abilities and provide a useful bridge to independent living for more able leavers at age 19.

66. Achievements are satisfactory overall, with some good features. In communication work, more able students can express ideas and feelings with increasing clarity and confidence as they progress through the post-16 phase. They can engage with

extended writing in aspects of technology. Learning is good in the area of ICT, where students have produced and presented highly developed computer presentations on their work in media studies. Students of a range of ability have good keyboard skills, can open and close files and, with minimal support, can access the Internet. Despite the lack of a clearly articulated physical education curriculum, many students are proficient swimmers with water skills close to those who do not have special educational needs. Although provision for developing numeracy skills are satisfactory, some opportunities for increasing student independence in this area are lost, for example in money transactions and activities which could involve estimation outside school. Behaviour within and outside lessons, taking into account the learning needs of students, is very good and a strength of provision reflecting both the care and ethos created by staff working in this sector of the school.

67. The achievements of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with challenging behaviour are satisfactory overall. With appropriate support from learning assistants, this group integrates well with other students over 16 within and outside lessons. They can communicate effectively using 'Big Mac' switches in personal, social and health lessons dealing with personal relationships and can define with some precision situations which are 'public' and 'private'. Their communication skills are enhanced by the 'Lunchbox' food technology program with facial expression and gesture and accurate choice of vocabulary from flash cards and symbols. Some students are able to operate a food-blender with augmentative switch control. Numeracy skills develop appropriately, especially in relation to money skills and basic estimation in purchasing items in a local supermarket. Behaviour is generally very good and, despite their disabilities, students concentrate very well for long periods and usually work to the best of their ability even in lessons dealing with more abstract concepts.
68. Teaching and learning are good overall and several lessons are very good. Teaching and support staff know their students well. Within this overview, however, there is a range of quality and the entitlement of students across the curriculum is uneven with a lack of challenge and stimulus in some of the work observed, for example in design and technology for students in Year 13. Generally, lessons are well planned, particularly in personal, social and health education, food technology and mathematics. Independence skills are well developed through a local gym programme where students can also evaluate some aspects of their learning and collaborate in setting future targets. In the best lessons, for example one dealing with ICT in a local secondary school, learning assistants take an effective lead with groups of students, and learning is correspondingly accelerated. This was evidenced during the inspection by business letters produced by more able students. Teacher expectation in all but a minority of design and technology and physical education lessons is consistently high and student participation in lessons is correspondingly good. The staff brief colleagues from other establishments well and this also promotes effective learning, especially in physical education and ICT.
69. The curriculum is good overall and provides a broad range of relevant experiences, including a satisfactory programme of work-related education, careers education and guidance. It is well balanced to meet the needs of a relatively small but diverse group of students with very differing educational needs. There is good progression beyond the age of 19, and relationships with other agencies, including health and social services, are both positive and productive. Students speak positively of their experiences and, in particular, the opportunity to learn in contexts away from the school. This view is reflected also in the observations made by parents. All students are enabled to have some experience of the world of work within the school, with about a third of them supported on outside placements at a local supermarket. Provision for students with

profound and multiple learning difficulties is improving and links have now been established with a secondary school within the county and the youth and community service to provide sheltered and simulated work experience for this group.

70. The curriculum for the remainder of the students over 16 continues to develop so that increasing opportunities for vocational studies and preparation for life after school are emphasised. The school has well-focused plans to become involved with school technology bids within the area and has applied to become a full member of the local education action zone. There is a good emphasis on key skills, especially those which relate to communication and problem solving. A business enterprise has been set up. There are vocational opportunities and provision for a range of leisure activities. Students have their work externally accredited through an awards scheme and communication skills programmes. These are to be further developed to include a number of vocational skill areas including bricklaying, car mechanics and art and design and drama. Despite these strengths, the time for some activities is not always used productively. Unnecessary time is lost for some groups undertaking design and technology courses at a neighbouring upper school. The practice of students regularly spending nearly 45 minutes walking to and from the local college of further education should be reviewed.
71. The management of students over 16 and their curriculum is satisfactory and well coordinated, despite the challenges of many educational activities being conducted away from the main site and the unsatisfactory length of time students take to reach the college. Whilst the continuing developing programme for students over 16 is to be commended, the practice of travelling 12 miles off-site following long travelling times from home is unsatisfactory because, on more than one occasion, students did not start work until after 10.00 am. Individual education plans are well maintained and form the basis for pupil support in lessons. The school does not, however, monitor the balance of targets set, and social development targets tend to predominate over more academic targets, even for higher attaining students.
72. The level of staffing is satisfactory and there is a good balance between teachers, teaching assistants and learning support assistants. All staff have been well trained to understand and deliver recent initiatives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Where staff have responsibilities for specific groups of students, such as early years or those with serious impairments, they are very highly skilled. All adults in these areas demonstrate consistently outstanding skills in promoting the students' progress through detailed plans, assessment and reviews. However, the provision for speech and language therapy, whilst largely outside the school's control, is insufficient.
73. The school has made very significant improvements to its accommodation since the last inspection. It has provided additional teaching areas by transforming external areas into indoor classrooms and has upgraded toilet facilities, particularly for those with complex needs. However, the accommodation remains unsatisfactory as there are too few specialist rooms for the number of students on roll and there is now no possibility of further expansion. The arrangements for students' arrival and departure are a significant concern. A large number of students spend far too much time travelling or waiting for transport. Inspection evidence shows that some students routinely travel for well over an hour and, at the end of the day, students can wait for up to 50 minutes before they board their transport home. The headteacher and governing body are addressing these difficulties as a matter of urgency. The level of resourcing in the school is good and teachers make good use of all equipment to stimulate students' learning.

74. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is a widening range of accreditation. The number of individual Youth Award modules available to students has increased. More significantly, the school has met the requirements to offer a range of modules accredited by the Open College Network and the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examining board. Students access courses in communication, numeracy, ICT and personal skills. Staff have successfully undertaken training to become internal assessors and verifiers. The weaknesses identified in respect of work experience arrangements have been addressed, although students with profound and multiple learning difficulties have yet to benefit from the improved opportunities now to be offered. All students leave school with a National Record of Achievement. To improve further, the school has recently put procedures in place to set and monitor academic attainment more systematically and seeks to ensure a more even quality of teaching and learning through more rigorous monitoring in lessons within and outside the school.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	98
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	140

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	14	25	28	19	1	2	0
Percentage	16	28	31	21	1	3	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	128
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

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

There were insufficient pupils to report their results at the end of 2001, but all the pupils in Year 11 completed Youth Award Portfolios successfully.

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	7
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	109
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10
Average class size	8

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

Total number of education support staff	44
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1400

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,577,188
Total expenditure	1,679,180
Expenditure per pupil	13,542
Balance brought forward from previous year	168,883
Balance carried forward to next year	66,891

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	128
Number of questionnaires returned	24

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	8	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	42	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	38	8	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	29	17	4	25
The teaching is good.	63	33	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	25	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	8	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	79	8	13	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	63	29	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	29	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	25	4	13	33

### Other issues raised by parents

The majority of parents show a firm commitment to the school and recognise the high standards achieved by staff and pupils. As in many schools of this type, extra-curricular activities are limited by the complexities of transport. Homework is set but some parents would like more and inspectors agree that its provision varies between classes. In addition to the above, parents also identified long-term problems over the provision of speech and language therapy.



