

INSPECTION REPORT

REDBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104749

Headteacher: Mrs S.Coates

Reporting inspector: Mrs F.D.Gander
21265

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 249310

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sherwoods Lane Fazackerley Liverpool
Postcode:	L10 1LW
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Norma Georgeson
Date of previous inspection:	16 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21265	Mrs F.D.Gander	Registered inspector	Post 16 Citizenship	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
8937	Mr H. Allan	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Educational inclusion
13101	Mr M. Kell	Team inspector	Design and technology History Geography	How well is the school led and managed?
19386	Mr T. Watts	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27429	Mrs M. Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Modern foreign language	
16198	Mrs C. Etherington	Team inspector	English Religious education	
30243	Mrs A. Heakin	Team Inspector	Science Art and design Music Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Redbridge High School is a special school situated in Liverpool and is part of a mini Educational Action Zone. Since its last inspection in 1997 it has been renamed as part of the Local Education Authority's (LEA) reorganisation. Only a few of the present pupils attended the school before this reorganisation. The school is now smaller, provides education for pupils between the ages of eleven and nineteen who come from all parts of the city. There are presently 81 pupils at the school, with 27 of them being over the age of 16. Some of these students enter the Post 16 provision from other special schools in the city. As the school provides education for pupils and students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) or severe learning difficulties, the levels of attainment on entry are well below the national average. There are also two classes of pupils who have Autism. Almost a quarter of the pupils or students have very challenging behaviour and some require high levels of support. There are 42 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals, which is above average for similar schools. Four pupils have English as an additional language, and altogether nine pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has Investors in People Award, the Basic Skills Award, and the Healthy Schools Award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. The majority of pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Due to the very good emphasis on personal development and social skills, and the provision within the Post 16 department, students leave school very well prepared for the transition into the adult world. The relationships that exist between pupils and all staff are very good. The very good teaching ensures that pupils overcome their difficulties and learn. This, along with the very good management of behaviour, ensures that all pupils and students are very well behaved, and do not put themselves and others in danger. The school is very well managed and responds positively to the changing, and sometimes challenging, needs of pupils and students. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils and students achieve very well and make very good progress because they are very well taught, especially in physical education, music, art and mathematics.
- The provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and for those with autism, is very good.
- The provision for Post-16 students is very good and prepares them very well for leaving school.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT), and for pupils to develop language and communication skills, are very good.
- There is mutual respect between staff and pupils, and the very good relationships that exist lead to pupils having high esteem.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop a high level of personal independence, social skills and socially acceptable behaviour.
- There are very good opportunities for students to experience the world of work.

What could be improved

- A whole school policy for promoting reading at all levels across the school needs developing, and the identification of the training and resourcing issues that are linked to this.
- There needs to be more effective use made of the accommodation so that there is provision for a library, more space for the teaching and care of PMLD pupils, and for the teaching of music, art and design, ICT, and for design and technology.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997 and was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since then the issues identified have been very effectively addressed. A number of new staff have been appointed and there is now a good level of support in classrooms. The quality of teaching, then satisfactory, is now very good. There is improved provision for ICT and Post 16 students have new accommodation. The quality of curriculum has improved considerably and now takes account the different attainment levels of pupils and the National Curriculum. Schemes of work have been produced, and a vocational curriculum has been introduced for older pupils. The class groups have been reviewed and there is clear rationale concerning the curriculum and the allocation of staff to the groups. The assessment of pupils' attainment has improved, along with the monitoring of progress and the quality of teaching and learning. Leadership and management have improved significantly, as well as the involvement of governors and co-ordinators in developing and improving the school.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Overall, all pupils and students in relation to their prior attainment, achieve very well. This is due to the very good teaching, which for some pupils is very specialised. The majority of pupils and students make very good progress in communication, information and communication technology, music, and physical education. During the French lessons seen during the inspection pupils were also making very good progress, but because it has not previously been part of some pupils' curriculum they have not made this degree of progress over time. Due to the very good provision for pupils with PMLD, or Autism, and for students at Post 16, they make very good progress. Pupils make good progress in all other subjects, including science, numeracy, and in literacy where they use of signs and symbols for reading. Higher attaining pupils and students who have the ability to recognise and read the written word make satisfactory progress. Pupils make very good progress in personal and social education, and steady progress in being made in the recently introduced citizenship. Overall, pupils make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual educational plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about coming to school and taking part in all the activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is very good and is the result of the relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of the impact that their actions have on others.
Personal development and relationships	The very good levels of personal development that pupils and students achieve by the time they leave school demonstrates the effectiveness of the curriculum and the contribution that the excellent opportunities for social development make to it.
Attendance	This is satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good and meets the needs of all pupils. There were examples of excellent teaching in science, physical education and personal and social education. Very good teaching occurs in all subjects but is consistently very good in mathematics, art and design, information and communication technology, physical education, the recently introduced French lessons, and at Post 16. Overall, teaching and learning is good in all other subjects. Across the school communication is also taught well. However, the teaching of reading to higher attaining pupils is not consistent across the school. The specialist teaching of the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or those with autism is very good, and the teamwork between all staff in these classes is a strength. All teachers have high expectations of achievement and they have developed a consistent approach to managing the challenging behaviour of some pupils and students. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well, and as a result they plan, organise, and support a range of learning activities that match the pupils' and students' differing attainment. The support provided by the teaching assistants is of high quality and they use their skills and initiative well to help pupils learn and teachers teach.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is very good for students in the Post 16 classes. It is good for other pupils and meets statutory requirements well. The teaching of French has only just started in the school, and there are some pupils who have missed the opportunity to experience this aspect of the curriculum and demonstrate their achievements. In addition, with the introduction of a vocational curriculum for older pupils, the opportunities to focus on science and investigation are being eroded away.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school provides well for these pupils and enables them to make considerable gains in their communication.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. The excellent opportunities for social development help pupils and students to become more mature and cope with life outside school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The assessment, and monitoring, of pupils' and students' progress is very good. This is a very caring school where the highest priority is given to the care and well-being of all pupils and students.
The partnership the school has with parents	This is very good and the school keeps the parents very well informed. Although only a few give regular support to the school, all parents are very positive about the school's provision for their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The management provided by the headteacher, governors and the senior management team is very good. Leadership is good, and along with the high quality management has resulted in a very much improved school where the aims and values are reflected throughout the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors are very committed to, and active in, the work of the school. They have detailed first hand knowledge about the school's strengths and weaknesses and therefore contribute very well to shaping the future direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed very good systems for evaluating how well it is doing. It is therefore a strong position to identify its priorities, set targets and to take action to address them.
The strategic use of resources	This is very good. Spending is tightly controlled; money is used wisely to provide the support and resources where they are most needed. The school is particularly effective in applying the principles of 'best value'.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources;	The school is very well staffed, and overall the quality and quantity of the resources are good. However, overall accommodation is unsatisfactory as many areas are too small for the needs of the pupils, and there are insufficient rooms for teaching of art and design, music, and design and

	technology.
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PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of pupils is good. • The quality of teaching across the school is good. • The school deals with problems promptly. • The school expects the pupils to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework pupils are given. • The range of activities outside lessons. • The communication between the school and themselves.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments concerning the school. It feels that the school communicates well with parents, provides a good range of activities outside lessons and that the provision of homework is appropriate to the needs of the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, in relation to their prior attainment, all pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well and make very good progress. Students at Post 16, through the very appropriate curriculum experiences, also achieve very well and are well prepared for transition into adulthood. The very good progress that pupils and students make is due to the overall high quality teaching that occurs across the school. This is further enhanced by amount of adult support that is available in each lesson, and when pupils and students go out into the community to learn.

2. Pupils who have profound learning difficulties achieve very well. The well considered curriculum, the detailed and individual planning, and very good teaching play a significant part in the quality of this provision. Pupils' personal and educational needs are very well met because the three teachers, who work in this section of the school, work very much as a team. Along with the very competent team of non-teaching staff they support each other and collaborate when necessary. The caring, friendly but appropriately challenging environment promotes the very good progress made by these pupils. The pupils with autistic spectrum disorder also make very good progress, especially in communication and personal development. They are taught very well by two well-qualified teachers and supported by experienced teaching assistants. The teaching is very structured and by means of skilful and consistent use of symbol or picture timetable, sequenced instructions and very good signing, pupils are helped to make sense of their day.

3. In English, pupils in Years 7 to 11 make very good progress in speaking, listening and in communication. The training and use of the co-ordinator as a link between the speech and language service, the class teachers, the parents and pupils, is particularly effective and contributes to the progress pupils and students make. Pupils' progress and achievements in reading and writing are satisfactory. While they make good progress in reading signs and symbols, there are some higher attaining pupils who are capable of extending their word recognition skills, their ability to use phonics and to read the written word. Some teachers are including appropriate reading targets in pupils' individual education plans, and encourage pupils to take reading books home and read with their families on a regular basis. However, some classes do not have a daily literacy lesson where pupils develop their independent reading skills at an appropriate individual rate. In addition, the inadequate library facilities in the school do not promote the use of books and the written word. As a result, there are some pupils who are underachieving in these areas.

4. The achievement and progress that pupils and students make in mathematics is good overall, and linked to the quality for teaching. Good emphasis is placed on reinforcing these skills in other subjects, especially in physical education and independent living skills, although more emphasis could be made in lessons of design and technology, and geography. Students at Post 16 make good progress in their understanding of numeracy, mainly due to the relevant emphasis on using these skills in everyday situations. Information and communication technology is used effectively in mathematics lessons both in the classroom and in the ICT room and therefore pupils make good progress in consolidating their learning through a visual and interactive approach.

5. Pupils' achievements in science in Years 7 to 9 is good, and is the result of detailed planning which takes into account pupils' differing attainment levels and their ability to understand difficult concepts. The school's decision for pupils in Year 11 to follow a more vocational curriculum is appropriate but it does mean that they do not follow a specific

science course. Science is part of other lessons, such as food technology and independence in the community. However, investigation work that goes with the subject is lost, and the curriculum planning does not identify which areas of science are being covered or how well pupils are achieving in this subject. The fact that the school does not have a specialist science room restricts the range of work that can be carried out safely, and this restricts the progress pupils can make. At Post 16, students use their scientific knowledge and understanding in everyday situations, such as in food technology, in gardening, photography and when on work experience.

