

INSPECTION REPORT

BEACON SPECIAL SCHOOL

Skelmersdale

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119898

Headteacher: Mr J Taylor

Reporting inspector: Mr J Morris
23696

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st November 2002

Inspection number: 249393

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:	5 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tanhouse Road Tanhouse Skelmersdale
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr William Hodgson
Date of previous inspection:	6 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12536	Mrs S Bullerwell	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?
04989	Mr L Lewis	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27409	Mrs S Hunt	Team inspector	English Personal, social and health education Citizenship English as an additional language	
32055	Mr G Davies	Team inspector	Art and design Geography History Music	
02746	Mr R Lund	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Educational inclusion including race equality	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beacon is a day, mixed gender, community special school for up to 72 pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) between five and sixteen years of age. There are currently 61 boys and seven girls on roll in Years 2 to 11. There are no pupils from refugee or traveller families and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. All pupils are from white British backgrounds apart from two who are African Caribbean. All pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) with SEBD as their most significant difficulty. Some pupils have additional difficulties, such as specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and Asperger's Syndrome. There are also pupils who are school refusers or phobics or have severe conduct disorders. Forty six per cent of the pupils receive free school meals and this is well above the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average and this is mostly because of poor attendance and negative attitudes to learning rather than a lack of ability. The local education authority is carrying out a review of its provision for pupils with SEN.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, with a significant number of very good features. This is because there has been very good improvement since its previous inspection. All pupils achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- All pupils achieve well. Academic standards are high for a school of this type and pupils make good progress in their personal development.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school, behave well and form very positive relationships with staff and each other.
- Attendance is much improved and above average for a school of this type.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. All staff have very high expectations of both work and behaviour. The support staff contribute significantly to the pupils' learning.
- The headteacher and other key staff provide very good leadership. The management of daily practice and strategies for school self-evaluation and improvement are very effective.

What could be improved

- There are several features of the accommodation which have a negative effect on pupils' learning.
- Significant numbers of pupils are not settled at the start of the school day. This is because their transport is late and some of them have been travelling for a very long period of time.

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 previously inspected in October 1997 and improvement has been very good overall. There has been very good improvement in relation to pupils' achievements and the school's curriculum. Attendance is much improved. Leadership has improved and senior staff monitor the school's provision and performance very well. Teaching has improved greatly in that the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are now taught effectively and there is much better subject specialism in the secondary department. There has been satisfactory improvement in teachers' planning, organisation and day-to-day assessment. There has been little change in the provision of homework in the secondary department and this remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and make considerable progress in all subjects of the National Curriculum and other courses they follow and in their personal development. The school has become very rigorous in setting and achieving challenging targets for National Curriculum tests and GCSE and other recognised qualifications. The rate of GCSE passes has increased year on year and in the past two years has been well above average for schools of this type within the local education authority and nationally. The school received an award from the Department for Education and Skills in April this year.

The most compelling evidence of the success of this school is the improvement in pupils' progress in the secondary department, particularly examination results in Year 11, since the last inspection. Progress was previously described as 'unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4'. It is now good overall and in most subjects. Results in English are much improved. Provision and outcomes in ICT are very much improved.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to school and many of them are much more enthusiastic about learning than often found in schools of this type. Pupils try hard to do well in achieving points in the school's token reward system.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall both during lessons and at other times. Pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their emotions understand the school's system of 'time out' and use it well to calm themselves down and allow the other members of their group to get on with their work.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and adults are invariably very good. Relationships among the pupils themselves are good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop increasingly positive attitudes to further education and the world of work.
Attendance	Attendance is above average for a school of this type.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 2 – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall and it is good in the different departments in the school. The teaching is very good or excellent in over a third of the lessons and only one lesson was seen that was judged to be unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good. The school has implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well in the primary department and is doing so with the national strategy at Key Stage 3. This has had a positive effect on teaching and learning of the key skills of literacy and numeracy and there have been significant improvements in ICT also.

Teachers have very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils and the subjects they teach. There has been significant improvement in subject expertise in the secondary department since the previous inspection. This results in pupils making good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. All staff have very high expectations of both work and behaviour. Combined with the pupils' positive attitudes to school this results in good interest and involvement in lessons. All staff help pupils manage their personal difficulties very well and the pupils themselves make good use of the 'time out' arrangements.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. There are good inclusion opportunities for pupils in the primary department. In Years 10 and 11 there are good arrangements for pupils to participate in work experience. Links with colleges and provision for careers education are good and improving. The system of 'options' at the end of the school day is effective in motivating pupils but some pupils do not get enough variety and learning is not always maximised in these sessions.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school makes good provision for the pupils' moral and social development and successfully develops the pupils' understanding of right and wrong and promotes positive relationships. Provision for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory but opportunities are missed to develop their awareness and understanding of the diversity of modern society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This school is a caring community which looks after its pupils well. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils based on mutual courtesy and respect. As a result of this the school is usually a calm and orderly community. Procedures for academic assessment have improved since the previous inspection but there is still some inconsistency in practice. School transport is unsatisfactory.

The school has a good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very strong leadership to the work of the school. All members of the senior management team, including the enthusiastic deputy headteacher, are very effective in their roles. This leadership provides a clear educational direction and there is a good climate for learning in the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The school benefits from a committed, supportive governing body. They have a good understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. However, the school has some difficulties appointing governors, particularly parents, and there are currently two vacancies.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has rigorous procedures for evaluating how effective it is, setting appropriate targets and priorities for improvement and measuring progress. There are very good arrangements for performance management and the training of all staff.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of available funding, including specific grants, and staffing. The school makes satisfactory use of modern technology.

Staffing and learning resources are adequate. The accommodation is inadequate and has a negative impact on pupils' learning in spite of the staff working effectively to minimise these difficulties. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Of those parents who responded, over 90 per cent think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the teaching is good; the school helps their children become mature and responsible; the school staff are approachable; the school has high expectations of work; they are kept well informed. 	<p>Of those parents who responded, over 30 per cent do not think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> their children get the right amount of homework. <p>Of those parents who responded, over 10 per cent do not think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> behaviour in school is good; their children like school.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views of the school and that the arrangements for homework could be better in the secondary department. However, inspection evidence is that behaviour is good and nearly all the pupils are very enthusiastic about school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. There have been significant improvements in standards since the previous inspection. Progress was extremely variable at that time and was described as unsatisfactory overall in the secondary department.¹ In this inspection progress was judged to be good in most subjects at all key stages, including the subjects of the National Curriculum, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education. The exceptions to this rule are:
 - progress is satisfactory in writing throughout the school;
 - progress is satisfactory in physical education throughout the school, music at Key Stage 3 and history at Key Stage 1;
 - progress is very good in art and design throughout the school.
2. Pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) typically have low self-esteem and attitudes to education and are often reluctant learners, particularly in relation to the key skill of writing. This school has taken the view that improvements in these personal areas and academic learning can be planned and delivered at the same time. A high status is given to academic achievement and progress and the school has, whenever possible, appointed subject specialists in the secondary department to improve the quality of teaching. The school has become very rigorous in setting and achieving challenging targets for National Curriculum tests and GCSE and other recognised qualifications. The rate of GCSE passes has increased year on year and in the past two years has been well above average for schools of this type within the local education authority and nationally. Opportunities for recognised accreditation are being increased at a good rate both in terms of the match of courses to pupils' needs and abilities and range of subjects offered. The school received an achievement award from the Department for Education and Skills in April this year.
3. Standards in English are very much improved particularly in the secondary department. This is partly because of the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stages 1 to 3. It is also because of the appointment of new subject coordinators and the raising of expectations, particularly of pupils' performance in recognised examinations, notably GCSE. Although pupils make good progress in speaking and listening and reading and achieve well in examinations, their progress is still only satisfactory in writing. Although most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and this is a very significant outcome for a school of this type, many remain reluctant writers. Standards in mathematics have improved in that progress is now good and it was previously described as satisfactory, although GCSE results were good.
4. Another very significant area of improvement is the good progress now made by all pupils in information and communication technology (ICT). This was previously poor across the school. This improvement has come about because of improved resources, including a very recently re-furbished ICT suite in the secondary department, staff training and staff changes. The teaching of ICT as a discrete subject is now good. Nevertheless, shortcomings remain in that ICT skills are still not taught well across the curriculum. This is in some cases due to a lack of staff confidence but a major factor