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

75. Children under five gain an excellent introduction to early education. With outstanding teaching and excellent support from teaching and learning support assistants, the children are rapidly learning early language, socialisation and physical skills. The early years provision provides all its children with an outstanding preparation for more formal education at the age of five.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

76. The development of the children's self-confidence and improved socialisation is a clear strength. Teaching is very good and staff provide very good opportunities for social and cultural activities which help the children to better understand themselves and their relationships. For example, children quickly learn that they must wait their turn and also listen to other children. They very quickly realise that they cannot have the teachers' attention all the time and sit quietly at circle time when the teacher uses the last few moments of the day for gentle reflection. The continued and very skilled emphasis on communication is helped by the use of several types of recording and playback machines. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to say or sign in a more sophisticated construction so that their use of grammar is maximised. Any signs of distracting or disturbing behaviour are dealt with immediately so that the child sees the reason. By the time they reach the age of five, children are familiar with school requirements and are able to take a little responsibility, for example they help put equipment away or try hard to dress themselves.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

77. The teaching of communication, language and literacy is consistently very good and permeates all activities in the Foundation Stage. Children follow the story narratives with high levels of interest and join in with the actions of puppets. The concepts of size and shape are a frequent focus of work and the staff link this work with colour recognition. Pupils learn to differentiate the classrooms very well. The staff arrange objects so that children can find things for themselves and be as independent as possible.
78. Children make very good progress in developing their understanding of interaction and communication. They all try hard to share their thoughts and ideas with others, with some beginning to use sign language where they are not able to speak. The concentration these pupils show in class and group work is surprisingly good. For example, as the teacher is emphasising the key vocabulary of 'rolling', 'pushing', 'pulling' and 'shaping' the dough, the children watch and listen intently as they turn their dough into pretend cakes. The range of needs and abilities in the group is very wide, for example, in this group, the highest attaining child announces 'I have pushed the candles in my cake'. Several lower attaining pupils use sign language to communicate their meaning or the staff sign for them.
79. The children rapidly extend their listening skills and the teacher's use of familiar objects helps them to recall the things they have learnt or experienced during the lesson. One child look confused at first when the teacher asked if she could remember riding a bicycle, but when a model bicycle was shown as a reference, the pupil's positive

actions clearly showed that she remembered. The staff are then able to turn the names of the activities indicating which are 'finished', a concept which they regularly reinforce.

80. Few children are yet able to write, but all hold a pencil or crayon as part of their early and emerging writing skills. Higher attaining children make meaningful marks, such as circles, whilst others have not yet passed the scribbling stage. Two higher attaining children demonstrate more developed skills by writing over letter shapes. All children have clear and specific targets for improving their language and listening skills and staff are rigorous in ensuring that they all are addressed in all areas of the children's learning.
81. The rigorous pace of learning combined with the clear focus on developing each child's communication skills results in an interest in work and very good progress. Because the children are so well motivated, their behaviour is very good. On the few occasions when they misbehave or become upset, the staff have excellent strategies for managing their behaviour. They redirect their attention or simply take them away from the group so that they can regain their composure. The overall arrangements are so efficient, little time is lost as one activity flows into the next.
82. All staff know the children and their levels of achievement very well and they target their expectations accordingly so that in every activity, the children face small but important challenges. For example, the teacher adjusts the time she allows for a child to answer a question or for another to put on his trousers after physical education before helping him. By these individualised approaches, each child makes clear progress against the targets in the children's individual education plans. Over time, these small steps of achievement build into a profile so excellent progress is made and a child who was reluctant to sit in a circle and join in activities is now able to do so throughout the lesson. All children are encouraged to be independent in communication and practical tasks. Detailed and regular records show that this expectation, together with motivating and challenging tasks, result in children's success in preparing for more formal education at the age of five.

### **Mathematical development**

83. Children are beginning to understand the meaning and use of numbers as a direct result of good, often very good, teaching. During story time, they are happy to count the characters and articles in pictures or throw articles into a container after counting 'one', 'two', 'three'. Children are making good progress in their early understanding of numbers and their use. They regularly count objects in stories, songs and poetry as staff are rigorous in ensuring that they reinforce such concepts whenever possible. All the children enjoy working and are developing a sense of time and of the routines of the day through timetables with pictures, symbols and small objects to represent different activities. This helps them develop early skills towards telling the time and to understand how their days at school are made up of different activities. The children's concepts of numbers and their uses are very wide ranging. Higher attaining children are beginning to recognise numbers and most children understand they need one sock and one shoe for each foot. Not all can yet transfer this idea of number correspondence to other activities. The very good teaching with its emphasis on counting rhymes and games is helping them all to deepen their understanding.
84. Staff place a strong emphasis on routine so that children develop a sense of the immediate environment and the passage of time. Daily routines are displayed in the classroom so that children understand the pattern of the day. They have quickly learnt their way around the school. The teachers reinforce this understanding by asking the

children to show which way they are going and what for. The children listen as staff use directional words such as 'right' and point to areas of the school such as the hall.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

85. Children develop a good understanding of the world around them because teaching is good and staff plan many opportunities for children to observe other people and other activities. For example, whenever possible, they visit the local area and its shops and other facilities to observe people shopping or using the library. Teachers also make very good use of the school environment by ensuring that the youngest children mix with older pupils when appropriate. They are rigorous in developing the children's sense of place so that they know where different areas of the school are situated, for example the hall, the classroom, someone else's classroom or other areas of the school such as the swimming pool. To challenge them further, the adults consistently attempt to enable the children to indicate where they are going and how to get there.
86. Staff and children discuss what they have done at the end of each lesson. Models of familiar objects are used very effectively to enhance this work. Children enjoy visiting other areas of the school and 'line up' obediently. In the interactive sound and light rooms, they enjoy exploring their environment and in all activities are reinforcing their language skills through the teachers' emphasis on vocabulary such as 'stop', 'wait', 'ready' and 'go'. In the sensory room, children experience 'cause' and 'effect' as they choose which particular light or sound effect they would like to experience.

### **Physical development**

87. Teachers provide very good opportunities for children to refine their movements either informally at play or within physical education lessons where there is a finer focus on skills and experiences. For example, the teacher uses musical instruments to gain and maintain the children's attention so that they follow her instructions to 'crawl', 'walk', 'run' or 'jump'. The teacher's planning in these lessons is faultless as every child's needs are specifically developed and met, for example the teacher assessed the children's ball control and matched the size of balls she provided to the children's skills and their range from tennis balls to standard-sized footballs. Children are encouraged to be confident when they find a task hard, for example staff positioned themselves at the end of a plastic tunnel to encourage the children to crawl to the end. Such activities and support enable pupils to do well and the very good planning and recording ensure that their small steps of learning are captured for future reference. Teaching is very good and assistants and teachers join in with all activities thus providing very good role models.

### **Creative development**

88. Children take part in a very good range of creative activities. They explore various materials and colours when painting or modelling. Music is a focal point of many activities as the children consolidate their understanding of counting with a number song. The staff also make very good use of music as a cue when activities stop or start. Children enjoy playing instruments, dancing and modelling with dough.
89. Teaching is of a consistently high standard for children under five and the school has built on the high standards reported at the last inspection. The teacher leads and inspires her team of assistants to persistently challenge and motivate the children so that they constantly work hard throughout the day. The adults in the Foundation Stage work as a highly effective team and are led by the outstanding example of the teacher in

charge. This teacher's skills have been recognised by the regional award for excellence in special needs teaching and a place in the national finals.