6. The majority of pupils and students also make very good progress in information and communication technology, music, and physical education. This is directly linked to the quality of the teaching. In information and communication technology teachers have benefited greatly from in-service training but also from the advice and support they receive from an ICT technician. The smooth running of the equipment, the modifying of programs, and the resources being available in the right place at the right time enables teachers to make maximum benefit of pupils' learning. The expertise shown by the teaching assistants also makes a significant contribution to learning in all lessons. In music, the consistently high standards of teaching result in the subject being a strength of the school. A secure learning environment is created where pupils overcome their natural reluctance to perform.

7. In physical education, the very high quality teaching by a specialist teacher is resulting in pupils and students of all attainment levels, and those with challenging and difficult behaviour achieving very well. The very challenging pace of some of the excellent lessons seen during the inspection motivated pupils and students to try very hard. During the week of the inspection, pupils who took part in French lessons were also making very good progress. After only five lessons, the overall achievement by pupils is much higher than would be expected of pupils who have learning difficulties. Because all pupils have been disapplied from this part of the curriculum the higher attaining pupils have not had the opportunity to achieve as much as they should.

8. Pupils and students make good progress in all other subjects. They make good progress in food technology but the lack of emphasis on other aspects of design and technology, such as working with resistant materials leads to an imbalance in their achievements in this subject. In personal, social and health education pupils and students make very good progress. The emphasis on personal independence and independence in the community is of high priority and contributes to the overall progress that pupils and students make in becoming young adults. This is very well supported by the residential experiences and the well-planned activities that take place outside the confines of the school. The school has introduced citizenship into this aspect of the curriculum and they are making steady progress in this area.

9. Pupils and students make very good progress in the targets set in individual educational plans. This is because the targets are precise and relevant to pupils' needs, both personally and educationally. Students who are taking part in work experience opportunities are monitored well to ensure that the experiences support their learning as well as their personal and social development. Pupils and students for whom English is an additional language learn just as well as the other pupils whom they work alongside in each class.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and their attitudes to the work and activities are very good. They arrive with their escorts in happy mood and eagerly greet their teachers and teaching assistants. They try hard in lessons and many are able to maintain concentration for long periods. Even pupils or students with more challenging behaviour or

severe learning difficulties concentrate on their work due to the very good support from teachers and teaching assistants that ensures all pupils and students take as full a part as possible in all lessons.

11. Pupils' and student's behaviour both in class and around school is very good. Many have a good understanding of right from wrong and respond appropriately in most situations. Despite there being a significant number of pupils and students with challenging behaviour there have been no exclusions. There is no bullying or oppressive behaviour. The few incidents of poor behaviour are usually restricted to pupils for whom communication is particularly difficult and is the result of frustration. Such incidents are not usually allowed to disrupt lessons. Pupils and students move around school without disrupting others, for example when changing classrooms. On the many visits into the community seen during the inspection pupils' behaviour was impeccable. There is a clear sense that pupils, and especially students on work experience, understand they are representing the school and are proud to do so.

12. Pupils' and students' all make very good progress in aspects of personal development. For example, some parents and carers were very pleased with the progress their children had made in feeding and dressing themselves, other parents were very pleased that their children were better able to deal with new situations. Relationships at the school are very good. All pupils and students have particularly good relationships with the staff. During lessons pupils and students are expected to be responsible for their work and get out and put away materials when appropriate, with students in the Post 16 classes taking on additional responsibilities around school. Pupils and students are encouraged to help others in lessons and usually respect others by being quiet and allowing them to concentrate. Lunchtime is a well used social time where all classes mix well with each other and pupils are encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves. By the time pupils reach school leaving age they have formed a strong bond with their peers. For example, in a Post 16 'Circle time' session students were able to communicate very effectively that they will be sad when their friends leave school as they will miss them. At the same time the students also expressed feelings of pleasure that friends would be making important steps forward such as going to college or taking up opportunities for independence by living on their own.

13. Those pupils and students who have profound difficulties or who are autistic develop very good attitudes to school. They respond very well to the well-prepared opportunities given to participate in the sensory curriculum. Effective lesson planning based on very good knowledge of pupils' individual needs means, for example pupils learn to brush their own hair with adult support, tolerate and enjoy controlling a foot spa as part the health care module in the science curriculum. Pupils learn to accept and enjoy the strong emphasis on physical development through physiotherapy, use of the light and sound room and rebound therapy. The relationships between adults and pupils are such that the pupils can be persuaded to participate fully in all these activities. The appropriate use of electronic switches, digital cameras and computer monitors contributes to pupils' personal development, giving a sense of achievement when they have been able to indicate a choice or see their creative work displayed on the screen. Achievement, over time, by autistic pupils is clearly seen, as those who could only work in isolation when they first came to the school, now sit together to work in a group, or join others at the table for snack time.

14. The level of pupils' attendance at 91 per cent is in line with the average for similar types of school. Most pupils attend school when they are well and there is little cause for concern about individual pupils' attendance. The school day can be a little delayed due to the late arrival of some transport but this is not allowed to disrupt lessons. Lessons throughout the day start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching and learning is overall very good, and this has improved greatly since the last inspection when it was overall satisfactory. This has been brought about principally by the appointment of new teachers with particular relevant in teaching pupils with a range of special educational needs and challenging behaviour. The quality of teaching in half the lessons observed was very good or excellent, a much higher proportion than in most schools. The exemplary teaching occurs in physical education, science and personal and social education. Although there was very good teaching in all subjects, it consistently occurred in mathematics, art and design, music, information and communication technology, physical education, the recently introduced French lessons and at Post 16. Overall, teaching and learning is good in all other subjects. Across the school communication is also taught well, and teachers pay attention to the promotion of numeracy in other subjects and the use of ICT to support learning. However, the teaching of reading for higher attaining pupils are only satisfactory. The teaching of personal, social and health lessons is good, with very good planning and use of equipment and materials. However, some of these timetabled lessons for lower attaining pupils are not planned in enough detail and although they are actually essential times for changing, physiotherapy or feeding, but there is a need to ensure the all the time is used to the best advantage for pupils.

16. Teaching of pupils who have profound learning difficulties is consistently very good. Though pupils are taught in three separate classes they are still within the same base and this allows teachers to support each other and work collaboratively if necessary. There is also very good teaching in the classes for autistic pupils. In these classes teamwork from all the adults is a strong feature of the very good teaching. The high staffing ratio means that pupils' responses are immediately noted and encouraged. Teachers record pupils' achievements after every lesson, referring to the lesson targets and comparing the targets with the achievements. This system ensures that no opportunity is missed to encourage pupils to achieve well, and that all lessons are planned meticulously based on pupils' individual needs. The non-teaching staff are well informed, sensitive and caring, they make a significant contribution to pupils' progress.

17. The overall high quality of teaching and learning is the result of the high expectations of achievement that teachers have and the consistent approach to managing the challenging behaviour of some pupils and students. Teachers have developed a high knowledge of their subjects, and where specialist teachers teach subjects, such as in physical education, it is of a particularly high quality. The majority of teachers communicate very well with pupils, and as a result pupils listen well and those who are able communicate confidently. Teachers use picture symbols well to help pupils participate in making choices during the lessons. Teachers and support staff are very careful to encourage pupils to respond with words, sounds, touching a switch, or pointing to a picture, symbol or word. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well, and as a result they plan, organise and support a range of learning activities that match the pupils' and students' differing attainment. The support provided by the teaching assistants is of high quality. They are hardworking, knowledgeable and use their skills and initiative well to help pupils learn and teachers teach.

18. The majority of lesson planning is consistent across the school as most medium term plans provide teachers with a firm basis for planning lessons. However, the medium term planning for geography, history and for design and technology does not contain enough details about the expected learning outcomes and therefore the lesson planning does not always have enough information to use as a basis for assessment. In those subjects where there is exemplary teaching, for example in physical education, there are expected learning outcomes at four different levels and also details of pupils' next targets for learning. Of

particular note is the high quality planning and organisation of the teaching and learning that takes place outside the school in the community.

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

19. There has been a very significant improvement to the quality and range of the curriculum since the last inspection when there were significant weaknesses in the curriculum that affected the pupils' progress. The school now provides a good and appropriate range of subjects to each age group and ability group of pupils. The teaching time each week is now sufficient to cover all of the subjects. The timetable is better organised, although there is still room for improvement in the timing of some lessons and different subjects. The lesson planning is now much better and based on assessment of pupils' progress. The school is aware of statutory requirements to monitor and report in compliance with legislation aimed at protecting vulnerable groups. All analysis undertaken by the school confirms there to be no educational inclusion issues.

20. The balance and variety of subjects differs across the school, but the balance of subjects for different groups of pupils is well thought through and meets the pupils' needs. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are provided with the subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as religious education and personal and social education. There is a good balance between the subjects, although some classes teach much more of one subject, such as religious education, than other classes but in general this is balanced out over the two-week time table that the school operates. As the school has a policy for the disapplication a foreign language most pupils in these year groups they have not had opportunities to experience the language. However, the school has recently piloted the teaching of French to some higher attaining pupils and are evaluating the success of this venture.

21. In Years 10 and 11, the school has opted to provide a more vocationally related curriculum concentrating on developing pupils' independence and the personal and social skills needed for adulthood. This is appropriate and has been well implemented, except in the area of science, where because it is part of other subjects, such as food technology, and independence in the community. It has lost its focus on practical investigation work. The school makes good use of awards and certificates that are approved by national organisations. This vocational curriculum extends into the Post 16 classes and, due to an increased emphasis on personal development and the work related curriculum, it is very good

22. The school pays particular attention to the learning of communication skills. English and literacy are very well supported by staff in all other subjects, such as physical education, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. Other subjects, for example, information and communication technology, physical education, and independence lessons support the teaching of number skills well. However, they are not so apparent or planned for in other subjects, such as design and technology or science, where there are many opportunities to reinforce counting and measuring.

23. The curriculum for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, and for those who are autistic is broad and well structured with an appropriate focus on physical care, personal and social development and a sensory approach to teaching. Detailed planning ensures that there is a very good match between pupils' abilities and the tasks that are set. A few pupils do not have English as their home language. The school makes sure that these pupils receive a good amount of attention with clear targets to meet their particular learning needs. They are fully integrated, and take part in all school activities.