¹ This report uses the phrase 'the primary department' when discussing pupils in Years 2 to 6 and the phrase 'the secondary department' when discussing pupils in Years 7 to 11. The school itself uses 'secondary department' for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and 'leavers department' for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

here is the cramped working conditions in many of the classrooms. In addition, the school has experienced considerable difficulties with the computer hardware over the last two years and this has prevented staff from accessing the available software. These factors have resulted in the inadequate use of computers outside the ICT suite.

5. The school is aware of the different groups within the school's population, with the main feature being the difference in the numbers of boys and girls. However, it does not find it helpful to focus on these groups because of the small numbers involved and lack of statistical validity of such an analysis. It prefers to focus on individual pupils' social and educational needs. However, analysis of detailed assessment information shows that there is no significant difference in the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good and have been maintained since the previous inspection. They make a positive contribution to the pupils' achievements. The staff demonstrate care and commitment to the pupils and there are very good relationships between the pupils and staff in which all pupils feel supported and valued. They trust the teachers not to let them fail.
7. Pupils' good attitudes to school and learning can be seen in their very good attendance and the interest they show during lessons. In most lessons pupils listen to the teacher and others well, such as during a Year 6 PSHE lesson when they were learning about respect for property and all pupils contributed maturely to the discussions. Pupils are enthusiastic when learning is made interesting. For example, Year 4 pupils who were very keen to play a mathematical game to match written fractions with a corresponding picture card.
8. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around school. They follow daily routines and abide by class rules. In lessons, pupils respond well to teachers' expectations and the token rewards and try hard to behave well at all times. When this is not possible due to pupils' particular emotional difficulties they use 'time out' effectively to control their feelings. This minimises disruption to other pupils' learning. In the dining room pupils show respect for others, wait their turn to be served and volunteer as table monitors. In the playground pupils behave very well, play team games cooperatively and socialise with friends. No instances of sexist, racist or bullying behaviour were observed during the inspection. Some pupils told inspectors that, although there was some bullying, they were confident about telling the staff about it and that it would be dealt with. There were 28 fixed-term exclusions in the previous year. These were an appropriate response to the related incidents and a reflection of the school's aim to improve the behaviour and cooperation of all pupils.
9. Pupils' personal development is good. This is as a result of the good provision for their moral and social education when they learn right from wrong and come to understand how what they do affects other people. They support each other during group work and develop good social skills and very good quality relationships, as was seen during a Year 5 lesson when pupils worked well together to make string telephones. As they move through school pupils' self-esteem and confidence improves. They offer opinions and show respect and empathy with people, such as in a Year 9 history lesson when pupils discussed the feelings of Irish Catholics during the plantation of Ulster. They look after school property and there is a distinct lack of graffiti or litter in the school. During a careers lesson, Year 11 pupils displayed a good understanding of personal responsibility in relation to health and safety in the workplace when discussing their

planned work experience. Pupils show good levels of initiative and responsibility when reviewing their daily targets aimed at helping them manage their behaviour.

10. There are no obvious differences between different groups of pupils in relation to absence, lateness and exclusion or their behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development. One older girl, the only girl in her class, said that she did feel isolated on occasion and that she would like to do more activities with other girls. However, she followed this up by saying that the school was 'brilliant'. At present, the school does not formally consider how the personal and social needs of its girls could best be promoted.
11. When compared with similar schools, attendance is well above average and unauthorised absence is well below average. Improving attendance has been a focus within school and it has risen to 90.9 per cent. Unauthorised absence is due to some parents not contacting school with a valid reason. A quarter of authorised absence is due to exclusions and the remainder is for medical reasons or parents taking their children on holiday during term time. A significant number of pupils do not arrive at school on time, so latecomers often miss the registration period and interrupt the first lesson of the day. Most pupils arrive by school transport, and although long journeys of an hour or more may be subject to unexpected hold-ups, this lack of punctuality does not provide a settled start to the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school with no significant differences between classes, departments or subjects. The teaching was good or better in four-fifths of the lessons seen and it was very good or excellent in over a third of the lessons. Only one lesson was seen that was judged to be unsatisfactory. The relationships between all adults and pupils are very good and are a substantial strength of the teaching. Support staff make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning. The number of support staff is substantially greater than at the time of the last inspection. This is clearly a major factor in the improvement in the quality of teaching which was previously 'sound'. Another factor is the appointment of more subject specialists in the secondary department and effective training of long-term staff, particularly in ICT, literacy and numeracy.
13. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. These are the core subjects of the National Curriculum. The quality of teaching in PSHE is good and this is, perhaps, the most important subject for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and SEBD in particular. The school makes good provision for PSHE, citizenship and careers education through good quality discrete lessons and good, planned cross-curricular work. The school has implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well in the primary department and is doing so with the national strategy at Key Stage 3. This has had a positive effect on teaching and learning of the key skills of literacy and numeracy and there have been significant improvements in ICT also. However, ICT is not used systematically to enable pupils to access and record information and develop personal research skills across the curriculum.
14. Teachers have very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils and the subjects they teach. There has been significant improvement in subject expertise in the secondary department since the previous inspection because the school has placed a great deal of emphasis on this when appointing new teachers. This results in pupils making good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding.