## ENGLISH

90. Provision for the subject is good. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing, and very good progress in speaking and listening, which are significant strengths.
91. By the time they are six, pupils generally make eye contact to indicate or to respond to communication. Higher attaining pupils greet the teacher, sometimes needing a hand-held tape recorder to do so. Higher attaining pupils name the day and recall the date and are capable of using simple phrases in response to the teacher's questioning. Lower attaining pupils respond to 'hello' by signing, making eye and bodily contact, or smiling. Higher attaining pupils pick out their own names, sometimes with prompting, and put it by their photograph. They are beginning to realise that words have meaning. A higher attaining pupil, with help, copies the word 'monster' to label her drawing. Average attainers join dots to help them to form a letter from the alphabet. A lower attaining pupil looks briefly at a computer screen, then presses the switch to activate a computer program. A pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties struggles to match photographs with objects but, with help, succeeds.
92. By the time they are eleven, higher attaining pupils ask and answer questions very readily. They greet the teacher confidently. They say how they feel and tell their news. They bring personal items to show the class and speak about them simply, but engagingly. One pupil chatters about Harry Potter, which she has seen on video. Lower attaining pupils and those who have complex learning difficulties greet others by gesture or eye contact. They make some significant response to their named photograph. They have some understanding that there are other people in the classroom who have names. They understand the sign 'finish'. Higher attaining pupils enjoy books by this stage and listen to stories with rapt attention. Their comments show they have understood certain aspects of them. They point out the illustrations. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties feel objects to give them some understanding of spoken and written words. Higher attaining pupils have made beautifully produced and illustrated booklets about themselves, copying or over-writing to create text, or using symbols. Others make marks on paper with enthusiasm, or copy and overwrite words and letters with varying degrees of manual control. Pupils make good use of computer programs to help them write symbols which they understand well.
93. By the time they are 14, pupils who can vocalise are cheerful and articulate speakers. They listen carefully to instructions, which they can, in most cases, carry out. They enjoy stories and poems, such as those by Doctor Seuss. Some confidently read words and phrases in letters and symbols. They know what rhyming words are, and, in most cases, can identify them. They respond positively to the mood of the opening scene in 'Macbeth' which they have learned to chant and enjoy hugely. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties participate in a multi-sensory interpretation of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. They communicate their preferred characters, events and objects. They co-operate well with shared exploration and supported participation. Pupils also continue to overwrite and copy letters, words and phrases, showing perceptible improvement over time.
94. By the time they are 16, higher attaining pupils listen carefully, speaking out clearly and confidently. They know how to speak appropriately when buying groceries, for example, or ordering in a restaurant, and know it is different from speaking to a friend. A few higher attaining pupils are able to read very simple, age-appropriate stories

independently. All enjoy browsing through tabloid newspapers and magazines which reflect their leisure interests. Pupils sign their names and some write approximations of their address, although they know it correctly. Pupils record their work using letters, symbols, or use an amanuensis to scribe for them.

95. Teaching and learning are very good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Almost all lessons seen were very well planned with clear learning objectives. Pupils' targets in their individual learning plans are reliably addressed. Inclusion of all pupils and students in practical learning activities is a strong feature of provision.
96. Teachers consistently make very good and imaginative use of well-chosen resources. There is a high level of a multi-sensory input. In one lesson where pupils had profound and multiple learning difficulties, for example, they listened intently to a spirited reading of 'Please don't chat to the bus driver', before exploring objects which helped them to understand the tale more fully. They were enabled to put models of everything mentioned in the tale into a model bus. They expressed their pleasure at the trumpet and soft toys presented to them, by working switches and smiling.
97. In the best lessons, there is a sense of urgency and very high expectation. Teaching strategies are appropriate and imaginative. A Year 4 lesson began by concentrating on names and initials, but eventually all attainment targets were covered. Activities followed along briskly, each one addressing pupils' targets and creating interest and concentration. An 'I-Spy' game caused great excitement and was an excellent means of teaching phonics. Skilful questioning, supported by signing, extended pupils vocabulary. Arresting pictures of toys stimulated pupils to speak and write. Pupils were utterly enthused, eager to start writing and were enabled to succeed because simple word frames had been prepared, some of them written in symbols. A good variety of other prompts were immediately to hand, including the use of computers. Management of pupils was, in this lesson, so good as to appear effortless. Support staff are well briefed, and their commitment enabled pupils to be taught individually and in small groups, thus maximising their learning.
98. Drama lessons support pupils' confidence and capacity for communication well. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were made to feel the horror of the wicked witch, which they were enabled to communicate. They imagined playing in a pool, represented by a large cloth, and were enabled to say if they wanted the water 'rough' or 'smooth'. Good forward planning enabled a pupil in a wheelchair to be included in this activity, which gave him particular pleasure. Pupils shouted, 'Bad witch, go away, don't spoil our fun' amidst great consternation. Pupils took great delight in choosing a biscuit to eat at an imaginary picnic. The teacher used very clear speech and signing to communicate, which promoted confident and enthusiastic communication in the class.
99. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy have been well adapted to pupils' needs. Monitoring of the curriculum is satisfactory and continues to develop, although monitoring of teaching is an acknowledged weakness. Assessment is generally good but there are inconsistencies in target setting. The school is right to consider the introduction of P-scales to sharpen procedures and improve standards, and planning for this is well advanced.
100. Since the last inspection, there has been a good level of improvement. Teaching and learning have significantly improved. Resources are now good, in quality and quantity, and are imaginatively and appropriately used to aid pupils' learning. Reading is now taught well and pupils' speaking skills have improved and are now a strength. The

curriculum is now adequately monitored for coverage. The co-ordinator, however, still does not have an overview of its delivery, which was a criticism of the last inspection.

## **Literacy**

101. The development of literacy is central to the work of the school and enables pupils and students to communicate at every level. There is a clear policy, which is frequently monitored.
102. Communication is very good in a wide range of subjects. Pupils and students greet the teacher appropriately, and older pupils and students confidently greet friends and adults. Vocal pupils articulate the days of the week, say what the weather is like and how they feel. Others use a range of other communicative means. A strong feature of the attainment of vocal pupils is their capacity to chat to others. A strong feature of the attainment of older pupils and students are their skills in oral collaboration. In design and technology, good opportunities are given for pupils to explain what they are doing and discuss their planning and making. In one lesson given to 16-year-olds, pupils discussed different ways of joining frames and making them stand up. In a post-16 art and design lesson, students shared the evaluative comments the teacher had made on their work. Some said a single word, but others were fluent and confident in what they said. When lunch orders are taken, teachers are skilled in enabling pupils and students to express choices. During this process, pupils use a range of communication aids to help them select and be heard. In mathematics, pupils are able to use numerals in sentences. Drama lessons extend pupils' capacity for role-play and develop confident communication skills. The school provides students and pupils with good opportunities for public performance.
103. In their reading activities, pupils and students increasingly interpret drawings, photographs and symbols to help their understanding. Some older pupils read very simple, age-appropriate fiction independently. Students over 16 read the computer screen with help. They read simple words to help them to make sense of their environment out of school.
104. All pupils and students take at least some active part in recording their work. They have good opportunities to write in a range of subjects. In a history lesson, for example, pupils were able to write in symbols and read what they had written. All who are physically capable sign their names and most students over 16 can write their address.