24. There are good opportunities to take part in out-of-school activities, such as a physical education and Sports club after school, and also several residential visits each year. These include indoor and outdoor activities, and are extremely valuable in helping pupils' and students' personal and social development. They involve all pupils who want to go, from those with the greatest physical difficulties to the older more active and adventurous pupils and students. The school's wider use of the community is very good. The school makes good use of these outside visits to support the wider curriculum, such as visiting museums, the theatre, football grounds, and they regularly make very good use of local facilities, such as the supermarket, shops, library and swimming pool. As part of their work experience, almost all of the older pupils go out to local business places, working for periods in, for instance, a pizza outlet, a hairdresser, a sweet factory and a nursery. There are frequent visitors into the school to make the learning richer for the pupils, including recently, a magician, a dance group, several musicians and a theatre group.

25. Links with other educational establishments are good. Despite the good attempts by the school to establish links with a mainstream high school, they have not come to fruition. However, the school is continuing to look further for mainstream schools in which to place some pupils for a small number of well-selected lessons. Very positive relations are kept with the two primary special schools. Pupils make several visits before they are admitted, and staff are regularly in touch with each other. Similarly, when pupils leave the school, they are very well introduced to their next placements. There are also good links with other schools through the local special schools network, and meetings of all schools in the area.

26. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop personally and socially. They do this through a good personal, social and health education curriculum, which includes sex education; drugs awareness; and health, fitness, hygiene and safety. The independence learning is especially good, with a lot of well-focused lessons on, for instance, shopping, managing money, speaking to people in public situations, using public transport, and working together. The citizenship lessons are very valuable in teaching pupils about the society they live in, and their part within it. Careers lessons and work experience for the older students are very well organised aspects of the curriculum.

27. The school's provision for personal development through opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and improved since the last inspection. It is now a strength of the school. Through the effectiveness of all of these areas of provision, and through staff's shared commitment to ensuring that pupils and students of all abilities and with all kinds of special need have equality of opportunity to participate in lessons, visits and all types of school activity, and can become as independent as possible, pupils' and students' personal development is promoted to a very high standard.

28. Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual development is very good. Each class has a daily period of quiet reflection and collective worship at the end of the school day.. Teachers set a very good example to pupils, thanking them for their contribution to the day, and many lessons end with a sessions where pupils are asked to reflect on what they have learned and to celebrate their own and others' progress and achievements. The whole-school assembly covers a variety of themes, including celebration of achievement, and of the main festivals of major world faiths, such as Harvest, Easter, Divali and Eid. At Christmas, a Carol Service open to parents is held at a local church. Pupils learn about the beliefs and traditions of other faiths and cultures in lessons in religious education, history and geography. Staff encourage pupils to think about the wonder of nature and appreciate beauty of art through the wide range of attractive displays in corridors and classrooms in school and when they are out in the community. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties showed awe

and wonder when looking up at huge stained glass windows on a visit to one of Liverpool's cathedrals and this was recorded photographically so that pupils could recall their visit.

29. The school also makes very good provision for pupils' and students' moral development. They are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong and, to see the effect of their actions on others, through the very consistent implementation of a simple but effective code of conduct. This is supported by sets of their own rules developed by individual classes. They are successful because they are positive rather than negative and are based on respect for others and the expectation of good behaviour rather than a list of "don'ts". Good behaviour is always praised by all staff, and is publicly recognised and reinforced, for example by the 'student of the week' award and by certificates for being a 'Buddy' to another pupil. Pupils and students have many opportunities to learn to make choices and take decisions, at first about their own personal preferences for drinks and snacks and later on what to cook in food technology and independence in the community activities. Older students are encouraged to take part in the equivalent of a school council through 'Circle Time' sessions, where they are asked to air any grievances about other students and debate what action should be taken. For those pupils for whom challenging behaviour is part of their specific special educational needs, the school provides very good quality individual behaviour management plans that are implemented consistently by all staff, and pupils and students are set targets to improve and manage their own behaviour through their individual education plans.

30. Provision for pupils' and students' social development is excellent and makes an outstanding contribution to their personal development. Teachers, learning support staff, therapists and medical staff share a school-wide approach to enabling pupils to become as independent as possible, based on the belief that pupils can and should become active and responsible members of society. Formal opportunities for social development are provided in lessons, where pupils are encouraged to work together collaboratively, to share equipment or to wait patiently and take turns in discussion or in class activities. For example, in classes for pupils with autism, many of whom find difficulty in relating to their peers and may prefer to work individually, staff encourage pupils to work closely together as a matter of course. In a very good religious education lesson, pupils were encouraged to lie down quietly and reflect on the meaning of prayer whilst listening to choral music. Because the teacher had put out less big floor cushions than the number of pupils, some had to share with each other and did so with little or no fuss, respecting the solemnity of the activity. The school places particular emphasis on the inclusion in the curriculum of opportunities to develop independence in the community. These are related to a variety of subjects, including science, history, geography and technology, and support the application of basic literacy and numeracy skills through visits to a local library and shops, supermarkets, cafes and sports facilities. As an integral part of these visits, pupils have opportunities to develop their communication skills in practical activities, to use money appropriately and to behave in socially acceptable ways in a variety of life situations.

31. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils learn about their own local cultural heritage through history and geography lessons and associated visits to museums, historical buildings and different places in the locality. They experience popular culture and art through visits to theatres, cinemas and circuses, and through visits from poets, artists and musicians. Every year, all pupils have an opportunity to participate in a whole-school music and drama production. Recent shows have included a variety of cultural learning opportunities, including *The Leaving of Liverpool* about historical emigration, a production based on the musical *Grease*, and *Islands in the Sun*, which had a similar theme to *South Pacific*. Pupils learn about life in a multi-cultural society through visits to places of worship of different faiths in religious education, and through contributions from visitors to the school from different ethnic backgrounds, including the families of some pupils. Every year,

there is a multi-cultural week with a different theme. For example, one was based on the World Cup participants, and pupils learned about the different countries' food, clothing and flags.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. This is a very caring school where the highest priority is given to the care and well-being of all pupils and students. This has been maintained since the last inspection. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' and students' welfare are very good. All staff know all the pupils in their charge very well and respond very effectively if it is clear pupils or students are feeling unhappy or just having an off-day. Child protection procedures are the responsibility of the headteacher and are taken very seriously by everyone at the school. There is very good provision for the many looked after children who all have personal education plans (PEPs) in addition to their IEPs. The school is aware of the implications of new legislation concerning disability and race. There is a whole staff awareness of good practice with regard to health and safety. As a result the school is a safe place for all staff and pupils. Health and Safety issues are handled very effectively by the deputy head teacher who by a series of checklists ensures all safety matters are regularly reviewed. The risk assessments are carried out to a high standard and include assessments of individual pupils, curriculum areas, such as PE, science and food technology, as well as the evaluation of any risks involved in taking pupils on trips into the community or on residential visits. There is an excellent inter-disciplinary team involved with the school that supports the work of the teaching team. Nursing, physiotherapy and social service staff compliment the work of the teachers and teaching assistants to ensure pupils and their families are very well supported.

33. As much information as possible is collated about pupils and students when they join the school and this enables staff to better understand the issues any pupil has to cope with as well as how pupils communicate what they want, like or dislike. This enables teachers to set appropriate personal development targets as soon as a pupil arrives at school. Such targets are set on a termly basis as part of the IEP process. Progress is regularly reviewed and teaching assistants play a vital part in this process and whether supporting one to one or in a group have a good understanding of how best to support pupils. The few pupils who have English as an additional language supported well.

34. The procedures for promoting discipline and behaviour are very good. Behaviour management is the responsibility of the deputy head who is very effective in ensuring there is a consistent approach across the school. There are whole school rules that are understood by most pupils and re-enforced by staff when necessary. Where appropriate pupils have individual behaviour plans that are worked to by teachers and teaching assistants. All teachers are trained in producing pupil or student behaviour management programmes based on a school pro-forma. Incident logs of inappropriate behaviour are kept and these are analysed by the senior management team (SMT). These provide a good basis for evaluating pupil behaviour plans and school practice. The school has considered best practice with regard to restraining pupils where their own safety or the safety of others is compromised. As a result there is very safe practice with regard to restraining pupils when necessary that can only be carried out by properly trained staff. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory.

35. The school's assessment of pupils' and students' progress is very good. The annual formal assessment, combined with the daily recording of achievement, provides teachers with accurate information on learning and personal development. All staff contribute to the recording of progress in lessons. The comments are frequently shared with pupils, either individually or in a group review of the lesson. Several of the plenary sessions, observed, were very effective in reinforcing learning as well as enabling pupils to be aware of the

progress they are making. The school reviews assessment procedures regularly in order to ensure that the smallest achievements are recognised and recorded. The data collected, is monitored by the head teacher. Any deviation from the expected progress in subjects, year groups, or for individual pupils or students, is investigated and appropriate action is taken. Though the headteacher does not monitor the performance of specific groups according to gender, ethnicity, or social disadvantage, she is confident that the current procedures would have identified any differences in the progress of these groups of pupils.

36. Targets for individual education plans, are based on the assessed levels, and the recording of achievement in every lesson. Pupils' and students' needs and abilities are understood well by staff and this enables them to set achievable objectives, and effective strategies to ensure success. This is especially true for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The individual plans for these pupils with additional learning difficulties are integrated well into lesson plans, through differentiated objectives. The use of assessment information in lesson planning for other pupils is very good in maths, English, information technology and physical education. In other subjects, block planning of lessons, means that lesson plans are not informed by progress made in the previous lesson. However, in the best lessons, teachers respond spontaneously to the needs of pupils, and adapt the lesson to meet these needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents view the school very positively. They especially appreciate the 'open door' policy that ensures they are regularly kept informed about their children's progress. Parents spoke highly of the welcome they received when first visiting the school and appreciated the way the school was able to explain the particular type of provision their children would receive. A number of parents confirmed they were so impressed with the school on their initial visit that they were eager their children attend the school despite Redbridge being further away than other similar schools.