15. However, by the nature of their SEBD, all the pupils have difficulties in engaging in school work. The school successfully motivates pupils through the staff's very high expectations of both work and behaviour. In addition, activities are carefully chosen to match the pupils' individual interests and needs. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to school and are, in the main, interested and involved in lessons. Staff skilfully provide learning activities, particularly practical ones, which sustain this interest and most pupils show good levels of concentration and perseverance. When this does not happen, all staff help pupils manage their personal difficulties very well and the pupils themselves make good use of the 'time out' arrangements.
16. Teachers use praise and encouragement very well to raise self-esteem. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and the pupils feel secure and well supported. The pupils respond positively to the staff's clear routines for, and high expectations of, behaviour and work.
17. Teachers make very good use of the school's skilled team of support assistants to provide focused help and support for each pupil. Four members of the support staff met with the registered inspector. They feel that they are very valued members of the school team and made positive comments about their induction and opportunities for training. Some have specific skills which the school uses well including during the options. For example, one learning support assistant has a diploma in drama and leads an option in this activity. However, it is the inspection team's view that it is inappropriate for non-teaching staff to work on their own for a significant period of time with a group of more than four pupils with SEBD. This is clearly possible, and has occurred at times, under the current organisation of the options. In general terms, this inspection team takes a more positive view of these options than previously reported. They are clearly an effective element of the school's strategy for rewarding good behaviour and make a positive contribution to the school's curriculum.
18. The good lesson planning does not always make appropriate reference to the pupils' individual learning targets. Planning tends to be more rigorous in relation to the pupils' targets for personal and social development and behaviour than their academic targets for literacy and numeracy. For example, whilst teachers relate the teaching materials well to the pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills, this is not always the case in terms of writing. Pupils are sometimes given tasks that are too difficult and this leads to frustration and restless behaviour.
19. The link with a local primary school, which has been in place for three years, is helping to ensure that the pupils can relate to mainstream pupils in areas of the curriculum in which their attainment is similar. During an observed outdoor pursuits session it was not possible to distinguish between the pupils from this school and the partner mainstream school when they were engaged in climbing activities. The pupils were able to see at first hand that that at least some of their skills were as good, if not better, than those of the mainstream pupils.
20. The quality of teachers' marking, whilst satisfactory overall, is inconsistent. Marking too often gives insufficient feedback to the pupils about what they have learned in relation to their personal targets. Homework is set appropriately in the primary department and is satisfactory. However, it is rarely set in the secondary department. This is as reported at the time of the last inspection and remains unsatisfactory.

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

21. The curriculum is broad, well balanced and very relevant to the needs of the pupils. It meets statutory requirements. Very good progress has been made in developing the curriculum since the last inspection. The quality and range of learning opportunities is now good and includes all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education in all year groups. Taught time is within national recommendations in the primary department and it is just adequate in the secondary department. The primary meetings observed during the inspection confirm that these are valid as taught time contributing well to pupils' learning in English, PSHE and music.
22. Observations of the 'options', offered during the last lesson throughout the school on most days of the week, show that these are also valid taught time, covering a wide range of subjects. Their use as a means of rewarding good behaviour and effort is very effective and this is being carefully monitored. However, this monitoring is not rigorously checking pupils' uptake to make sure pupils are participating in a good variety of activities. Some pupils justifiably choose design and technology every day for a long period because they are working on a long-term, worthwhile project. Others are likely to choose the same activity without sufficient justification if not checked, for example computers or a physical education activity. The arrival of transport at the beginning of the day is variable and many lessons do not begin promptly with the pupils present ready to work and are interrupted by other pupils' late arrival.
23. Both the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies in the primary department and now the national strategy at Key Stage 3, have been introduced and implemented well. As a result pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills are good and standards of writing are satisfactory across the school. For pupils in Years 2 to 9, the development of numeracy skills and mental arithmetic, in particular, are good.
24. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. There are no after-school clubs but there are some lunchtime activities. There are several reward-based activities in the secondary department that include ten-pin bowling, shopping and visits to cinemas, art galleries and museums. There are very good opportunities for pupils in the primary department to participate in residential outdoor pursuits activities. These activities have not been provided in the secondary department for some years but the school intends to re-introduce these opportunities again next summer.
25. Subject policies and schemes of work are good and ensure that pupils build upon what they already know, understand and can do. This is very evident in mathematics, for example, where there are comprehensive records of what pupils are achieving and their progression over the years. The schemes of work provide good quality, clear guidance for teachers in their planning, being a mixture of materials based on national exemplars and commercial schemes and, in Years 10 and 11, the syllabi of accredited academic and vocational courses. The provision for art and design is very good and is a major strength of the curriculum. There is good communication between the subject co-ordinators in the primary and secondary departments and, as is again the case in mathematics, they meet frequently to discuss any issues that may arise. The school has effective systems in place for monitoring the success of its provision.
26. Provision for PSHE and citizenship is good throughout the school. It is currently taught as a discrete subject in all year groups apart from Year 4. Personal development permeates all aspects of the school's curriculum, with the staff being good role models. Progression from Year 2 to Year 9 is dependent on the school's reward system that promotes good behaviour, self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils from Year 7 onwards can work their way off the token system by achieving 15 days consecutive good behaviour. Similarly, there are systems in place to put them back onto the token system should behaviour deteriorate. The school aims for all pupils in Years 10 and 11

to manage their behaviour independently and not to need to use the reward system. The school has developed its own model of PIVATS (performance indicators for value added target setting) for PSHE. It was felt that the official version did not fully meet the needs of the school population. There are good links with parents and carers. The school values the role of parents in the 'Community Award' element of the school's citizenship programme. The provision for both sex and relationship education and drugs education is satisfactory and is underpinned by good policies that were updated in 2001.

27. Careers education is good. There is a timetabled careers education each week in Years 10 and 11 and in the 'life-skills' programme the careers teacher has two full periods. These lessons cover topics such as role-play, form filling and appropriate dress for interviews. The work experience module in Year 11 is informed by the careers information database that is linked to various useful websites. Last year the careers programme included a successful first input by the new Connexions service and the establishment of good college links. This year is proving to be even more successful. There are many more Years 10 and 11 college and work experience placements and there is increased Connexions input into Years 9, 10 and 11 and transitional reviews. There is increasing careers information for Year 9 pupils. Pupils are prepared very well for work experience beginning with an action plan outlining what needs to be done prior to the actual placement.
28. Experiences in the community and partnership with other education providers in particular are a major strength of the curriculum. There are very good links with mainstream schools and other special schools, notably a major inclusion programme with a nearby primary school. The school also provides a valuable outreach service which supports pupils with SEBD in mainstream schools. The inclusion project is funded by the appropriate use of standards funds in close liaison between the two schools and the local education authority. It is now in its third year. In the first year, the focus was on music and drama which had a multi-cultural flavour. Last year, pupils worked with an artist in residence with approximately 200 pupils completing a project that included the making of mosaic tile patterns, banners and textile prints. All of the pupils involved visited the Lowry Museum in Salford for a workshop and there was an exhibition of work to which the mayor and local visitors were invited. This year the focus is on the development of social and physical skills through participation in outdoor adventurous activities and problem-solving tasks. Staff from nearby schools have visited Beacon School to observe lessons and have benefited from outreach support from the school. There is a growing involvement with colleges of further education with some pupils being offered full-time courses after they have left school.
29. Good modular courses are provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Seven units of work are offered over a two-year cycle, with four in Year 10 and three in Year 11. Each choice operates for eight weeks followed by one week's evaluation and discussion about the next choice of unit. Modules are based on broad themes such as money management, local studies, practical life skills, cross-curricular themes and voluntary services. It is expected that each pupil will complete at least one unit of work from each area. The seventh and final unit of the two-year cycle is work experience. To facilitate and enable the principles of active learning outside the school through activities such as surveys and visits, a block of two lessons is available each week as part of this modular curriculum. The validation of each module is through the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA), fully approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as a scheme for recording achievement.
30. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is good for their moral and social development and satisfactory for their

spiritual and cultural development. These judgements are the same as at the time of the previous inspection and improvement is satisfactory. A significant omission is that references are not made to this important aspect of the school's work in subject planning.