## **Library**

105. The school library is good and well organised. Although it is not within the main body of the school, it is a bright and welcoming facility. The number of volumes exceeds national recommendations. They are suitable to the abilities and interests of the pupils and support the curriculum well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to borrow books during lesson times and many do so. The school intends to increase the number of simple, age-appropriate books for older pupils. All staff are fully consulted as to which books should be bought.

## **MATHEMATICS**

106. Pupils make good progress throughout their time at the school. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when progress overall was deemed to be unsatisfactory. A scrutiny of work shows good progress over time throughout the school. There are no significant differences in learning made by pupils of different

abilities, girls and boys. The effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy throughout the school and the development of a curriculum and Programmes of Study matched to pupil's abilities have all contributed to raising standards.

107. By Year 2, pupils develop their mathematical skills through many practical experiences and make good progress in relation to their prior learning. They show an interest in number and enjoy the number songs and games used to reinforce learning. Higher attaining pupils select numbers to ten and know that seven comes after six; they also link numbers to a group of items, for example, small toys. Lower attaining pupils can sort objects by colour or shape and, with support and encouragement, 'count' the number of skittles knocked down. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and multi-sensory impairment make good progress because of the very good teacher support and use of communication aids, including signing and switches.
108. By Year 6, pupils extend their knowledge of numbers through interesting presentations of counting tasks which they enjoy. All pupils are involved in the singing of number rhymes aided by good use of verbal and signed prompts of teachers and support staff. The teachers and learning support assistants work well together to provide pupils with work that is matched well to their abilities, and has sufficient challenge to develop them further. For example, Year 4 pupils make very good progress using their knowledge of number to estimate how many jumps they can make before carrying out this task, recording their results, and as a class producing a large bar chart of results. Higher attaining pupils estimate and count without help and complete number lines that have missing numbers. Most pupils reinforce their understanding of shapes through activities such as sorting and sequencing a group of different shapes. Adults reward success with praise and encouragement to lead pupils to attempt the next step with success. Lower attaining pupils match shapes and complete simple jigsaws.
109. By Year 9, pupils make good progress in relation to their previous learning. They show an interest in numbers. Higher attaining pupils count confidently up to 20 and perform calculations with numbers up to 20 and use computer programs independently and with confidence to practise their number bonds. They recognise numbers and sets and can record simple data on tally sheets. Year 8 pupils produce a block graph using the results of a traffic survey. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to demonstrate choices of objects by focusing on items and tracking movement. They learn to touch and select objects or numbers by pressing switches with growing confidence.
110. By Year 11, pupils can work with number bonds up to ten and count to 100 in fives and tens. They can perform simple calculations using these units. They understand the principles of measurement and can select problem-solving strategies to estimate numbers and measurements.
111. Students over 16 can tell the time to the hour and half past. They recognise and can name basic two- and three-dimensional shapes, use numbers and perform simple division. They can conduct a survey and record their results. They are able to explain and discuss their work. They complete mathematical modules as part of nationally accredited certificates, both of which have an emphasis on skills essential to life after school, including money skills.
112. The quality of teaching and learning is predominantly good. It is never less than satisfactory. Teaching and learning in nine out of 13 lessons is now good or better and in two further lessons it is excellent. Teachers know their pupils very well. This helps them to manage behaviour very successfully; they ensure that all participate in activities

regardless of their learning difficulties or other significant factors. Pupils behave very well in class and have very positive attitudes towards mathematics, which is a clear result of good teaching. The good use of resources promotes interest and motivates pupils. For example, the use of floor dominoes in a Year 11 lesson with lower attaining pupils ensured that all took an active part in an enjoyable group session. When they are used, computers help pupils to present their work well and keep them motivated. For example, as observed in a Year 11 lesson, a higher attaining pupil using a self-corrective number bond program. However, little use of computers in mathematics lessons was observed during the inspection and this lack of use is a real missed opportunity, as pupils are not making best use of their computer skills.

113. The quality of teachers' long-term planning is very good; day-to-day planning, while still good in terms of lesson content, does not always provide full detail of work for each individual, particularly with reference to their individual education plan targets. However, in practice, activities and objectives were invariably relevant to pupils' needs. Where teaching is excellent, teachers inspire their pupils with lively, step-by-step teaching. Pupils want to learn because their teacher gives them the confidence to succeed and provides material which is attractive, simple to use and is a real aid to their learning. Teachers are particularly rigorous in ensuring that pupils understand what they have learnt and praise them regularly for effort and achievement. Teachers subject knowledge is generally good and, in some cases, very good. Where there is less expertise, learning dips slightly and the content of lessons, although satisfactory, is still weaker. The range in quality of teaching is spread across all age groups.
114. A new curriculum co-ordinator for mathematics has been appointed since the last inspection and a draft policy has been produced. This is a good document which is planned to promote consistently high standards in mathematics. Much hard work has been done in establishing a curriculum in mathematics which identifies the learning needs of most pupils and students in the school and enables staff to assess progress from baseline assessments of pupils and students. The co-ordinator has identified areas for further development and is aware of the need to improve the assessment and recording of all pupils' and students' achievements by establishing good practice across the school. For example, some learning support assistants are involved in ongoing assessment of pupils and students within lessons. When learning support assistants perform this function, the teacher has a clearer picture of pupils' and students' attainment and progress but this practice is not consistent across the key stages. A good start has been made on identifying the pupils' and students' ability where they are working below Level 1 of the National Curriculum and on their future work. However, the link between the targets within individual education plans and the learning objectives specified for pupils and students in lesson planning is not always secure which impedes consistency and progress. The co-ordinator has made a start on monitoring the planning and teaching of mathematics by other teachers, but has not been allocated sufficient time to develop this important aspect of her role to continue to monitor teaching and learning and evaluate the information gathered to raise standards further. Resources for mathematics are adequate. The co-ordinator has identified resources that will further develop the subject. In classrooms, there are displays of numbers and mathematical symbols though there are few examples of pupils' or students' work on display. The school has an appropriate range of software that allows some higher attaining pupils and students to work independently for sustained periods of time and other pupils and students to work with the support of an adult. This assists in the development of mathematical concepts and increases pupils' and students' pride in their work and presentation.

## SCIENCE

115. The school has maintained the good provision in science noted at the time of the last inspection. Pupils and students make good progress and achieve good standards in science now as they did when the school was last inspected.
116. By Year 2, the higher attaining pupils can correctly sequence the growth of a plant from the time a bulb is planted without assistance. They can also identify objects made from wood and brick and they know that the materials are different. Lower attaining pupils listen to sounds when hitting a keyboard without prompting. Pupils with the most complex needs have a sensory experience of feeling and exploring wet and dry materials. Between reception and the end of Year 2, pupils make good gains in their learning measured against their prior attainment, but some, who are in regression because of their medical condition, slip backwards. However, the school successfully includes these pupils in as many science experiences as possible. By Year 6, pupils achieve good standards because of the good progress they have made due to the challenging teaching they experience. Higher attaining pupils know that the sun is in the sky when behind clouds and they are able to identify light sources. Lower attaining pupils switch the bubble tube on and off and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore paper and its properties at a level appropriate for them.
117. Progress is good between Years 7 and 9 with pupils' achievements covering a wide range of practical activities and simple experiments. By Year 9, average attainers can sometimes categorise food types and at other times they cannot. Their performance is inconsistent reflecting the complexity of their needs. However, they engage in experiments with a suitable range of equipment in familiar and relevant situations. Lower attaining pupils need help in making choices. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience and explore different textures and tastes and a few are beginning to be proactive in their interactions. Although progress between Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory overall, some higher attaining pupils in Year 11 underachieve because they are not sufficiently challenged and stretched due to very poor teaching and an absence of recording their progress and using the assessment of what they can and cannot do to inform subsequent planning to raise their standards. However, analysis of work indicates that the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 can engage in scientific enquiry to Level 2 b/c of the National Curriculum expectations. These pupils know that carbohydrates provide energy and have the functional language to express their likes and dislikes about food. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have explored ice cubes and melted and froze chocolate and, judging by the photographic evidence, they have greatly enjoyed the experience. Lower attaining pupils have experienced materials changing as a result of being heated and are able to ask sensible questions about food types.
118. Pupils enjoy their practical activities in science because they are made interesting for them. Because they are interested in their work, they make good gains in their learning. They concentrate hard and persevere, for example when pupils in Years 10 and 11 constructed a circuit and made a windmill work, they watched the results with great interest and care. Relationships are good and pupils collaborate well. Higher attaining pupils help lower attaining pupils with practical work and this contributes to their social development as well as to the good gains that the lower attaining pupils make in their learning. The pupils are all included well in activities, with adaptations and special arrangements made to accommodate them where necessary, and their specific needs, lifestyles and preferences are identified well.