38. Most parents live a considerable distance from the school and this means there are very few who are able to help in school. However, the school fully understands and values the contribution parents can make by involving them in their children's education and does much to enable parents to do this. The school has a parental involvement policy and a teacher responsible for maintaining good links with parents. The school regularly consults with parents to get their views on the quality of information the school provides and identify areas parents consider they could be better informed about. The school has been successful in organising courses for parents that enable them to support their children's learning at home. Courses that have been enjoyed by parents include PECs, Mackaton, ICT and behaviour management. In the past the school has been able to use part of its Education Action Zone funding to help parents get to and from school and attend events. However, this specific source of funding has now been withdrawn and the school has to review this service.

39. The school provides a high quality prospectus for parents that gives them a good idea how the school operates and the methods adopted within each of the four bases. The governors' annual report to parents is also well written and easy to read, giving parents an understanding of what each class has done over the year. However, both the prospectus and annual governors' report omit certain statutory information. Other information provided by the school that enables parents to understand the workings of the school include a very high quality termly newsletter and an explanation booklet on the school's approach to teaching language and communication.

40. Parents receive very good information about the progress their children make at school. Most parents attend annual reviews and value the associated reports that are very

detailed and contain much information on the progress their children have made over the previous 12 months. Pupils' IEPs are shared with parents each term so they are aware of targets their children are working towards. The home/school link books are very well used by staff to inform parents about what pupils are doing in class on a day-to-day basis and any small steps their children make in meeting targets. This enables parents to support the work of the school by re-enforcing new learning. The link books are also well used both by parents and teachers to exchange information on the general health and welfare of children. In addition, parents feel confident in contacting the school by telephone to discuss problems or exchange information.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. There have been significant and substantial improvements in the leadership and management of the school since the previous inspection. The establishment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher and changes to the governing body have been influential in ensuring that all shortcomings identified at that time have been addressed very effectively. Consequently, the leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are now very good and they are very well supported in their work by a highly knowledgeable and effective governing body. Together, the whole of the staff and governors are very committed to ongoing school development and are very well placed to enable improvements to be carried forward.

42. Senior managers have specific delegated responsibilities, which they carry out very well, and therefore they are able to make a significant contribution to the school's work. Key staff work extremely well as a team, with a clear and focused sense of purpose and direction. There are very efficient day-to-day systems, routines and procedures in place that produce a highly structured, secure and ordered learning environment that enables the school to fulfil its aims through promoting the values it considers important. Senior managers in the school are equally effective in managing the longer-term development of the school. This is because the school has in place routine and systematic monitoring procedures that enable it to maintain oversight of all aspects of its own performance and of the standards pupils achieve. All members of the senior management team monitor the quality of teaching and learning through classroom observations and examination of teachers' and pupils' files, and there are developing opportunities for subject co-ordinators to fulfil their management responsibilities in this respect. Importantly, senior staff evaluate the results of this monitoring and make appropriate and decisive responses.

43. A very good induction programme for all new staff and embedded performance management procedures underpin and reinforce the school's provision for meeting these aims. It links well to raising standards, the setting of individual and group targets and the training needs of staff. There are good opportunities for teaching staff and non-teaching staff to take part in further training, such as teaching pupils with autism, or profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as in personal and social education. The increased expertise and skills which they gain makes a significant contribution to the pupils' very good achievements.

44. The management of the provision for pupils who have profound learning difficulties is very good. The experienced co-ordinator leads by example and manages the high number of adults efficiently with pupils' best interests always a priority. There is a happy collegiate approach that means teachers are able to share their strengths and successes easily and this contributes to the high quality provision. Resources, including electronic switches and computers are used appropriately to support pupils' learning. However the accommodation is unsatisfactory, the base is too small and though it is managed efficiently by storing wheelchairs and standing frames outside, the small space inhibits the learning opportunities.

Staff have to dismantle tables to allow wheelchair access and movement around the base has to be well orchestrated. Staff work around this problem to the best of their ability.

45. As the school employs robust systems of self-evaluation it is in a strong position to identify its priorities and targets and to then take the necessary action to address them. Appropriate and relevant priorities are reflected in an effective school development plan that also acknowledges the local authority's developmental priorities and those of the education action zone. All members of staff are involved in discussions leading up to the formulation of school priorities and the governing body plays a very important role in shaping the future direction of the school. Governors are able to make such a positive contribution to this process because they have detailed first hand knowledge about the school's strengths and weaknesses. This understanding results not only from formal governors' meetings but also from both planned and informal visits to the school and training that has given them the skills to participate in school evaluation. In addition, governors are very keen to understand the rationale and underlying principles of recommendations that are brought to them and therefore they are always prepared to press for clarification and explanation.

46. Income is only marginally above the average for a school of this type and the school uses its money wisely. Spending is tightly controlled and administered and there are very good arrangements for the day-to-day management of the school's finances. Procedures for linking spending to the school's priorities and longer-term strategic direction are equally very good. The efficiency and effectiveness of the school's overall arrangements were confirmed by the most recent local authority audit carried out at the end of 2001. Accordingly the value for money provided by the school is very good.

47. The school is particularly effective in applying the principles of 'best value' in ensuring that it provides the best value for money in its purchases and use of resources. The chair of the finance committee is especially vigilant in overseeing that the school follows the criteria of best practice very closely. Therefore there is routine consultation with all those involved with the school regarding spending decisions and regular comparisons made with similar schools in terms of its performance and expenditure. In addition, governors and the school management team consider the longer-term implications of their major spending decisions by having in place procedures that enable them to monitor and evaluate the impact of this expenditure on raising standards in the school.

48. The quality and level of staffing are very good and has improved since the last inspection. The managers of the school have recruited and appointed staff with expertise and/or experience so that the needs of the pupils and students, as well as the demands of the specialist curriculum are catered for. Where staff have limited expertise in teaching very special young people the school's induction and in-service training ensures that they quickly become specialists. Teachers are qualified in a range of subjects, and a number have experience in mainstream schools, and this expertise is used well. The school is very well resourced with teaching assistants, and because of this the behaviour of pupils or students with challenging behaviour is very well managed, and also pupils can be taught in small groups within classes. This has a beneficial impact on the progress they make as pupils and students are guided in the learning process, and concentrate and achieve well. The school has also recruited an ICT technician who is of invaluable support to staff in ensuring that the resources function properly, in supporting pupils in lessons, and in training staff. The quality of the work experience is also enhanced by the use of a careers assistant, who has enabled the majority of students to take part in experiences as well as promoting the school with employers.

49. The accommodation is unsatisfactory even though that provided for students at Post 16 is very good. The amount of space available for the increasing number of pupils with

profound and multiple learning difficulties is insufficient and the school has to place three groups of pupils in one area. This means that the layout of the class, and the fittings, have to be reorganised by staff before certain activities, such as stretching or relation can take place. This is a waste of valuable staff time. Although most classrooms in the school have a library or book corner, the school does not have an adequate library area where pupils and students can develop their independence skills in selecting books. At present it is situated in a corner of the corridor and there is no indication that it is a library area, and many pupils do not associate it with the community libraries they visit.

50. The school has some specialist rooms, such as for food technology and ICT. However, in an attempt to provide additional space for the teaching of specialist subjects, such as art and design, music, and design and technology the school has made use of a demountable classroom outside the main building. This also causes problems with time and organisation, as resources cannot be left in this building and they have to be transported along with the pupils at the beginning of lessons. In addition, the room presently used for ICT is too small especially for classes where there are a necessary high number of support staff, or in circumstances where groups of pupils are working on very different tasks. The school needs to rethink its allocation of rooms for specific curricular areas or groups of pupils so that the space is used more effectively. The quality and range of resources are mainly good, and are very good for physical education, ICT and for music.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- 1) Improve the opportunities for pupils to develop reading skills by:
 - developing and implementing a whole school policy on reading;
 - identifying pupils who have the ability to develop word recognition and reading skills;
 - creating time on timetable for the teaching of these skills;
 - identifying the in-service training needs of staff in the teaching of reading to pupils with learning difficulties, and providing relevant courses;
 - increasing the range and amount of resources for reading at different attainment levels;
 - promote literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum.

- 2) Rethink and rationalise the current use of rooms so that more effective space is available for:
 - the teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties;
 - art and design, music, ICT and design and technology;
 - the provision of a library area.

In addition, the Governing Body and headteacher as part of school development planning should give consideration to the following minor issues:

- Science for older pupils
- Expansion of the French curriculum

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	35	28	12	0	0	0
Percentage	6	44	35	15	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	81
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	9	School data	0

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stages

There are no pupils who reach the nationally expected level of attainment in English, mathematics or science by the ages of 7, 11 or 14.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	71	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.75
Average class size	7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	964

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	1043771
Total expenditure	1047935
Expenditure per pupil	11908
Balance brought forward from previous year	28619
Balance carried forward to next year	24455

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	81
Number of questionnaires returned	32

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	22	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	41	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	31	19	0	16
The teaching is good.	66	31	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	22	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	16	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	31	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	56	34	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	63	31	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	38	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	19	3	3	22

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

52. Due to the major changes in the age range of the pupils and in the range of special educational needs and additional learning difficulties since the last inspection, it is inappropriate to make comparisons between the two inspections. However, where comparisons can be made, there are relevant comments.

ENGLISH

53. The school has made a number of improvements to the curriculum for English and other areas of provision, including resources, speech and language support, and implementation of parts of the national literacy strategy, in order to address the changes in the school. Consequently, pupils make good progress overall. However, within this, pupils make more progress in the speaking and listening element of the English curriculum than they do in reading and writing. This is in part due to the ability levels of pupils, but does reflect the amount of emphasis placed on the different elements in the teaching in lessons and by the scheme of work that is followed.

54. All pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening due to the high quality provision for language and communication work, the consistent use of alternative and augmentative communications systems such as signing, the use of symbols and the picture exchange communication system, and the commitment that all staff show to developing pupils' communication skills across the whole curriculum and in activities taking place out of school. It is not appropriate to describe what pupils can do by ages 14 or 16 in this area, as teachers plan activities within each lesson that enable pupils to work towards and achieve their individual language and communication targets from their individual education plans. In addition to the work pupils do in class groups, some lessons during the week are identified for group work where the classes for pupils with severe learning difficulties are set by dividing them up into groups based on their assessed levels of language ability and communication skills rather than by age. These arrangements allow teachers to plan more focused speaking and listening activities at a particular level more relevant to the group of pupils. For example, a group of pupils who are able to speak or sign two word phrases might work on developing three word sentences and then recording these. This results in pupils of all abilities making very good progress whatever their level of prior attainment, type of special educational need or additional learning difficulties.

55. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are encouraged to vocalise wherever this is appropriate, to communicate through signs and symbols, eye pointing, indicating pictures or using technological communication aids such as 'Big Macs'. In their time at the school, pupils learn to concentrate on what is being said or read by adults, to attend carefully to the contributions of their peers, to take turns to contribute themselves and to wait for and anticipate when this will be. Pupils with autism learn to communicate their needs through the picture exchange communication system, by signing and by the use of symbols, and many develop the ability to communicate effectively through speech. Again, emphasis is placed on the use of language as a means of communication and socialisation. This is important because many pupils with autism find communicating and interacting with others difficult. The very good progress that pupils make prepares them well for the next stage of education or future placements and they gain skills that they can use in life after school.

56. In reading, most pupils make good progress in learning to read signs and symbols. Many pupils with severe learning difficulties can use the information they gain to follow instructions for a learning task or a shopping list or recipe in food technology or independence activities. Pupils with autism can use signs and symbolic timetables to help them to understand and structure their day and later their week at school. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties also learn to recognise symbols or pictures that indicate the start and end of a lesson, and other key times of the day such as snack times, lunch and home times, collective worship/prayers and assembly time.

57. The reading survey undertaken during the inspection, including hearing a sample of pupils read and examination of teachers' planning and pupil records, showed that a significant minority of pupils with severe learning difficulties and some higher attaining pupils with autism can read, but that these pupils are making only satisfactory progress in this overall. Factors affecting this include the lack of a whole-school approach to the teaching of initial reading skills and to the development of pupils' reading comprehension. More effective teachers are including appropriate reading targets in pupils' individual education plans, and encourage pupils to take reading books home and read with their families on a regular basis. However, many classes do not have a daily English lesson where pupils could develop their independent reading skills at an appropriate individual rate. Better teaching includes the keeping of records that identify pupils' strengths in reading and note errors where the need for further work is indicated. However, some teachers record only the titles of books read and the date completed, showing only progress through the reading scheme but not gains in reading skills such as the ability to decode new words, whether or not the pupil can recognise certain initial letter sounds or combinations of letters, and the level of comprehension of what has been read.

58. In writing, many pupils make good progress in recording their work using symbols and symbolic sentences created through using a specialist information technology program that prints symbols and accompanying words. Pupils using the picture exchange communication system progress from using a single picture, for example the symbol for a lesson or a particular drink or snack or to request the toilet, to combining two pictures, with higher attaining pupils creating full sentences using series of symbols. For example, pupils with autism can use this system to write themselves a shopping list when going on a visit to a local supermarket to buy ingredients to make their own lunch. In handwriting, pupils learn to make marks and then patterns in preparation for learning to form letters of the alphabet, with teachers placing appropriate emphasis for lower attaining pupils on them learning the letters in their own name first. Higher attaining pupils learn to write words, phrases and sentences, with older pupils learning to write their name, address and other personal information in preparation for filling in official forms and writing letters. Teachers use a range of approaches to support pupils' learning in writing. For example, pupils are encouraged to write over an adult's writing, or to copy a modelled or dictated sentence. They may be asked to use given words to make their own sentences, and some pupils can write sentences and short paragraphs independently. Teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities in other subjects of the curriculum to develop pupils' individual and independent writing skills, teachers need to plan for more writing opportunities in other subjects of the curriculum.

59. Teaching of English and literacy is good overall for pupils of all ages, but ranges from satisfactory to very good. There are examples of very good teaching in lessons for younger and older pupils. Particular strengths in teaching include the management of pupils, the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' learning, the teaching of language and communication skills leading to the very good progress that pupils make in speaking and listening, and the use of the 'TEACCH' specialist approach to the teaching of pupils with autism as part of the strategy for the teaching of English. Teachers also assess pupils well throughout lessons and plan effective activities that enable pupils of all abilities to

work towards and achieve their personal targets from their individual education plans. Areas for development include teachers' knowledge and understanding of the teaching of basic reading skills, and of how to develop pupils' independent reading skills, including their reading comprehension so that pupils can understand and apply what they have read. The curriculum for English is good and includes some elements of the national literacy strategy, though not all teachers make full use of guided and shared reading where this is appropriate. The range of literature studied and the variety of theatre trips, visiting drama groups and the opportunities for taking part in performances that enhance the English curriculum, combine to ensure that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. The opportunities to work together in lessons and to learn to use community facilities in independence work, for example the local library and shops, support pupils' social development.

60. The co-ordinator for English, language and communications provides very good leadership and management of these areas, and effective support to class teachers. Through a two-year project funded by the local health trust, she has undertaken training in the development of high quality speech and language programmes for individual pupils. Working closely with speech and language therapists, she has devised very good assessment procedures for the subject, with excellent assessment of pupils' language development and effective recording systems. Those for reading are less well developed as the school has not yet focused on standards in reading. Resources have been improved since the last inspection and are good overall. There are appropriate good quality books in all classrooms, and a good range of non-fiction books to support learning in English and other subjects is kept centrally in the teachers' resource room. However, the school's library is limited to shelves of fiction only, situated in a corridor. Although there is a computer nearby, the unsatisfactory accommodation for the library means that it cannot be used effectively to develop reading for pleasure, for independent study or for developing early library skills.

61. The strategies for the teaching of basic literacy skills across the school are very good, and the school has gained the Basic Skills award. Teaching and non-teaching staff share high expectations for what pupils can achieve, and speaking and listening skills are effectively promoted across all areas of the curriculum, including additional therapies and independence in the community work. Many elements of the national literacy strategy have been implemented, and contribute to developing pupils' literacy skills, especially the plenary session at the end of lessons, where pupils report back what they have learned and can share and celebrate their own and each other's achievements.

MATHEMATICS

62. Overall, pupils make good progress in mathematics and achieve well. Throughout the school, there are pupils who are of widely differing attainment levels, and therefore some pupils at the age of fourteen attain at a higher level than others at the age of sixteen. In some aspects, such as the practical skills of recognising, counting and using money, they make very good progress because of the amount of concentrated time that is spent on it. The lower attaining pupils begin to learn very basic skills, such as being aware of things when they touch them; choosing between two objects; realising that some things are big and others are small; and that they have different shapes and colours. Higher attaining pupils learn to count. This is up to twenty for the most able pupils, although many pupils struggle to count to five without help, even by the age of sixteen. In the practical lessons, which take place both inside and outside the school, the higher attaining pupils learn to recognise coins and to use them under supervision when shopping. Other pupils need a great deal of help and support when using money. When measuring, the higher attaining pupils learn to measure using their hands, or strides, as well as using rules, tape measures and trundle wheels to measure short or long distances. They recognise two-dimensional shapes, such as squares, circles

and triangles, and a small number of pupils recognise three-dimensional shapes such as spheres and cubes.

63. The teaching and learning in mathematics are very good. The well-structured lesson planning is very well aimed at the needs of individual pupils, or small groups of pupils, so they learn at a very good pace. Teachers use clear speech, signing and symbols to make sure that all pupils understand them well. Lessons proceed at a very challenging pace, and are taught with enthusiasm and imagination. For example, one teacher had pupils taking part in a counting game in which they threw soft balls at the Velcro hat that he was wearing. The pupils had to keep a running total of their scores. Information and communication technology is well used to give variety to the learning; in the same lesson as the hat game, the teacher ended the session by using an addition program and a large 'touch-screen'. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well; even the pupils who have severe difficulties with their attention are well motivated to work hard and learn well. Pupils behave very well, and are generally keen. They listen carefully to the teacher, and in pairs or groups try hard to concentrate on their work. Lessons are very well organised with different activities, often with good use being made of very capable teaching assistants who keep all of the pupils working well throughout each lesson. Occasionally, lessons are cut short when the activity is not planned to be long enough, or when the pupils have to leave early for the next lesson, such as for swimming. Many pupils are taught in groups of similar ability and this allows teachers to concentrate on meeting the needs of a narrow range of abilities and this positively supports learning. All staff have very good knowledge and understanding of the pupils, and of the subjects they teach, and as a result they plan lessons and activities that are appropriate to individual pupils' needs.

64. This subject is led and managed very well. The co-ordinator has observed all staff teaching, and has discussed these lessons with them to see if there are aspects that might be improved. This process has been very effective in raising standards. The plans of what is to be taught in the long term are very good, and the school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy very well. Information and communication technology is used effectively in lessons to enliven the learning in relevant ways. Pupils' progress is checked regularly, and the information is used very well in deciding what should be taught next to each pupil. The resources are good, are used effectively in lessons and are often produced by staff. Training in different aspects of the subject has been particularly helpful in raising teachers' subject knowledge, and improving the way that most staff plan and structure their lessons. The co-ordinator has clear plans for how the subject should be developed in the future, especially in developing a more detailed plan of what will be taught, with particular focus on the least able pupils.

SCIENCE

65. Pupils' achievements in science, in relation to their prior attainment and to their individual targets, are good overall. The pupils who have additional educational needs, such as autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties, achieve very well. This is the result of detailed planning that takes into account pupils' different ages and abilities, and means that pupils build systematically on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding. Frequently this is achieved by teachers' cross-curricular approach, such as by reinforcing pupils' understanding of plant life through painting and collage. The emphasis on vocational education for pupils in Year 11 means these pupils do not follow a separate science course and as such have lost the opportunities to extend their investigative skills through practical scientific experiences, which helps them to understand the world around them. In the rest of the school, teachers plan practical investigative work which pupils enjoy. For example, in Year 8 pupils carefully examined chocolate, decided it was a hard substance, and remembered from a previous lesson that chocolate can go soft, with one pupil recollecting

the word 'melt'. Having predicted the chocolate would change from a hard state to a soft one, they enjoyed proving the case by eating the chocolate. It was clear the pupils understood the scientific concept that materials can change.