31. Opportunities are still missed to help pupils develop spiritually. They have few chances to reflect. Registration in the morning is very rushed due to transport difficulties. No provision is made for whole-school or classroom acts of worship. The daily meetings in the primary department include an element of collective worship, stories, singing and awards for good behaviour and work. These meetings only take place once a week in the secondary department and are primarily a celebration of pupils' achievements. However, religious education is developing well and is providing the opportunities for pupils to explore the world's major faiths. The development of PSHE and citizenship lesson time is beginning to give pupils the opportunity to discuss and reflect on events, feelings and issues.
32. Provision for moral development is good. There are very clear school rules, which have been drawn up in consultation with pupils and these are consistently applied. Good work and behaviour are given a high profile through the awarding of certificates and bonus points which lead to rewards. The 'option' system in place at the end of each afternoon helps pupils appreciate that they have to earn the privilege to choose the activity they most enjoy. Pupils develop an appreciation for the needs and feelings of others. For example, during a Year 6 science lesson, pupils displayed concern when one of their group became upset. Secondary pupils are encouraged in English and PSHE to see, understand and accept other points of view. Pupils are encouraged to co-operate with each other, for example during games lessons. As a result, pupils develop a clear set of values and tolerance of the views of others.
33. Good provision for social development includes the explicit teaching of social skills, particularly speaking and listening. This helps pupils to relate well to one another and to adults, including those they do not know well. Pupils are made aware of how society functions and of the relationship between rights and responsibilities through a wide variety of experiences. These include the support of the learning mentor and the visiting pupil counsellor, PSHE and citizenship provision, community links, residential experiences, inclusion activities with local primary schools and work experience and college placements. The responsibility that an individual has within the wider society, for example for the environment and those less fortunate than oneself, is brought home to pupils through opportunities to raise funds and activities such as the community garden project.
34. Cultural provision remains satisfactory. Pupils learn a lot about their own culture. For example, in art and design, geography and history they have visited Wigan Pier and the Lowry Gallery in Manchester. The development of a wider view of other cultures is improving. The subjects of religious education, music and art and design are beginning to make a contribution to pupils' cultural awareness. For example, pupils saw African drum playing at the local primary school and in art and design they have studied the works of Van Gogh and Monet. In religious education pupils become aware of the major world religions and begin to understand and see the similarities and differences between these faiths and cultures. However, there are missed opportunities to develop the pupils' awareness of the diversity of the world at large and modern British society through subjects such as art and design, geography, history and music and through visits to places of worship and other places of interest outside Skelmersdale.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Pupils' are supported within a caring environment where relationships are very good. The school has policies and procedures relating to educational inclusion but this is not yet a systematic and rigorous part of all policies and procedures. The requirements of SENDA (Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001) are not yet included in all policies and procedures but the school is fully aware of this new legislation. Two members of staff have been trained in child protection matters since the previous inspection and keep other staff aware of the procedures to be followed. Twenty members of staff have been trained in managing conflicts and physical handling and this has reduced the number of incidents requiring physical intervention by 40 per cent. Ten members of staff have been trained in first aid and procedures for recording accidents and administering medication are followed rigorously. The health and safety policy is very good and regularly reviewed. However, there is not a designated person responsible for monitoring practice within school and risk assessments are not done for lessons. Since the previous inspection fire drills are carried out each term but weekly checks on the alarm system are still not being done.
36. Personal support and guidance given to pupils is good. The pastoral year group teacher provides day-to-day care. Staff work hard to improve pupils' self esteem and develop very good relationships with pupils. Positive reinforcement of good attitudes, behaviour and effort is promoted throughout the day and reviewed at the end of each lesson with individual pupils. The daily meeting in the primary department allows pupils to share each other's achievements and give support to friends. Displays around school, such as 'The student of the week' recognise pupils' efforts and encourage others to improve. The school also has a pupil counsellor and a learning mentor to provide extra support and guidance for those pupils experiencing difficulties.
37. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance have improved since the previous inspection and are very good. The school now operates a first day response system to absence. The education welfare officer visits twice a week and does a detailed computer analysis of individual pupils' attendance. She supports parents with home visits and rewards pupils with certificates for full attendance each half term. This has resulted in unauthorised absence falling by five per cent in three years and attendance rising to over 90 per cent. Almost all pupils travel to school by transport and at present many of them do not arrive at school on time.
38. Procedures for monitoring and supporting behaviour are very good. A detailed policy is in place and regularly reviewed and it includes anti-bullying and racial equality sections. Pupils of all ages are fully involved in monitoring their own behaviour through the token economy and 'options' systems, which are used effectively by staff to reward good behaviour and effort. The use of the 'time out' areas is helping pupils to manage their own behaviour and leads to them developing good levels of self-discipline and good behaviour in class.
39. The school's procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress and monitoring and supporting the pupils' academic progress are good overall. All subject policies have good sections on assessment but there is some inconsistency, between subjects and teachers, in practice .
40. The records which pupils bring with them into the school are often incomplete because of a history of disrupted schooling. As a result the school carries out an initial baseline assessment in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development on all pupils soon after admission. These assessments are linked to National Curriculum levels and to the local education authority's PIVATS levels (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting). From these assessments and the pupils' individual statements of SEN an IEP is produced. These IEPs always contain clear, achievable targets for

personal and social development and behaviour but there is some inconsistency as far as targets for literacy and numeracy and other academic skills are concerned. The IEPs contain clear strategies for teaching and learning linked to each target and this is good practice.