119. The quality of teaching is good overall. It ranges from very good to one poor lesson in the secondary department. Where teaching is very good, the higher attaining pupils are challenged because expectations are very high and the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are fully included because of the skilful support provided by teaching assistants. In these lessons, pupils make good gains in their knowledge, understanding and experience of relevant activities. The pupils with the most complex needs make good eye contact with materials and express their sense of joy in what they are doing with gorgeous smiles. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged, the teacher was very rude to a pupil and pupils were momentarily left unattended with access to practical equipment. In this lesson, pupils' achievements were not recorded and there was some confusion between the teacher and a learning support assistant over what was expected.
120. The accommodation for science is better than at the last inspection but nevertheless limited for practical work, especially in Years 7 to 11. There are strengths and weaknesses in the co-ordination of science. Good work has been done to produce a scheme of work which is relevant for pupils with very complex special educational needs. However, the co-ordinator does not monitor the quality of teaching and learning and so does not have a firm hand on where the strengths and weaknesses lie across the school. There are inconsistencies in recording pupils' progress and this sometimes results in the teacher in the secondary department not having meaningful information to plan and stretch the highest attainers which, in turn, sometimes results in a measure of underachievement from them. The teacher in the secondary department is a non-specialist and, although she lacks confidence in the teaching of the subject, she has not received formal training on how to assess and record pupils' progress and this is a weakness.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

121. Pupils achieve well in art and design and make generally good progress in lessons and over time. Progress is more rapid in the multi-sensory classes in the primary phase. In these small classes, pupils benefit from well-planned multi-sensory lessons, in which teachers and support staff work well together, using their skills to stimulate communication through discussions about works of art.
122. By age seven, pupils show strong reactions to colour and texture. In one particularly well-planned lesson, pupils were exposed to the colour blue, using water, photographs and blue floodlights in a sequence, before using the colour in a painting. They were fully engaged in the lesson and used a wide range of responses, eye and hand pointing, gesture and vocalisation, to indicate their awareness and pleasure in the experience. One pupil repeated the word 'paint' through much of the lesson and was clearly involved and enjoying the lesson. By age eleven, most pupils are able to hold a paintbrush, but have little control over its movement, needing hand-on-hand support to produce a pattern. They explore the brush and paint through their senses, developing fine motor skills as they strive to work with the brush. More able pupils can indicate the position of eyes and mouth on a prepared head shape. By age 14, pupils show good levels of response to the texture of sand and impasto paint, exploring and communicating effectively. They model clay, some using co-active support to create the necessary pressure on the clay. Higher attaining pupils use paint rollers to form monoprints and to create patterns. By age 16, pupils work well with junk material to make fruit shapes for use in the forthcoming production of 'Macbeth'. A few of them model clay independently to form fruit shapes and colour them appropriately. They handle brushes and spatulas well. In one lesson seen during the inspection, a more talented pupil showed a sense of design that was not fully exploited by the staff. His repeat leaf print patterns were very

carefully set out as an inverted sequence, creating a pattern that opened up many design possibilities. Pupils work together in a productive environment, using tissue, bubble wrap, card, cloth and clay to form very effective, brightly coloured bowls of fruit. They consolidate their understanding of colour as they work.

123. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers in multi-sensory classes work particularly well with their pupils, encouraging them to communicate and work as independently as possible. Teaching assistants are confident and capable in leading some of the lessons. Teachers and support staff have appropriately high expectations of the pupils and they plan very well for their lessons. Planning in the junior and middle school is particularly effective, where good opportunities for independent choice of colour are given, and there is good teaching of brush-handling skills. Some very enthusiastic teaching was observed in the senior classes, where a sense of humour and a love of teaching were evident in the busy and productive class environment. Relationships are a strength of teaching. Staff know the pupils well and are sensitive and caring in their approach to them, ensuring that lessons are enjoyable and full of multi-sensory experience that stimulate positive communication responses from pupils. A strength within the subject is the attention given to ensuring all are included, their lifestyles and backgrounds reflected in the breadth of the work, such as when they study the work of artists from other cultures.
124. There is no co-ordinator for art and design across the school, but teachers work well from the recently rewritten extension curriculum to ensure that pupils are offered an appropriate curriculum. This includes both two- and three-dimensional experiences and opportunities to explore clay, paint, textile, print making and construction. Staff make a creditable effort to introduce the work of many well-known artists, but their overall lack of expertise in the subject leads to the loss of many opportunities to investigate the subject further. The good links with music and drama strengthen the curriculum and lead towards a well-received whole-school production at the end of the year. There is no effective monitoring of standards across the school and the subject is not yet secure in its delivery. The expressive arts course in Years 10 and 11 is effective in providing an experience that is evaluated by the pupils and well monitored. The assessment and recording of progress in other areas of the school are not well developed. There is good accommodation for art and design, but resources for the subject are unsatisfactory overall. The standard of teaching and the progress of pupils have improved since the last inspection, but the lack of a co-ordinator has led to the subject making no more than satisfactory improvement overall.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

125. This is a rapidly improving subject where teachers work well to provide a rich, multi-sensory experience for pupils who enjoy their lessons. Pupils achieve well and make generally good progress in the subject. They progress more rapidly in the primary and lower school where their work with pupils who have more severe and complex needs is particularly well planned. The subject is very well taught in the senior school where the pupils benefit from the mainstream resources of the local upper school and the knowledge and expertise of advanced skills teachers. Well-qualified volunteer support in the middle school broadens the practical experience for the pupils in that phase.
126. By age seven, pupils have explored a good range of materials and developed their awareness of the differences between hard materials such as wood and mouldable materials such as clay. They have experienced a wide range of foods and helped to prepare them for eating. They help to mix salads and butter bread for sandwiches. By age eleven, they sign and gesture 'yes' and 'no' in expressing preferences for food.

They make very good use of object cues for food and most are able to identify the symbols relating to different aspects of the subject. In one lesson seen during the inspection, the very good co-active support of the learning assistant enabled one pupil to make fluent use of the rolling pin independently, showing good development of both fine and gross motor skills. They make wall hangings using scrim and felt shapes, which they glue to the scrim in flower designs, using hand-on-hand support. By age 14, pupils use materials purposefully to make wood block prints, first building a relief pattern on their block and then, with hand-on-hand support, they print on different materials in colours they choose. More able pupils can print independently.