66. Records of pupils' work indicate, that by the age of fourteen, they have undertaken a good range of practical investigations and observations. They use pasta and jelly to observe the changes and effects of heat and cold. They plant seeds and observe how plants grow, making tests to see the effect of light deprivation, and investigating the rate of decay in fruits and vegetables. They extend their knowledge of living things when they learn about the life cycle of a chicken. Pupils consider the effect of force and motion as they experiment with cars moving across different types of surface, and fly kites. They use their mathematical skills well when they make charts to record daily changes in weather or make a transport survey. Pupils who have additional educational needs gain a deeper understanding of living things by touching leaves and bark or handling wet, dry, rough or smooth items. In physiotherapy sessions they gain a deeper understanding of body awareness and with physical prompts are able to use switches to control lighting and sound effects in the light and sound room. Pupils in Year 10 compare a range of magnets and decide which is the most powerful. They extend their understanding of the properties of materials when they test objects to see if they float or sink and use batteries, wires and bulbs to make a simple light circuit. The needs of higher attaining pupils are well met and they are challenged to extend their knowledge and understanding. For example in Year 8, the higher attaining pupils were given very good opportunities to predict what might happen to the butter spread on hot toast and to count the number of slices of bread needed for an investigation.

67. Teaching and learning is consistently good with an excellent lesson seen during the inspection. Lesson activities are well chosen and teachers encourage pupils to participate and they respond with interest. Lessons are planned appropriately so every pupil is able to extend their scientific skills and understanding. Teachers consider carefully the targets for each lesson and match the lesson targets with pupils' individual targets. The regular recording of pupils' achievement in the lessons means that all targets are appropriate and support pupils' learning well. Throughout lessons teachers and assistants are noting the responses from their pupils and through continuous encouragement and praise they help pupils to consolidate their learning. Relationships are very good, pupils respond well to all the adults and they try hard. Close teamwork with support staff means that every pupil is engaged and learning. Teachers use picture symbols well to help pupils participate in making choices during the lessons. However there are some lost opportunities to extend the verbal skills of the more able pupils and to consolidate mathematical understanding of measurement.

68. All lessons take place in the classroom or light and sound room, as the school does not have a science room. Despite this restriction staff are imaginative in providing stimulating resources, which make pupils curious and interested. Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good. This is because pupils enjoy their lessons, fully participate in the activities and feel secure in the very good relationships they have with the adults. This in turn creates a happy learning environment and development in personal skills. For example when the teacher cut toast into pieces and 'got it wrong' there was an eager volunteer to share his piece of toast with a friend. Classroom teaching is augmented by well chosen visits to the local safari park, the mounted police and police dog sections, and Seaforth wind turbines so pupils can extend their knowledge of living things and the environment.

69. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of science provision in the school. The budget for the subject has been well managed and resources are bought after consultation with teachers. The use of information and communication technology is good in supporting pupils' communication

needs and the co-ordinator is building up a collection of appropriate CD-ROM's and videos to support pupils' learning in science. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and has taken advantage of the increased opportunities to monitor teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

70. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in art and design. Throughout art and design lessons pupils progress well as they improve their physical and communication skills. They learn to control and manipulate tools and materials for making art. Higher attaining pupils make good progress, increase their physical skills and their awareness and knowledge of different materials, textures and colours. Pupils build consistently on their existing knowledge and skills because teachers plan their lessons carefully, based on their detailed assessment of pupils' progress. Pupils who have additional educational needs achieve very well because of the strong emphasis placed by teachers on developing creative skills, and the high levels of very good adult support that means pupils are fully engaged in their artistic activities.

71. By the age of fourteen pupils achieve well. They work well with their class teachers to develop painting and designing skills. This work is often related to topics being taught in history, geography or science. For example, after a school trip supporting their work on the environment, pupils use a range of card and paper to create collage depicting the trees, water and bridges seen on the visit. Scientific investigation about daily changes in the weather is consolidated by rainbow paintings and imaginative print work helps to extend pupils' understanding of symmetry. Pupils who have additional educational needs appreciate the traditions of the Hindu festival of Divali and develop their physical skills when they use salt-dough to make diva lamps. Through their work on famous artists and having examined the style of Picasso, they make jigsaws from photographs of their own faces and use cutting and sticking skills to decorate masks in the style of Picasso. They use paint and sponges to create the background for their own Picasso style pictures.

72. The pupils with autism, with the support of the adults, are able to concentrate sufficiently well to paint or use collage techniques to create their own Picasso paintings. In themed work based on the Egyptians pupils participate fully in a well-planned activity that includes painting a Tutankhamen mask. Pupils who have profound difficulties enjoy their work based on the artist Monet, communicating by eye-pointing or electronic switches they work with staff to make choices of colour and use their fingers or sponges to produce work in the style of their chosen Monet print. Art and music are combined very well; for example pupils create their own headdresses to wear when they play the rhythms of Native American music. Older pupils develop these skills further when they consider the sort of toy they should make for a younger child. Having decided on a mobile, pupils participate and become involved in moulding the salt-dough balls and decorating them attractively with glitter. The very good use of digital photography and computer monitors means that pupils can appreciate their own efforts when work is reviewed.

73. Teaching and learning is very good. Teachers conscientiously and imaginatively plan lessons based on very good assessment and knowledge of pupil's artistic and personal skills. This means that lessons are structured to develop each pupil's skills in creating and appreciating art as well as increasing their individual physical and communication skills. The teachers and teaching assistants work collaboratively. The high proportion of adults in the classrooms means that pupils can focus on their tasks and are able to respond very well to the demands made by their teachers in creating their art. The warm relationships and interactions between adults and pupils mean that pupils are eager to work and the praise and encouragement they receive raises their self-esteem. Linking with the music curriculum, teachers often play appropriate music to accompany the art lesson. Two pupils in Year 8

enjoyed the Spanish music during their Picasso work so much that they performed an impromptu dance, much appreciated by the rest of the class. Lessons are well managed with appropriate resources available so pupils can achieve success in their work.

74. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and is enthusiastic about developing the subject. However she is a part-time member of staff and as such is restricted by the amount of time available to fully develop the subject, but is able to support other teachers with informal advice based on her own expertise. The co-ordinator monitors planning but is unable to monitor teaching because of time restrictions. Resources for art and design are good and the co-ordinator manages resources well by referring to the scheme of work and consulting teachers so appropriate consumable items are purchased. The art room is based in demountable classroom that is shared with other subject areas. This is restrictive because teachers have to organise sufficient time to move to this room. There is the added difficulty of carrying classroom resources over to the art room, as storage is limited. Art is an important aspect of the school curriculum and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development because regular visits are organised to public galleries and because pupils are often able to express themselves creatively through art when written and spoken communication is difficult for them. The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual and cultural development because pupils learn about European artists and learn to appreciate the beauty of art from Asian and Chinese cultures. When World Cup Day was organised art, music and physical education were combined to produce enjoyable experiences for the pupils. The art and design co-ordinator hopes to work on a similar project this year and to develop portfolios of pupils' work so teachers can reliably track pupils' progress in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

75. All pupils achieve well and make good progress in food technology. Only pupils in Years 7 to 9 also study resistant materials and they achieve equally well when working with card, wood and textiles. By the age of fourteen, higher attaining pupils have the dexterity to carry out simple tasks as they make things, such as a chocolate box. They fold card accurately along a line, use scissors to cut straight lines and spread glue. Pupils use hand tools, with support, to produce a wooden trolley and a needle and thread to make a fabric bookmark. These pupils also know how to use the correct equipment in food technology, such as a tin opener and toaster, and have the skills to carry out tasks like removing eggs from their shells before mixing them with tuna. Older pupils continue to extend their practical skills so that by the age of sixteen they follow a symbol recipe sheet and use basic equipment, such as potato peelers, correctly. The highest attaining pupils key in the correct time when using the microwave.

76. Overall, both food technology and resistant materials are well taught. In particular, in the kitchen all aspects of health and safety are acknowledged and pupils are very well managed in a potentially dangerous environment. Very good classroom organisation and teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils work safely and have access to support when required. A particular feature of food technology lessons is the level of challenge that teachers present to pupils, with high expectations of pupils carrying out tasks independently. All adults are very effective in implementing this strategy, such as when a class of sixteen-year-olds made jacket potatoes and pizza crumpets. Pupils clearly followed well-established routines, such as washing their hands, collecting aprons, clearing away and washing up and adults expected pupils to work as independently and with as much initiative as possible. The pupils responded very well to these expectations, willingly and with good humour.

77. Whilst no teaching was unsatisfactory, and some was very good, some lessons using resistant materials had features that limited pupils' learning. The classroom organisation, the quality of resources, and activities that did not fully meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils restricted learning opportunities. Therefore, on these occasions pupils were not fully stretched through opportunities to extend their learning. In addition, some opportunities to promote the basic skills of numeracy, such as counting and measuring, were missed.

78. A non-specialist co-ordinator who has only been in post a short time has begun to consolidate the current status of the subject through activities such as auditing resources, but the current action plan does not yet identify how the subject is to be moved forward. There is good specialist accommodation for food technology, but the accommodation for working with resistant materials is unsatisfactory as the room is also used for teaching both art and design, and for music, and this restricts the opportunities for pupils to work on design projects, and use a range of materials and tools.

GEOGRAPHY

79. Geography is only taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9 although it was not possible to observe any lessons during the inspection. However, teachers are astute in establishing different levels of pupils' responses and skilled at monitoring and evaluating their progress. Therefore, pupil records provide secure evidence of their developing skills, knowledge and understanding and these show that they make good progress.

80. Long term planning is structured in a way that increases pupils' understanding of their environment. This takes place by extending their experience from their most immediate surroundings, the classroom, to the school buildings and grounds and eventually into the wider community. By the age of fourteen the highest attaining pupils follow simple routes, tracing paths on worksheets, following arrows around the school site and simple orienteering in a local park. They also develop simple mapping skills, such as the use of a key, so that they match a particular symbol, like a fish, with the appropriate area of a simple map such as the river.

81. The local and wider communities are used very well to further develop pupils' geographical knowledge. The local area is used to examine different elements of the immediate environment so that pupils identify different buildings and carry out traffic surveys, tallying the results. Visits to places like the Blue Planet Aquarium and Delamere Forest are well planned to reinforce specific aspects of geographical understanding so that pupils observe and record features such as the river and associated plants. Teachers plan lessons well so that excursions into the community are also used to encourage pupils' independence and self-help skills. Activities such as using public transport to travel to the library and supermarket promote these skills, and walks to these facilities are used to develop listening and observation skills as pupils learn instructions associated with road safety.