41. The ongoing records of achievement are also variable in usefulness, with the best examples giving clear dated, annotated evidence of the targets being met. Annual reviews and reports to parents are inconsistent, with the best giving clear information about what has been covered, what the pupil has learned in relation to previously set targets, what will be covered next and the new or modified targets for each pupil. The last inspection noted inconsistencies in these areas and to some extent this is still the case, although the systems in place are much better than previously.
42. The pupils take part in the national standard assessment tests (SATs) and a good range of externally accredited courses, like GCSEs, is provided. The test results, which are significantly above those for similar schools, indicate that the school's assessment procedures are targeting teaching effectively. The staff are obviously well aware of what the pupils know, understand and can do and this is largely compensating for the lack of consistency in assessment and recording procedures.
43. The deputy headteacher works very effectively to ensure that the annual reviews of the pupils' statements of special educational needs are carried out efficiently and in accordance with the national Code of Practice guidance and requirements. Parents, carers and, where appropriate, external professionals attend the meetings and all older pupils and those younger pupils who are judged to be able to cope also attend reviews and this is good practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents have positive views of the school. They appreciate what the school offers their children and can see improvement in pupils' behaviour and the progress they make. Nearly all parents, who expressed an opinion, say that teaching is good, the school is well led and managed and they find staff keep them well informed and are easy to talk to. Most think that their children like school, and say teachers really listen to their children and teach them respect and responsibility. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments.
45. A few parents have concerns about homework, behaviour and the range of activities outside of lessons. Some would like more information about what is taught in school. Inspection findings show that the provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and behaviour in school is good. Homework and information about the curriculum is satisfactory for pupils in Years 2 to 6 and unsatisfactory for Years 7 to 11.
46. The school strives to maintain an effective partnership with parents. The quality of information provided is good overall, although the governors' annual report to parents has some minor omissions. Frequent letters and telephone calls keep parents well informed about their child's behaviour, school organisation and events in the school calendar. Parents share in pupils' achievements at the Christmas concert and sports day. The school consulted parents about homework and this is now set regularly for primary aged pupils. Some parents make good use of the home diaries for sharing information with teachers. Annual written reports on pupils' progress are provided but the quality of these is variable. The best clearly tell parents what pupils can and cannot do in all subjects and set targets for improvement. However some reports concentrate more on pupils' attitudes to subjects rather than the standard they have reached.

Parents have the opportunity to discuss progress with staff twice a year at the annual and transitional reviews.

47. Parents know the school would like them to be involved in their child's learning and every parent has signed the home-school agreement to work in partnership with the school. However, the school admits pupils from a very wide area and the distance some parents have to travel makes it difficult for them to visit school regularly. There is no parent teacher association and there are two parent governor vacancies. Parents have supported the school's efforts to increase attendance. A rather low percentage of parents attend the annual meeting with the teacher to discuss their child's progress and contribute to the annual review of their child's individual education plan. Parents in the lower school ensure homework is completed and returned, however homework is not set for Years 7 to 11 so parents do not have the opportunity to be involved in helping pupils to raise their attainment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher is an experienced and committed professional in the field of SEBD and he provides a very strong lead to the work of the school. The senior management team very effectively monitor and evaluate pupils' performance, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The deputy headteacher, in particular, is a key member of the team and impressed the inspection team with his knowledge, energy and enthusiasm. The deputy headteacher, head of 'leavers', head of secondary and head of primary all use phrases like 'walking the floor' or 'having a hands on approach' or 'always being available for pupils' when explaining their respective roles. This common view of the pupil being at the heart of the school's work reflects the very positive ethos of the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good in relation to leadership and management and this has made a significant contribution to the improvements in the school's provision and outcomes, particularly the quality of teaching, academic standards and rates of attendance. There is great commitment to carry on with this process of improvement and a good capacity for success.
49. The school's aims and values are given in the parents' prospectus. They are highly appropriate for the pupils' needs and are very evident in daily practice. For example, one aim includes 'promoting the idea of high expectations' and this inspection finds that all staff have very high expectations of both work and behaviour. Another aim is 'to provide inclusive education opportunities for as wide a range of pupils as possible' and this inspection finds that the school's policies and procedures for educational inclusion are good overall.
50. The school sets a range of targets through agreeing predicted levels of pupils' performance in SATS and GCSEs with the local education authority, pupils' IEPs and annual reviews, staff performance management procedures and subject action plans. These are brought together in the school improvement plan. This is a very effective tool for managing change. It identifies appropriate whole-school targets and specifies responsible individuals, timescales and costs in relation to the separate objectives. There are good plans for the individual subjects of the curriculum. Subject co-ordinators have a good understanding of their roles and are, in the main, effective. In some cases, co-ordinators do not have sufficient time to carry out aspects of their role such as monitoring the quality of teaching or use of assessment.
51. The school benefits from an effective governing body. The governors are committed to supporting the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities and duties well. They have properly constituted committees which meet at appropriate times, particularly the full

body and finance committee, and all meetings are accurately recorded. The governors have a good understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. However, their strategic role remains less well developed. This is in part due to the fact that they quite often have difficulties filling vacancies in terms of parent or local authority representatives. For example, there are currently two vacancies for parent governors.

52. There are very good arrangements for staff development and training. The school follows the recommended procedures for the performance management of all teachers. All other staff both within the classroom and beyond, have an annual appraisal and are set personal targets in the same way as the teaching staff. The school has very good procedures for the induction of new staff and the potential for the development and training of new teachers is excellent. Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed in the past two years and are proving to be successful appointments. The school has experienced considerable difficulties with the recruitment of new staff in recent years in that the number of applicants is always very small. However, the school has managed to fill all vacancies within a reasonable time-scale and successfully improved staffing through the appointment of good subject specialists in the secondary department. The school has Investors in People status.
53. The local education authority has provided some support to the school since its previous inspection. For example, the special needs adviser has made an input into helping the school monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The LEA is carrying out a review of its provision for pupils with SEN and it is not clear at this time whether the school will carry on as currently or face significant changes in terms of the nature and number of pupils and its catchment area. The existing catchment area creates problems in terms of transport arrangements and links with parents.
54. Financial planning is very good and supports the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Effective use is made of specific grants, for example in supporting inclusion initiatives and developments in ICT. Although there has been considerable improvement in ICT as a discrete subject so that it is now good, the use of modern technology in the work of the school as a whole is only satisfactory. Day-to-day administration is efficient and effective and ensures the smooth running of the school.
55. Staffing and learning resources are satisfactory overall and in most subjects. The appointment of more subject specialists in the secondary department has been effective. Support staff are regarded highly and make a significant contribution to the work of the school. The accommodation is inadequate and has a negative impact on pupils' learning, despite the positive judgements made about their progress. The school building is single storey, apart from some staff accommodation on the first floor. It is extremely cramped, with narrow corridors and very small rooms throughout the school. This creates several organisational difficulties for staff which they manage well in the main, although the lack of space clearly has a negative impact on the teaching of ICT across the curriculum. The fittings, layout and organisation of the science laboratory are unsatisfactory. The equipment in the workshop is not laid out to best effect, including minimising hazards. Storage facilities are inadequate and this sometimes makes access to resources problematic, for example in physical education. There are several leaks in the roof. There are no toilet facilities for the disabled. It would be impossible to admit physically disabled pupils to the school or accommodate any disabled parents, carers or members of staff without extensive remodelling.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. The headteacher and governors should now:

- (1) As time and finances permit, and in close consultation with the local education authority, improve the accommodation by:
 - carrying out repairs to the roof to ensure there are no leaks;
 - refurbishing and re-organising the science laboratory;
 - reviewing the organisation of equipment in the workshop;
 - improving the storage facilities throughout the school;
 - planning building modifications and, if necessary, re-organising class groupings so that learning is not restricted by the size of classrooms.(paragraphs 4, 55, 58, 83, 98 and 116)
- (2) In close consultation with the local education authority, provide a better start to the school day by confirming existing contracts or negotiating new contracts for school transport so that:
 - apart from when faced with the most extreme weather or traffic conditions, all pupils are in school and ready for registration by 9.10 am;
 - no pupils are on school transport for more than one hour per journey.(paragraphs 11, 22 and 53)

The headteacher and governors should also consider the following minor points:

- (1) Improve the arrangements for homework by:
 - reviewing the school's policy and practice so that appropriate homework is provided for all pupils, particularly in the secondary department;
 - providing parents with clear information to give them a full understanding of what is expected both of their children and themselves.(paragraphs 20, 45-47, 72, 82 and 114)
- (2) Maximise pupils' learning in the 'options' by:
 - improving the monitoring of the pupils' uptake in the different 'options' to check that they participate in a good variety of activities (unless they are pursuing a long-term, worthwhile project in a specific area);
 - giving clearer advice and guidance for support staff who agree to lead an 'option' group and restricting the number of pupils support staff have in a group, when on their own, to four or less.(paragraphs 17 and 22)
- (3) Improve pupils' personal development by:
 - planning and delivering more opportunities (for example, in English, art and design, geography, history, ICT and music) to promote the pupils' awareness and understanding of the diversity and multi-cultural nature of the world at large and modern British society.(paragraphs 30, 31 and 34)
- (4) Increase the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring all teachers implement the school's assessment policy and procedures consistently;
 - increasing the use of ICT across the curriculum.(paragraphs 4, 13, 18, 20, 39-43, 46, 50, 54, 55, 58, 65, 70, 80, 82, 95, 109, 113, 114, 116 and 128)

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	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	25	38	14	1	0	0
Percentage	3	31	47	18	1	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	68
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

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

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7

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

Pupils' achievements

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are entered for various nationally recognised courses. In 2001/02 achievements were:

Accreditation	Number of pupils entered	Number of passes and grades achieved
GCSE English	6	2 grade D 2 grade F 2 grade G
GCSE Speaking and listening	6	1 grade B 2 grade C 1 grade E 2 grade F
GCSE Mathematics	4	1 grade D 2 grade E 1 grade F
GCSE Science	3	1 grade D 1 grade E 1 grade F
GCSE Design and technology	6	1 grade C 2 grade D 1 grade E 1 grade F 1 grade G
GCSE Art and design	6	1 grade D 2 grade E 2 grade F 1 grade G
Certificate of Achievement Numeracy	2	2 Grade 3
AQA Basic Skills Tests Health, safety and hygiene	6	4 merits 1 pass
AQA Basic Skills Tests Life skills	6	1 pass

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
67	24	1
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y2 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.0
Average class size	7.5

Education support staff: Y2 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	321

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	834,416
Total expenditure	843,862
Expenditure per pupil	12,230
Balance brought forward from previous year	139,877
Balance carried forward to next year	130,431

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	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 = 25 per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out	64
Number of questionnaires returned	16

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	56	6	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	44	6	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	50	13	0	19
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	44	19	13	6
The teaching is good.	63	38	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	38	0	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	31	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	31	6	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	38	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	69	19	0	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	25	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	19	0	13	6

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

ENGLISH

57. Pupils' achievements and progress in English are good overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress in writing and this is as previously reported. This is due mainly to a reluctance by most of the pupils to write and the inadequate use of ICT within classrooms, which in some cases is due to a lack of space. However, there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the pupils' progress in reading and speaking and listening. A major factor in this has been the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, initially in the primary department and now in Years 7 to 9. Two new co-ordinators, for the primary and secondary departments, have been appointed since the last inspection and they have worked very hard and with considerable success to improve provision across the school. All Year 11 pupils are entered for either the General Certificate of School Education (GCSE) or the Certificate of Achievement (AQA) in English and, over the past two years, an increasing number of pupils have achieved passes in GCSE.
58. By the end of Year 2 pupils are making good progress in speaking and listening. More able pupils recall the characters and story line from the Big Book 'Morag and the two grandmothers'. In a discussion with pupils in the mixed Years 2 and 3 class words like moon, clouds and sunlight were used by all pupils to describe the weather in a story. This good progress continues as pupils move up the school and by the end of Year 6 speaking and listening is being effectively taught through other subjects. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils used key words such as taut and transmit. In a design and technology lesson, one more able Year 5 pupil used the phrase 'inserting rice in a tube' in place of 'putting rice in it'. During a Year 4 literacy session pupils happily discussed friendship while helping the teacher to write a poem. More able and less able Year 6 pupils discussed lines from Macbeth' and made suggestions to change the text from 'the sky stared and then shut its eye' to 'the clouds closed'.
59. Good progress in speaking and listening continues in the secondary department. Key vocabulary was used well by Year 8 pupils during a mathematics lesson. Year 7 pupils discussed the rights of a cannibal in a literacy session about 'Robinson Crusoe'. During a Year 9 literacy lesson more able pupils described the characters enthusiastically from their class reading book 'Holes'. They compared their first and second impressions of the text. A more able Year 11 pupil discussed the media using the term 'the watershed' for the period after 9.00 p.m. on the television. During an art and design lesson, Year 11 pupils were aware of key vocabulary words, using describing words such as texture, screen printing and skeleton drawing.
60. Years 2 and 3 pupils are encouraged to group letters and leave spaces between words. All pupils write simple stories and sequence sentences and the more able pupils use full stops and other basic punctuation. By the end of Year 6 more able pupils progress further using 'Starspell' on the computer to test their own spelling skills. However, achievement is slow in writing and although some pupils progress well this is not consistent across the key stages. For example, Year 9 pupils are reluctant writers and although the more able pupils produce neat joined-up writing it lacks substance. Insufficient use is made of ICT within the classroom. This is often due to a lack of space rather than a reluctance or lack of ability on the part of the staff. Progress continues to be satisfactory into Year 11. In Years 10 and 11 writing frames are used to help pupils with their presentation. The school has identified a need for improvement in handwriting and presentation and this is the main literacy target at the present time.