127. By age 16, higher attaining pupils are able to cut and stitch different materials to a felt base. They watch a video on basic weaving and learn to weave paper strips cut by staff, with minimal support. They work on rigid plastic, using basic hand tools, guided by staff. They take cardboard boxes apart to see how they are made and make their own boxes, embellishing them with coloured stickers to match the pattern they have drawn. With the support of a volunteer who has cabinet making skills, they experience the use of tools, such as hammer, saw, drill and brushes, for surface finish. By age 16, pupils benefit from more sophisticated machinery such as vacuum former, strip heater and pillar drill. They learn to use them with minimal support, to make key fobs and picture frames, firstly drawing out a simple design of the intended product. They drill, sand and file copper shapes, before applying enamelling powders to their design brief. They experience the use of gloves, goggles and tongs in placing their work in the enamelling kiln. Lower attaining pupils are able to choose, prepare and mix different ingredients to make a salad dish. Pupils throughout the school experience a good range of ethnic foods to coincide with religious festivals from the different major faiths.
128. The quality of teaching is generally good. It is consistently very good in the senior school where there is well-planned team teaching using advanced skills teachers from St John's and the local upper school. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of pupils and the subject, which they blend in a very productive and worthwhile workshop experience. Teaching assistants are confident and experienced in supporting the class teachers and many of them are able to take a class independently, in particular the small classes of pupils with severe and complex special needs. Teachers are very caring and committed to their work and are aware of the small steps of learning that pupils can make in the subject. Teachers ensure that all pupils, whatever their backgrounds or learning difficulties, are able to take part in all activities and that they reflect the varied lifestyles of different cultures and beliefs. Teachers are very good communicators, using signing appropriately and encouraging pupils to respond in ways that build up their communication skills. An excellent example of planning was seen in one lesson where the unqualified teacher had planned in detail and built the assessment and recording into the planning, to ensure that any small gains in learning were recorded and used to monitor progress over time. Teaching in the senior school is made more demanding because of the wide range of special needs that teachers are faced with in the relatively large classes. Although there is a good atmosphere for learning, built up through the good relationships and enthusiastic teaching, the targets for learning are unclear and the late arrival of several pupils slows down the pace of lessons. The management of pupils is very good throughout the school. Staff know the pupils very well and respond to their needs sensitively and positively.
129. At present, there is no co-ordinator for the subject and hence no monitoring of it across the school. There is specialist accommodation, but it is shared with science and is not well resourced. The use of an upper school workshop area is of considerable benefit to older pupils and the appointment of a design and technology specialist from the upper

school (to take up post in September of this year) is a very positive move for the subject as a whole. Although the use made of ICT across the school is preparing pupils for the control aspects of design and technology, there is a need to develop systems and control technology in a separately focused way.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

130. The provision for geography is satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The timetabling of geography rotates with history and only three lessons for pupils in Years 1 to 6 were observed. Judgements are therefore also based on looking at the quality of pupils' work and by speaking to staff and looking at their planning. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very positive as shown in the small number of lessons observed. Pupils respond with enthusiasm in these lessons because teachers provide them with an interesting range of activities, and resources are used effectively to gain pupils' attention.
131. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop a sense of space and place. They experience and explore their immediate environment and can identify windows and doors on a plan of the classroom. In a good lesson for younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the teacher introduces the class to 'Barnaby Bear' and pupils are able to recognise the areas of the classroom in which Barnaby has been placed. Pupils show great pleasure when each member of the group finds Barnaby and responds to photographs of different areas of the classroom.
132. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learnt about weather conditions and explore what types of clothes are best worn in different conditions. They choose what objects they would use on a sunny day or a wet day, express a preference for certain weather conditions and record these details in a sensory book. They investigate the local area, including visits to the local shops and ambulance station. Pupils are able to read simple maps and have made plans of directions to the local library. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in a good Years 3 and 4 lesson were able to recognise up to three landmarks in the local area from photographs shown to them. They were able to communicate their understanding using a concept keyboard and objects of reference.
133. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are able to understand directional language such as 'near' and 'far'. They use pictures to show familiar places and make simple plans and maps of familiar local areas. Pupils in Year 8 can describe how areas of land and water are represented on a map. They can identify and describe different types of weather, expressing a preference for the type of weather they like. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils show some understanding of environmental awareness and how it relates to their own lives. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon the lifestyles of other cultures and understand that different people live different lives to them. All pupils benefit from this focus and the subject is well planned to ensure they can all participate.
134. At the time of the previous inspection, there were no co-ordinated schemes of work to ensure continuity and progression across the school. This has now been successfully addressed by the enthusiastic co-ordinator and the school now has a comprehensive policy document which gives good guidance for non-specialist staff. However, both the arrangements for monitoring the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and the delivery of the subject are unsatisfactory.

## **HISTORY**

135. The provision for history is satisfactory. Owing to timetabling arrangements, in which history rotates with geography, only one lesson was observed being taught; this was for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been studying geography. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. Scrutiny of work and interviews with staff and pupils indicate that pupils throughout the school acquire a satisfactory range of historical knowledge. All pupils up to Year 9 are given the opportunity to study history.
136. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about the passage of time through daily routines and can anticipate events of the day and sequence events of the recent past. Pupils develop an awareness of their own and others' development from birth. They recognise themselves and other people in pictures of the recent past. One pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties was able to use a speech output device to recall the events of the day, while another used symbols and objects of reference to represent particular activities that he had participated in. By the end of Year 6, pupils have studied the lives of famous people from the past, such as Florence Nightingale and John Logie Baird. Pupils in Year 6 have also made a wreath and placed it on the local war memorial on Remembrance Day. Local facilities are used well. Pupils have made visits to Bedford Museum and compared a Victorian kitchen to a kitchen from the 1950s. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have studied the story of King Harold and why William Duke of Normandy wanted to be King of England. They have also learned about World War Two and what happens to people during wartime. They have considered the moral aspects of people fighting and thought about how people must feel. One pupil wrote that 'a war would make you sad'. This reflects the caring attitude that is successfully promoted throughout the school.
137. Improvement in history since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Recent planning is good and there is a comprehensive curriculum which gives good guidance in clarifying what should be taught and what the learning outcomes should be and which pays due regard to including all the pupils. Documentation has been reviewed and extended since the last inspection and has been influential in achieving improvement. Resources are now satisfactory and, as a result, there are sufficient resources and artefacts to support planned work. However, the subject co-ordinator is aware of the need to improve assessment and recording procedures to enable the school to effectively monitor pupils' progress and to evaluate the teaching of history throughout the school.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