82. Geography is well led and managed. An experienced co-ordinator has produced a relevant and appropriate subject curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, with particular planned opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autism. A wide range of good quality resources supports learning.

HISTORY

83. Only pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught history although no classroom-based lessons were observed during the inspection. However, pupils' work and teachers' records show that pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress. Teaching overall is good. Effective

long-term planning means that pupils follow a broad and balanced subject curriculum so that pupils aged eleven to fourteen acquire a range of historical knowledge and understanding. They develop a sense of chronology through topics that have relevance to them such as themselves, their family, toys, and houses. In addition, daily routines are used to reinforce the idea of sequencing, such as the use of symbol timetables. Therefore, pupils have a developing understanding of the vocabulary associated with the passage of time, so that they understand concepts such as old, new, now, next, and before. They know the days of the week and understand the concept of yesterday, being able to name the day. Pupils also know about different periods of British history, and their learning is enhanced through many practical experiences. They understand how the Romans constructed their roads through building a 'road' in the classroom using the same materials, and they know about aspects of Victorian life through activities such as dressing in clothes from that time.

84. Although no classroom-based lessons were seen during the inspection, pupils were observed on trips linked to topics being studied. The local community provides a rich source of learning opportunities that 'bring the subject alive' and the school uses these resources extremely well. Consequently, the visits to Crosby and Waterloo Fire Station Museum that was linked to work on the Great Fire of London, and to the Maritime Museum to see the Victorian street exhibition, were both highly worthwhile experiences. The trips were very well planned, organised and managed and a high adult to pupil ratio meant that all pupils were closely supervised and supported so that they were all able to benefit greatly from the learning opportunities. Very good relationships and high quality communication underpinned the high level of support and teachers' expectations of behaviour. Therefore, pupils were able to participate fully and their behaviour throughout was exemplary

85. History is managed very well by an extremely well organised and knowledgeable subject co-ordinator. A bank of good quality resources has been established, ranging from new technology in the form of CD-ROMs to home made creative learning aids like large jigsaws of photographs. In addition, the co-ordinator is able to support the quality of teaching and learning through some monitoring of classroom practice and assisting in planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

86. Pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to use switches and the 'rollerball' to bring images to the computer screen. Progress is carefully monitored in terms of the attention given to the visual and auditory stimulus, and the level of help needed, moving, for example, from physical to verbal prompts, to independent action. Pupils respond well to the use of the 'Smartboard', and use the 'rollerball' to create patterns. Pupils co-operate well with adults and with other pupils in the class. For example, when playing a game of skittles, using a programmable 'Roamer', Year 11 pupils work firstly with a teaching assistant, and then with pupil partners. Lower attaining pupils started the 'Roamer' by pressing the appropriate switches, after the partner estimated the number needed to cover the distance.

87. By the age of fourteen, the higher attaining pupils can open programs, find the correct level, save and print their work. They understand that their work can be sent to a printer, and they identify and retrieve their copies. They use floppy discs and CD ROMS appropriately, and, with assistance they import and label photographs. Lower attaining pupils operate programs on the touch screen, touching specific areas to achieve results, such as the launching of rockets. All are expected to treat the equipment with respect, and correctly close down the computer at the end of the lesson. This very good practice is consistent throughout the school. Most pupils do this independently, while lower attaining pupils require help with verbal or physical prompts.

88. Pupils in Year 10 are learning about relevant technology in the world around them, for example, tuning a radio, and using hairdryers efficiently. In computer lessons, they work at the appropriate level on a range of programs, and show very good progress in developing mouse and keyboard skills. The higher attaining pupils click and drag images in a desktop publishing programme. Pupils enjoy a group activity with an interactive story on the interactive whiteboard, all participating, according to their level of ability. They demonstrate a good recall of previously learned skills. By the age of sixteen, the higher attaining pupils are working towards accreditation, accessing the Internet, searching their chosen sites, and selecting and printing pictures. Lower attaining pupils use programs that are well matched to their level of understanding and as a result make good progress. Information technology is used well throughout the school to enhance both teaching and learning, especially in English, mathematics and music.

89. Teaching and learning in this subject very good in all classes although there are variations in the quality of planning. Teachers have taken full advantage of the national and school based training and as a result use the very good resources well across a range of subjects. The subject is very well co-ordinated and results in class teachers having a high level of skills and consistent expectations for pupils. Pupils respond to these high expectations of both work and behaviour, and so achieve very well both in lessons and over time.

90. The technician and the teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning in all lessons. In addition, the technician facilitates the smooth running of the equipment, assists in the finding and adapting of programs, and ensures that resources are available in the right place at the right time. This enables teachers use time and resources for the maximum benefit of pupils. The very good resources, provide computer access to every pupil in the school, but the computer room is small and can become cramped when classes who have a large number of adults supporting them uses it. The code of practice and the co-operative working contribute to personal development, and the pride in achievement promotes self-esteem and confidence.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

91. Over the past few years the school has disappiled all pupils from French, but at the time of inspection they were running a pilot scheme with a number of higher attaining pupils, who were having one French lesson every two weeks. They had taken part in five lessons and were achieving very well during the one lesson observed. Pupils' recall of past learning is good. They remember greetings, thanks, and numbers to ten. During the lesson, they recalled some days of the week and months of the year, and learned others, while filling in a weather chart. They learned to give their names, responding with, "Je m'appelle" then used all their vocabulary in role-play. They were introduced to written French through a photocopied passport with symbols added to assist translation. During the lesson, pupils also learned about French culture and tradition, and talked about previous lessons when they had tasted French food. Overall, the achievement was much higher than would be expected of these pupils, after so few lessons, and an intervening holiday. Teaching is very good, well-planned, imaginative, exciting and challenging, and pupils respond with enjoyment and enthusiasm.

MUSIC

92. Pupils achieve very well in music because of the consistently high standards of teaching in the subject. The very good relationships between the adults and pupils promote a secure learning environment where pupils are able to overcome their natural reluctance and become confident in performing simple musical activities within their class groups. Recordings made of the most recent school performance, which played for three nights, show all pupils appreciating music as they participate in musical activities based on the theme of Islands in the Sun. By the age of fourteen, pupils provide the final word of the tune 'I'm sticking with you, I'm made out of glue'. Pupils recall that the oldest instrument is the voice and either join in verbally or use an electronic switch to respond to the song. Those pupils who are confident to sing enjoy using the microphone and happily experiment with high or low tones, or unusual sounds much to the amusement of the rest of their class. Pupils learn to listen to instructions and to take turns in performing with electronic switches. They experiment with a range of musical switches and work out if pressure or movement activates the music. Pupils are enthralled when they realise they are able to produce atmospheric sounds by just gently moving their hands. Pupils who are autistic improve their 'looking' skills as they work in pairs and follow the picture symbols and pointer to know whose turn it is to use an electronic switch to produce sustained sounds and patterns. In work based on sounds associated with the theme of 'Lost in Space', pupils listened well and developed their imaginative skills as they discussed what the music symbolised for them. Pupils express their preferences for switches or choice in music by using symbols, 'Big Mac switches' or verbalising their thoughts.

93. Pupils who have profound learning difficulties participate in the musical experiences, and through the high quality adult support and careful management by teachers they enjoy making music. Younger pupils indicate their choice between two instruments and with physical prompts use bells, drums and chimes to represent animals when they listen to the orchestral piece *Peter and the Wolf*. Once they realise the connection between their own movement and musical sounds, older pupils enthusiastically repeat sound patterns created by touching electronic switches. These activities help pupils to stretch and improve their muscle tone. In a very good lesson for older pupils who are autistic, pupils were able to convey emotion through actions and facial expression indicating surprise or astonishment when they activated the beam switch by walking near it. Throughout the school pupils develop awareness and an enjoyment of a wide range of music because of the very good opportunities provided for them to respond to music.

94. Teaching and learning is consistently very good. The specialist teacher takes most of the lessons and class teachers in the base for pupils who have profound learning difficulties also teach music. All teaching is of equally high standard. This is because teachers plan their work imaginatively and because they know their pupils extremely well. The tasks are always skilfully managed so pupils extend their skills and enjoy themselves. For example when pupils with profound learning difficulties listened to Native American music, they enjoyed not only beating the rhythm with their instruments but wearing war-paint and the feather head-dresses they had made. Further development of this work includes dancing round their totem pole. A consistent strength in teaching is the very good relationships that are evident throughout music lessons. Firm but fair expectations of behaviour combined with enthusiasm and a sense of humour all contribute to the success of the subject, providing enjoyable and meaningful musical experiences that support pupils' musical and personal development. Pupils respond very well to the challenges of the subject, in learning to start and to stop an activity, take turns and make choices. The lessons also provide very good opportunities for pupils to appreciate each other's efforts and to show their support with applause. Adults are very good role models in encouraging appropriate responses and behaviours from all pupils. Self-esteem is boosted. A very good example of this is the response from autistic pupils who

respond very well to the teacher's sensitive approach and despite their innate reluctance join in making music, huge smiles indicating their feelings of achievement. Class teachers, throughout the school, provide additional opportunities for pupils to appreciate a range musical styles by playing music in lesson times. The music always relates to a topic theme for example Spanish music when pupils study the work of Picasso and Debussy when they paint in the style of Monet. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. They gain an appreciation not only of classical, jazz or folk music but also Indian, Chinese and African styles.

95. The leadership of the subject is very well managed and organised. The curriculum is planned very well to meet the special educational needs of all the pupils who attend the school. There are very good quality resources to support pupils' learning and the electronic switches and acoustics used during the inspection provide excellent musical learning experiences for pupils. Pupils do not produce written work but ongoing assessment records and reports show that pupils achieve very well. CD ROM recordings and display illustrate the pleasure pupils experienced when they took part in the recent school productions *Islands in the Sun* and *Around the World in 80 Days*. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of future development and is actively working to further develop resources and monitor the musical appreciation aspect that takes place in classrooms. The music curriculum is restricted because practical lessons take place in the mobile classroom. This means that not only is time taken to transfer pupils to the room but the teacher also has to spend some considerable time and energy in setting up and dismantling equipment on a daily basis. Despite these limitations all adults work hard to make sure that music plays a significant part in pupils' educational development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96. All pupils by the ages of fourteen and sixteen make very good progress and achieve very well Lower attaining pupils become more aware of their own bodies, and increase their tolerations of being stretched and moved, especially through hydro-hydro-therapy, and on the trampoline, they take part in "rebound therapy", which involves gentle bouncing, massage, parachute games and rolling over. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate a good range of skills in different games, such as basketball, football and cricket; they pass and catch the ball, and work with a partner or as part of a team. In athletics, they run, jump, throw the javelin and put the shot. Pupils make very good progress in swimming, where the lower attaining pupils get into the water independently, and have enough confidence to splash around, float on their backs, and try to swim. Higher attaining pupils swim recognisable strokes for up to metres, swim a few strokes underwater, and float comfortably without support.

97. This subject is taught very well, mainly by the specialist teacher, and some (mainly hydrotherapy and swimming) by classroom teachers. Several lessons during the inspection were excellent. The very challenging pace of lessons motivates pupils to try very hard and become keen to do well. Pupils are helped greatly by the teachers' enthusiasm and their ability to give different levels of challenge to different pupils as a lesson proceeds. Teachers give very good demonstrations of skills, and get pupils to show each other how to do things. The structure of lessons helps learning a great deal. Sessions start with a good warm-up, followed by a series of activities that are all aimed at the same principal skill, but which increase in difficulty. Lessons end with a different activity, such as a game, relaxation, a discussion or a review to remind them what they have practised and learned. Support staff are very capable, and have good relationships with the pupils. Working well as a team in each lesson, they are used in very positive ways by the teachers. In some lessons, however, pupils have to sit and take their turn for too long, whether in games, swimming or hydrotherapy. It would be preferable to find a more positive alternative to this. Pupils behave very well in physical education lessons. They pay attention, and follow instructions very well.

Their enthusiasm and efforts are seen in games, gymnastics, fitness training or swimming. The specialist teacher has chosen ten pupils who have greater talents in sports, and these form the core of the school's teams and after-school club. They are a "gifted and talented minibus-full".

98. This subject is led and managed very well. The co-ordinator is a subject specialist who is energetic and enthusiastic. Lesson planning, and the planning for what is to be taught in the long term, is very good. Teachers are watched, and their lessons are discussed to see how any parts of them might be changed or improved. Pupils' progress is checked frequently and accurately. Teachers use the information to make constant alterations to what is taught, so that the pupils' learning will always be very high quality. Resources have been built up well, and they are used very effectively to support learning. However, the grass area, however, is often water-logged in the winter, and is too small for full-size games. Very good use is made of outside contacts, such as for games tournaments, residential trips, a professional football club, and the local swimming pool. The coordinator has clear plans for the future development of the subject, especially for further training in some aspects of the subject, a more detailed plan of what will be taught in swimming lessons, and more focused plans for what might be taught with the pupils with autism.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

99. Since the last inspection, the school has made some improvements in its provision for religious education. A new co-ordinator who is a specialist teacher of the subject has been appointed and she has undertaken a full review of the scheme of work. This is based on the newly revised locally agreed syllabus and is appropriately adapted for pupils with special educational needs. The new scheme of work is currently being trialled, but has already improved pupils' progress in religious education from satisfactory to good. Where teaching is most effective, some groups of pupils have started to make very good progress.

100. Because of pupils' widely differing abilities and range of special educational needs, they do not all reach the same level of knowledge and understanding of the subject by age 14. However, all pupils have the opportunity to experience the full range of study units and all make good progress, taking into account their learning difficulties and their prior attainment. They develop an understanding of Christianity and of other major world faiths, including Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Through studying the main festivals, special books, writings, symbols and places of worship, pupils learn in a practical way that there are some similarities and some differences between peoples' beliefs and customs.

101. Similarly, by the time they are 16 pupils have made good progress overall, with opportunities to learn more about each faith studied and the chance to study Sikhism. Pupils study the stories behind major religious celebrations, for example Easter, Rosh Hashanah and Diwali. Through looking at creation stories from different religions, higher attaining pupils can compare and contrast these. Older pupils study moral issues relevant to their own lives through a unit on Rules for Living, where they consider rules at home, class rules and school rules, and think about the Ten Commandments as God's rules. The oldest pupils, who are following religious education as part of a further education curriculum, have an opportunity to gain a unit of national accreditation 'Introduction to Islam'.

102. The quality of teaching of religious education is good overall, with some examples of very good teaching where teachers plan effectively to adapt the scheme of work to use approaches that are particularly suitable for the pupils in their class, such as in the specialist classes for pupils with autism or those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. An example of this was seen during the inspection, in a very good multi-sensory lesson with a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties who were learning about

Hindu festivals and family occasions. The teacher had high expectations of what the pupils could achieve. She made some very difficult concepts understandable for the pupils through her practical approach. Pupils listened to her reading a large format book on the Hindu faith, to a prayer bell and to Indian music. They could smell the incense and scented diva candles she used to create a spiritual atmosphere. Pupils were encouraged to touch a statuette of the Goddess Lakshmi, the prayer bell, flowers, and the sari fabric which they had an opportunity to try on. They tasted foods mentioned in the text, and they looked at the illustrations of key points in the book. Pupils concentrated particularly well throughout the session, and all made great efforts to participate to their full ability and because of this were able to appreciate beliefs, customs and traditions from the chosen faith.

103. The use of artefacts and resources is a strength of the teaching overall, and teachers are committed to giving pupils of all abilities an equal access to the subject curriculum. Teachers place great emphasis on respecting and valuing all of the religions studied and create a respectful atmosphere in lessons by dimming the lights, using candles and appropriate music. Consequently, pupils respond very well by handling religious artefacts and books very carefully and by behaving respectfully and quietly in religious education lessons and on visits to different places of worship. However, because this is a new scheme of work, teachers of classes where there is a much wider range of abilities have not yet always successfully planned activities that ensure that all higher attaining pupils are challenged or that lower attaining pupils can grasp some of the more difficult concepts.

104. The subject curriculum is now good. There is a good range of other world faiths represented as well as Christianity. Pupils are also given opportunities to develop moral understanding through units of study on rules and on awareness of how we can help others. Because pupils learn about and respect other faiths and cultures, religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject co-ordinator provides good quality leadership and management of the subject. Monitoring does not yet include classroom observations to identify strengths and areas for development in the quality of teaching and learning, although monitoring of teachers' planning and of pupils' work does take place. However, for higher attaining pupils, there are insufficient opportunities to record their own work in a variety of ways, and all pupils could benefit from more use of information and communications technology to support learning. Other areas for development in the subject curriculum include making the time allocations for the subject more consistent, as currently some classes have one 30 minute session per week whilst others have two or three times this amount, and devising a way of ensuring that pupils in mixed-age classes neither miss out on or repeat the units of study that are planned for each year group.

Post 16

105. The provision for the continuing education of students between the ages of sixteen and nineteen is a significant strength of the school. The department is based in very good accommodation that has been extended and refurbished since the last inspection. All students achieve very well, including those with additional special needs, such as autism. This is because the department is very skilfully managed and organised, it is well led, and the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The head of the department has a very clear vision of the aims of Post-16 education and specifically for the future needs of the students currently in the school. Consequently the curriculum provided for students meets the needs very well, and is modified very well at an individual level so that by the time students leave the school they are well prepared for adult life. Each student follows a very broad curriculum, which has a balance between personal, social, health education and vocational aspects, and the necessary basic skills. The overall effectiveness of the provision is reflected in the success that students achieve in personal development, taking part in work

experience placements, and moving onto externally accredited vocational and non-vocational courses at college. There are very good opportunities for all students have the opportunity to take part in work experience. This has been particularly successful this year due the very good liaison, and support, of a specific careers education assistant. As a result, the number of placements in the community has expanded and students now have a very good range of opportunities.

106. Students make very good progress in developing their communication skills. Speaking and listening skills are promoted in all lessons and at different levels. All adults consistently use symbols, and sometimes signing, to aid communication. In all lessons there are planned opportunities for students to give their views and convey ideas. Students make good progress with reading, and in this area the learning mentor is used well to support small groups of students and extend their basic skills. Higher attaining students read well, although not always with expression. A few have developed the skills to try out new words they encounter while other students still have difficulty with sounds of first letters of words and who rely on pictures to aid their understanding. Lower attaining students, and the majority of all students are making very good progress in understanding and reading the signs found in social situation, such as when shopping and cooking. Progress in writing is good with higher attaining students writing short sentences or lists independently. The majority of students are at the stage of copy writing but all can use word processing on the computer as an alternative to handwriting.

107. Students make good progress in developing numeracy skills, particularly in relation to using and applying these skills in everyday situations. Higher attaining students work out the cost of the food they have bought for making their lunch, and total up the amount of money taken in the school's tuck shop. Some are able to tell the time from analogue or digital clocks and apply this knowledge when on work experience and for working out the time of public transport. Lower attaining student are working on recognising coins and selecting the correct ones when asked. These students are at the stage of distinguishing between 'more' or 'less', adding simple single numbers together, and using their ICT skills to match numbers or shapes. Students also make very good progress in information and communication technology and physical education.

108. Many activities are planned out in the community and these present students with realistic levels of challenge that extend their social and personal development. Students respond very well to these opportunities, and because of the thoroughness with which they are organised students make very good progress in areas, such as self-esteem, confidence, independence, and social awareness, as well as taking on responsibilities. Higher attaining students therefore, they find their way around supermarkets, libraries, and meet up with others in the right place for lunch. All students have good opportunities to benefit from attending residential courses, in a variety of locations, where developing independent and teamwork skills are the focus.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers and students are very well supported by a team of skilled teaching assistants, some of whom have excellent relationships with individual, and sometimes difficult, students. Lessons are well organised, with all adults knowing what is to be taught and what is to be expected from individual students. The activities are carefully planned to match students' learning needs, and there are high expectations of behaviour, social interaction between students, and an acknowledgement of the students as young adults. As a result, students mainly respond in a sensible way and their behaviour in class and their attitude to work are very good. They are very willing to work in groups and the most mature students help each other.