138. Pupils are achieving well and make steady progress. They each have individual targets for improving their skills in using ICT which are precise and well founded in relation to their special educational needs. While, by the age of six, pupils are attaining well below the entry level of the National Curriculum for ICT, as a consequence of good teaching, they are achieving well in working towards this. Among pupils with multi-sensory impairments, a higher attaining boy recognises switches for what they are and uses one to activate the bubble tube in the interactive light and sound room. Although another pupil resists choosing a piece of equipment to interact with, she responds to illuminated fibre optic strands by reaching out, holding them and passing them through her fingers. This leads to her operating the switch for them, which in the course of the lesson represents very good progress.
139. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils give a few examples of sources of information, for example by asking questions or listening to recordings, which takes them near to the first level of attainment of the National Curriculum and in some aspects

beyond this. For instance, with a computer they control events on the screen by pointing and clicking a mouse or entering commands through the keyboard. A higher attaining girl independently accesses the Internet using screen commands and uses the information on the screen to locate and play a mathematical game. She and others know about and use a program to make a graph with data they have collated. This attainment is consolidated within a wider range of pupils by the age of 16, although while the rate of progress is as expected, it is not as high as for younger pupils. Pupils enter log-on codes to start up the computer following information on prompt cards. Using pictorial symbols on a simplified keyboard, they construct sentences in words and symbols. For example, drawing on their knowledge of Macbeth, they type 'King Duncan is the King of Scotland'. Some pupils made good progress through sharing their ideas on making a video and planning its use in a multimedia presentation. They found out about, and learned a vocabulary for, video and digital cameras, tape-recording and image projection.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The group of pupils with multi-sensory impairments is taught very well. Here, the teacher communicates very effectively with pupils, ensuring intentions, which are based on very high expectations, are clearly understood. Pupils follow the teacher's instructions very well and produce considerable efforts to achieve tasks. The teacher also uses a very good knowledge of pupils in planning work and assessing progress. These are thorough and match very closely each pupil's individual needs. As with all of the good teaching seen, many opportunities are found for pupils to build on a range of essential skills. Alongside learning ICT, pupils improve speaking and listening skills through discussion of their work or manipulation skills in keying in information and commands. Pupils also work increasingly independently and, for practice in using computers, use their Macbeth work from English, which in addition secures their knowledge and understanding here.
141. The few shortcomings in teaching are accounted for by some teachers not having sufficient expertise, in ICT applications in particular, to incorporate the technology into the teaching of other subjects. For example, one teacher struggled to fit the objectives for mathematics and ICT into the lesson and this resulted in too little time for pupils to practise making computer-generated graphs. This reflects the fact that teachers are part way through their training programme. They have, nevertheless, a positive frame of mind and are enthusiastic about making good use of the knowledge and skills they are currently learning. To an extent this is already manifest in many subjects, for example in geography, where a pupil uses a simplified keyboard to indicate preferences. Various types of electronic switches, some with voice simulation, are used effectively throughout the school to aid pupils' communication.
142. There is a satisfactory improvement in ICT since the last inspection. Teachers' knowledge and skills are being developed and this is helping increase the use of ICT in other subjects. Equipment is modern, sufficient and accessible to all pupils whatever their learning difficulty or background. The designation of a learning support assistant to ICT ensures teachers have technical help at hand and, by contracting a part-time technician, the school has, importantly, immediate cover when equipment needs servicing and updating.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

143. Four lessons were observed between Years 7 and 9 and in each lesson pupils showed a good level of interest and willingness to participate in speaking the target language. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but varies from outstanding to satisfactory. Whilst teachers all have good knowledge of the subject and some have faultless spoken French, they do not make the most effective use of their skills to promote pupils' learning. For example, in one lesson, the teacher chose one pupil to ask of the other pupils 'comment tu t'appelle?' and 'quel age as tu?' Whilst this technique gave one pupil much valuable experience, the remainder were required to wait their turn. However, in an outstanding lesson with pupils in Years 8 and 9, the pupils were fully involved for the whole of the lesson and enjoyed singing French songs or naming the colour of articles hidden in a bag.
144. The planning of French lessons varies in quality. In the best lessons all tasks are linked so that pupils build steps by the work they have covered in previous lessons. Where planning is less effective, lessons comprise a series of activities which occupy the pupils rather than develop their knowledge and skills. The current focus on speaking and listening skills is appropriate to levels of the pupils' emerging achievements but the procedures for recording their progress are inconsistent.
145. The curriculum sensibly concentrates on basic social conversation which the pupils use in classrooms and during school trips to France.

### **MUSIC**

146. Overall, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Listening to and enjoying music, as well as singing, are used by teachers as a vehicle to promote a wide range of learning. As communication is often complicated, it provides pupils with cues for starting and finishing work, which helps them give attention and to know what to anticipate. Music and performance have a high profile in the school's work. Among several annual events, the end of year production involves every pupil. Last year they presented 'Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'.
147. Up to the age of eleven, pupils, whether they have severe or more complex learning difficulties, are well included in lessons and achieve much more than expected because much of their learning about music is planned very effectively. In particular, while pupils listen to and participate in music, they are improving in a wide range of areas essential to their whole development. When, for example, most of the pupils of primary age gather together for music, they sit quietly and listen attentively, which in itself is quite an achievement for the youngest in the group. This lesson format is one of 'circle time' and pupils are familiar with the routines involved so they confidently sing 'hello' to each other. When prompted, some also accompany this with signing. They choose simple percussion instruments and know whether to shake, drum or scrape with them to make a sound. When they move to the singing of 'See the little sandy boy', the pupils take turns to pair up, involving each choosing a partner to dance with. The pupils with complex learning difficulties, confined to their chairs, are included very positively as ambulant pupils choose them as partners as naturally as anyone in the group. In their turn, pupils with complex difficulties participate continuously and are involved at an impressive level in the dance routine, one girl, for example, stretching out her hands towards her partner to begin the dance. The improvement of pupils' physical skills and

their social development are effectively catered for and in these respects they make very good progress.

148. Beyond the age of eleven, the majority of pupils make the amount of progress expected. They continue to listen to music showing interest and enjoyment in pieces that are familiar to them. Pupils respond appropriately to different characteristics in music whether it is fast and energetic or soft and relaxing in its rhythms and tones. They match the expression of the sounds they create with percussion instruments, taking turns and performing on cue. However, pupils are not developing sufficiently their control over the sounds they generate by developing knowledge and skills of beat and rhythms. Pupils with complex learning difficulties around the ages of 14 and 16 are achieving well in some respects through music lessons. They all show enjoyment and the span of their attention is good. A few recognise, hold and shake a tambourine or maraca. More participation in playing instruments independently through increased physical control and movement is held up by staff over-assisting these pupils perform.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. While there is not a high level of music expertise at work in directing lessons, the best teaching emerges from a combination of a good understanding of pupils' special educational needs and the imaginative interpretation of the school's music curriculum. In these circumstances, lessons are planned and approached thoroughly. Teachers are skilful in organising activities that have the variety and challenge to generate pupils' enthusiasm and effort. In this, they make very good use of plentiful music resources and ensure opportunities for pupils to listen and perform. Pupils of all abilities learn to appreciate music and develop knowledge of musical instruments and the sounds they make. This teaching promotes very effectively pupils' physical and communication skills as well as their personal and social development. In some lessons seen, the teachers' planning does not make clear what they want pupils to learn or, if these objectives are stated, they are not addressed well in the activities arranged. In one lesson, for example, while pupils did well in listening to excerpts from a musical version of Macbeth and spontaneously accompanied this with their percussion instruments, they did not, as intended, experiment with tempo and tone. This would have been an appropriately challenging activity for them and a learning opportunity was missed.
150. The improvement in the provision for music since the last inspection is good and this has raised the standards pupils now achieve. The re-visioning of the music curriculum and the acquisition of good musical resources has benefited teaching, which shows improvement. As the curriculum is relatively new and teachers have now put it into practice, rigorous evaluation of its success is necessary. However, the arrangement for carrying out monitoring lags behind the curriculum initiative. The music co-ordinator has the insight and energy to give the lead to raising standards further but, until monitoring and evaluative work is well underway, the leadership is confined to being just satisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

151. All pupils up to the age of eleven are achieving well beyond what is expected as the result of very effective teaching, focusing consistently on activities that significantly improve pupils' movement and physical skills. All pupils are helped to participate in activities, for example in one excellent activity, seven pupils with complex learning difficulties and few physical skills, each supported by an adult assistant, practised moving their arms, legs and heads in a series of warm-up exercises. They know the routines and enjoy being taken through the exercises. Most make considerable efforts to move their limbs without help. When gently swinging to and fro or sliding over the floor,

they eagerly communicated their enjoyment of moving in space. Throughout the lesson, their responses and level of engagement were at the highest level they could achieve. Pupils with multi-sensory impairments achieve highly, moving a ball forward with a hockey stick past obstacles. Other pupils with greater physical skills achieve as highly in water, developing their confidence and the arm and leg actions to propel them along. Higher attaining pupils move with greater independence towards actually swimming.

152. By the age of 16, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in gymnastics and athletics. Progress in swimming is very good because of the instructor's very good expertise in developing pupils' physical skills and their ability to swim. By the time they are 16, many pupils have gained distance certificates for swimming using front and backstrokes. Sometimes, physical activities in the hall are not based on well-articulated learning objectives and therefore the work pupils do does not contribute more significantly to their achievement. They listen carefully for instructions, work together as a team and happily take turns. This is equally evident on the field. Pupils watch the teacher's demonstration of warm-up exercises and attempt to replicate this but do not achieve the level of muscular activity required to prepare them well for further exercise. Pupils run a race and putt the shot without good technique although, in the course of a lesson, both improve satisfactorily following coaching from the teacher.
153. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very often excellent in the primary years and in swimming. In the secondary years, in gymnastics and on the field, teaching and learning in physical education are satisfactory. The youngest pupils, including those with multi-sensory impairments and complex learning difficulties, are given excellent opportunities for learning because teachers, support staff and the swimming instructor have a sharp understanding of each pupil's physical needs. They exercise considerable expertise in meeting these by planning an interesting and challenging range of activities. Expectations are very high and work moves at a considerable pace. Pupils learn new skills, for example pushing a ball towards another or kicking with their legs to move through the water. Other opportunities are very effectively incorporated into this, such as pupils working together, taking turns, counting and learning left from right. Learning objectives are very clear and they focus on pupils practising the movements that build precisely on what they have already achieved. Teachers and support staff watch pupils' performance closely and are quick to notice any breakthrough, for example when a boy who had recent surgery on his legs began placing his weight on them and resumed taking steps. The collaboration with physiotherapists is particularly good in this respect and they frequently join lessons to make observations. In one instance, a physiotherapist assessed a girl's reactions in the water during a swimming lesson to offer support to her parents who were concerned at her aversion to showering at home.
154. For pupils in the secondary years, lessons, although satisfactory, were much less challenging. Teachers plan a variety of gymnastic and athletic activities which are structured and energetic out of which pupils derive good physical exercise. However, the work pupils do lacks clear learning objectives which would allow pupils to extend what they have already achieved. The curriculum plan for physical education, which has yet to be finalised and not in operation, is a significant factor influencing the quality of teaching and learning.
155. The improvement in physical education since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, although there is quite a mixed picture. The standards pupils now achieve are much better in some aspects of the subject, particularly for younger pupils, and this is a consequence of much improvement in teaching. A new swimming pool has been added to resources and this is an excellent facility contributing to improvement in the good

standards in swimming and water skills seen during the last inspection. The indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are inadequate, particularly for older pupils, and this restricts what they achieve. There is not the space in and around the school to change this. However, the school has done well to maintain good use of sports facilities in the community and thereby avoids the worst effects from a lack of facilities. Leadership in physical education has not improved. The curriculum was inadequate at the time of the last inspection and this has not been resolved.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

156. The provision for, and standards achieved in, religious education are good and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the subject had only just been included in the curriculum. Pupils make good progress now compared to the satisfactory progress at the time of the last inspection. The improvement has come about because of the creative and imaginative co-ordination of the subject. The co-ordinator has skilfully adapted the locally agreed syllabus so that it is accessible and relevant to the needs of pupils with complex learning difficulties and reflects the pupils' varied lifestyles, backgrounds and beliefs.
157. By Year 2, pupils make good progress through experiencing the smells and tastes associated with Easter. Very good use of drama results in these pupils exploring Easter bonnets with enjoyment and the development of their communication skills is good. By Year 6, pupils experience what happens during important religious festivals such as Diwali, through the medium of role-play, which is effectively planned for them by their enthusiastic teacher. Through a sensory approach to teaching, these pupils have joined in the festivity associated with the Eid party celebrated by Muslims. Unless a medical reason prevented them, pupils have tasted the food associated with Eid and photographic evidence indicates that they enjoyed the experience.
158. Because of the developmental needs associated with their learning difficulties, the knowledge and understanding of the festival are non-existent for most pupils. However, a higher attaining pupil in Year 5 has some understanding of the significance of the event and all pupils, including those with multiple sensory impairment and profound and multiple learning difficulties, are fully included in experiencing the event. The higher attaining pupil in Year 5 can sequence the story of the life of Jesus independently and he also knows that the Muslim name for God is Allah.
159. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils continue to make good progress and the highest attainers gain a good understanding that Christians worship in a church and Sikhs worship in a gurdwara. Through well-planned visits, all pupils experience what it is like inside a church and a gurdwara. In Years 10 to 11, pupils make good gains in their social development through experiencing interesting and well-planned religious education lessons. Following a visit to an elderly lady, one Year 11 pupil said, 'We went to visit Sylvia. She had a bad hip. We gave her some flowers. We made her laugh'. The tasting of foods from different cultures contributes well to pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.
160. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons. Photographic evidence indicates that pupils had fun tasting and smelling hot cross buns and simnel cake associated with Easter. There was a gorgeous smile on the face of a Year 11 pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties when she explored the materials used for making a Diva lamp. High attainers in Year 11 spoke with interest and enthusiasm about their visit to places of worship. This sense of fun contributes to pupils' good learning in the subject. It

also contributes to the good communication, whether it is a smile or pointing of the eye for some pupils, or the effective use of functional and expressive language by others.

161. The quality of teaching is good overall. It ranges from very good to satisfactory. Where teaching is very good, the high attainers are challenged because of high expectations, and those pupils with very complex needs are fully included in the planned experiences. In a Years 5/6 lesson, pupils touched and explored Muslim clothes and very good use was made of questions to extend the highest attaining pupil. In a satisfactory lesson for Years 10 and 11 pupils, the highest attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged in the work they were doing about the gurdwara and a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties was not sufficiently included. The teacher's knowledge on one point was also insecure. However, there were a number of strengths in the lesson as well as shortcomings and so it was satisfactory overall. Overall, teachers, through their planning, have made a very difficult syllabus relevant to the pupils and use the subject well to improve pupils' life skills, particularly communication. In the best teaching seen during the inspection, very good use was made of signing by both the teacher and the pupils.
162. The co-ordination of the subject has a number of strengths. The planned scheme of work makes sense of a complex agreed syllabus for pupils in the school. A meaningful and useful assessment system has been developed but it has yet to be launched. However, the co-ordinator has not had the time to observe the quality of teaching and learning in the subject and this is a weakness. The co-ordinator has improved the amount of artefacts to support the teaching of the subject and offers practical help to other teachers, some of whom still lack confidence in the teaching of the subject. However, teachers have not received any formal training to support them in their teaching of this subject for a long time.