61. Pupils' achievements and progress in reading are good throughout the school. By the end of Year 2 more able pupils are achieving National Curriculum Level 2. They read simple books from the Oxford Reading Tree scheme, identify key words and recognise their names. By the end of Year 6 more able pupils are achieving National Curriculum Level 4 or 5 which is in accord with national expectations. They read with enthusiasm and fluency and have a deep understanding of the text. During a Year 4 literacy lesson pupils were able, with the help of their teacher, to construct a poem about friendship. However, less able pupils are only at Level 2 or 3.
62. Progress continues to be good in the secondary department. By the end of Year 9 more able pupils achieve National Curriculum Level 5. They tackle difficult text with ease and competence. Less able Year 9 pupils are still only achieving Level 2. They read simple text and sight read using a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. In a religious education lesson Year 9 pupils were happily using their dictionaries to find out words relating to the 'three-in-one' concept while studying the Holy Trinity. They found words such as triangle, tricycle, tributary and tripod. By the end of Year 11 pupils read texts ranging from the works of William Shakespeare to thrillers by Roald Dahl such as 'A Lamb to the Slaughter'. More able Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve Level 6 or 7 tackling any text with ease and competence.
63. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teachers delivering English plan well, imaginatively linking their planning to pupil outcomes. Teachers are skilled in the use of different strategies to support literacy. They plan well to suit individual needs, and use resources in an imaginative way. This helps to motivate pupils and they respond by working hard and showing high levels of enjoyment. Teachers and support assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. They know their pupils well. Relationships are very good and play a positive part in the quality of learning.
64. Monitoring is carried out by senior management and the two co-ordinators when time allows. The subject contributes satisfactorily to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment procedures and practice are quite variable and are not consistent enough to maximise pupils' progress, particularly in writing. The primary co-ordinator has recognised this and plans are being put into place to help with this standardisation. Individual learning targets in the primary department are very clear and concise, reviewed regularly and agreed with pupils and used to inform planning. However, the individual literacy targets for the secondary pupils are inconsistent in quality and use. The secondary co-ordinator has recognised this deficiency and it is being addressed. There are two library areas for primary and secondary pupils and these areas and resources generally are being developed well.

MATHEMATICS

65. Pupils' achievements and progress in mathematics are good. This is because they are taught well. Pupils in the mixed Years 2 and 3 class sometimes make very good progress because they are taught by enthusiastic and well-prepared teaching teams. The subject is very well planned and assessment, over time and on a day-to-day basis, is of good quality across the school. There has been good improvement overall since the last inspection.
66. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a very positive effect on the teaching and learning of mathematics. This is a particular strength in the teaching of the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to pupils in the primary department. During mental arithmetic sessions pupils explain the strategies they use to arrive at the correct answer. They understand that there are numerous ways of completing a calculation and are beginning to appreciate that some methods are more

efficient than others. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils were challenged to find the difference between the length of the outside corridor and that of their classroom, described in metres to one decimal place. They were quick to arrive at the correct answer and to justify how they had made their calculations. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been successfully introduced at Key Stage 3 and is evident in the teaching and learning. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 use the correct technical language when describing polygons and they recognise regular and irregular ones, giving reasons for their decisions.

67. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow external examination courses. Results are improving with the secondary department co-ordinator confident that the successful introduction of the national strategy will further enhance achievement at GCSE level. By the end of Year 11, pupils have continued to make good progress in their mathematical skills and knowledge. For example, they understand probability and reflective symmetry. Pupils tell the time of day using the 24-hour clock and are competent in calculating temperature differences below and above zero readings.
68. The quality of teaching is good across both the primary and secondary departments and at times it is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the special needs of the pupils are very good. The teaching of basic skills is good and at times very good. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils got on with their work with minimal support. Many used a calculator correctly to check their mental arithmetic. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils converted estimated measurements into fractions, decimals and percentages. Others indicated their understanding of algebraic expressions. They are beginning to simplify them successfully.
69. Teachers' management of pupils is very good across both departments. When pupils become frustrated teachers allow them to take time out to cool down. Throughout the week no pupil left his mathematics class for longer than five minutes. On returning they settle quickly and continue working with little or no disruption to the learning of their peers. In most lessons teachers' use of time is good although there are some instances when there is a distinct lack of pace in the learning that leads to frustration. Support staff are well directed and contribute good support to the teaching of some very challenging pupils. Mathematics resources are used well with some being adapted to clarify or enhance learning. In one lesson a triangular metre rule had been adapted to show fractions, decimals or percentages on a single face. However, the use of ICT is unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 8 to 11. Teachers of these pupils lack training in using ICT and consequently it is absent from lessons. For pupils in Years 2 to 6 the use of ICT is satisfactory.
70. There is good use made of numeracy in other subjects of the curriculum. In an 'options' lesson, pupils were playing cards and had to count their scores on completion of a round that entailed adding numbers up to 30. Pupils also played dominoes and used dice. In a science lesson pupils were drawing a graph of distances of planets from the sun and learning about orbits and time including the greater the distance the slower the revolution. In a design and technology lesson pupils were making bridges that required precise measurements to make an accurate scale model.
71. The quality and use of ongoing assessment in mathematics is good. It makes the tracking of progression through the school easy to follow and is well used to inform teachers' planning of future lessons. The use of homework at the primary level is satisfactory with teachers using worksheets from other schemes to supplement the work undertaken in lessons. However, in the secondary department it is unsatisfactory with little or no homework being set.

72. The leadership and management of the subject by both of the co-ordinators are good. The policy is very thorough and good. Schemes of work across the school are good and ensure that pupils progress in both their general mathematics and numeracy. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject is satisfactory, although there is no time allocated for either co-ordinator to observe classroom practice within their phases. There is a sufficient match of staffing and learning resources to meet the needs of the subject but accommodation is limited by a lack of storage space across the school.

SCIENCE

73. Throughout the school, the pupils' achievements in science are good. This compares with satisfactory progress at the time of the last report, indicating a good improvement in standards since the last inspection. The pupils' attainment in standard assessment tests in Years 2, 6 and 9 are in accordance with their ability. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve results which are significantly higher than similar schools nationally. Throughout the school, less able pupils cover the same work as their peers but they need more help with planning and recording investigations and experiments. Because they receive good support with this, there is no significant difference in the rate of progress of different groups of pupils.
74. By the end of Year 2, pupils suggest how to find out what food is appropriate for babies and toddlers, and they know that babies, toddlers and young children like to play with different things. They know that different materials are used for building houses. They record their observations with varying help, depending on their ability.
75. By the end of Year 6, pupils know that yeast feeds on sugar to produce a gas. They also know that mould grows on bread and the more able pupils know that moulds are fungi. Pupils use a Newton meter to measure the forces necessary to drag a weight up different slopes and across different surfaces. They predict where greater force will be needed. They know that there are different kinds of materials and examine and report on the differences between the texture of different kinds of paper, using a simple microscope.
76. By the end of Year 9, pupils sample different animals and plants from metre squares in different parts of the school grounds to compare two different environments. They know that the concentration of a solution affects the speed of a chemical reaction and can use a computer program to plot a bar graph of the results. They use the Internet to search for information about the differences between plant and animal cells. They know that the further a planet is from the sun, the longer the rotation.
77. By the end of Year 11 pupils work out a fair test to find out what happens to the weight of magnesium when it burns. They know the different parts of the human body which are associated with digestion. All pupils understand how light can be reflected and refracted in different ways. They know that man pollutes the environment and can discuss the moral and ethical issues surrounding this. They also know about reproduction in animals and about inheritance, adaptation and natural selection.
78. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. All four lessons observed in Years 2 to 6 were good or very good. The five lessons observed in Years 7 to 11 were satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Furthermore, it must be noted that the school's permanent science specialist teacher and science co-ordinator for Years 7 to 11 has been off sick for much of this term. The temporary teacher covering this absence, who is not a specialist science teacher, has 'held the fort' very capably. When the pupils' work for previous terms and their performance in SATs and

externally accredited examinations are taken into account it is clear that the science teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good overall.

79. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject in Years 2 to 6 are good and they are also good in Years 7 to 11. Planning is good throughout the school, ensuring that all pupils gradually improve their knowledge, understanding and skills and objectives are shared well with the pupils. Literacy is promoted well, with carefully chosen questions, which encourage communication. Numeracy is encouraged through estimating, measuring and weighing during experimental work and graphs and tables are used to record results. ICT is used effectively to enable the pupils' scientific research and to help with recording results in Years 7 to 11 but it is used very little in Years 2 to 6. ICT is not used systematically across the school as a means of helping pupils with literacy difficulties to access the science curriculum.
80. The pupils' attitudes towards science are good and there is a noticeable increase in maturity of understanding as pupils move through the school. One Year 11 lesson included a very in-depth and responsible discussion of the moral and ethical issues surrounding a recent tanker oil spill. This discussion would not have been out of place in a good mainstream secondary school. Most pupils behave well in science lessons and individual pupils use short periods of 'time out' very effectively to come to terms with current concerns and to manage their anger. As a result of this, science lessons are purposeful and productive. Pupils work well individually, in pairs and in groups and this is all the more creditable because of the pupils' poor personal and social development on admission to the school.
81. The school's systems of lesson routines and behaviour management help to promote a calm and purposeful atmosphere in science lessons. Health and safety procedures are an integral part of the curriculum, and rapidly become second nature. The teachers' expectations of high standards are clearly reflected in the quality of the pupils' work and in their achievements. Questioning is usually of a high standard, especially the crucial science question, 'what if?' The activities are chosen carefully to stimulate the pupils and most respond with interest and good behaviour. The support staff are used very effectively to offer individual support to pupils to enable them to meet their individual learning and personal and social targets. Members of the support staff show real empathy and skill in working with these pupils. Although work is marked regularly, the pupils are given insufficient and regular feedback as to what they know, understand and can do. Homework is given regularly in Years 2 to 6 but rarely in Years 7 to 11.
82. The subject co-ordinators provide good leadership overall. There is a clear vision for taking the subject forward and the school's high standards in science reflect their commitment and skills. The laboratory is cramped and is not suitably equipped for electronics work. There is no preparation room or area for laying out materials and equipment prior to lessons away from the pupils and there is no technician support for lesson preparation and for looking after resources. However, the resources, including books and modern technology, are good for Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory for Years 2 to 6.

ART AND DESIGN

83. Provision is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils in Year 2 develop their skills through an exciting range of activities that extends across the whole curriculum. Evidence from past work shows that these pupils have used paint, texture, clay and card to express their ideas in paintings and collage work. However, due to the high level of adult support and instruction during lessons, it is not possible to make a reliable judgement on the level of pupils' independent learning from these examples of work.

84. In Years 3 to 6 pupils continue to make good progress. They show deep thinking when making choices and work very hard. For example, in one lesson, pupils were asked to sketch people's relationships with each other. The more able pupils showed mature interaction with their sketches and were able to evaluate their work when discussing it with their friends. Pupils worked well both in the drawing activity and when sitting as models in pairs. They tried hard in their groups and were successful with help and guidance in depicting relationship between people. In this respect, art and design makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
85. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve very well, benefiting from the high quality teaching and provision. Lesson observations and scrutiny of past work show that pupils use chosen pictures as a stimulus in drawing, painting and using colour very well. The most able pupils experiment, combine, select and manipulate the range of colours they use very effectively. Less able pupils benefit from high quality guidance and help. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE course module that involves both theory and assignment work. Good results have been achieved in recent years with the more able pupils gaining a 'C' grade. The school uses guidance from a variety of sources to improve the quality of provision.
86. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. This judgement is based on six lessons observed as well as analysis of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils. Teaching is planned well and pupils' work is regularly assessed and evaluated to show what elements have been covered and what are the major strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to plan what the pupils will learn next. In every lesson the planning provided challenging work, which met the needs of all the pupils in the class.
87. Art and design techniques are used particularly well to support and illustrate other areas of the curriculum. This was seen in the very good presentation of pupils' work throughout the school, displayed in the entrance hall, corridors and classrooms. An example of this may be seen in the history and geography classroom with pupils' drawings and sketches of World War 1. This stimulates pupils' interest and creates an attractive and welcoming atmosphere for learning. The school also promotes the subject in other ways such as organised visits by local artists to work on projects with the pupils, for example the Lancashire project on the theme of 'Hope'. As part of the inclusion programme with a local primary school, a number of pupils participated in the construction of an attractive mosaic of a seafront. Some of the original work from this project was exhibited in the local art gallery. Certain pupils also participated in the summer school project organised locally. A colourful display of this work has had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils also work very successfully on digital art using modern technology.
88. The policy and scheme of work aim to promote the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is planned to meet the needs of all the pupils. The scheme of work takes account of the needs of pupils with emotional difficulties and the other needs of the pupils attending the school. The school supports the two co-ordinators in their professional development and values their work in the school highly. They provide support and guidance for other members of the teaching staff and monitor the teaching throughout the school. The co-ordinators also have an overview of the resources available, which are satisfactory. The school has a designated art and design room in the secondary department, which is also used for other lessons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

89. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school, with some very good achievement in Years 7 to 11. The last inspection report judged progress to be good from reception to Year 2 and satisfactory from Year 3 to Year 11. As there are currently no pupils in reception or Year 1 and few pupils in Year 2, any judgement on improvement at this stage would not be valid. In Years 3 to 11 the improvement in pupils' achievement since the last inspection has been good. The pupils now have access to externally accredited courses and the group taking GCSE examinations at the end of this school year is expected to do well. Throughout the school, less able pupils need and receive help (to overcome their limited literacy skills) with the written tasks of planning, recording and evaluating.
90. By the end of Year 2, pupils discuss what vegetables would be suitable for a young baby and plan how they should be prepared. By the end of Year 6, pupils plan and make a variety of artefacts such as cartons from flat card, pop up greetings cards and pyramids. They specify the materials needed to make a musical shaker, suggest the sequence of operations and complete a design sheet.
91. By the end of Year 9, pupils carry out a design process to make a clock from acrylic sheet. They are aware that the clock could be made from different materials and cost the process. They undertake a project to make a bridge structure from rolled newspaper, demonstrating co-operation in this problem-solving activity and they evaluate the project well.
92. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 undertake a wide variety of design and make projects, including a steam engine and a wooden digger. They use a variety of tools safely to cut and shape metal, wood and medium density fibreboard (MDF). They use computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacturing (CAM) to produce a mould for casting a pendant and to use the school's forge to cast the pendants in pewter. The pupils produce design folders of a very high standard and are clearly, and rightly, proud of their work.
93. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The one lesson seen in Years 2 to 6 was judged to be very good and the five lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 were good overall within the range very good to satisfactory. Good or very good teaching is underpinned by the school's routines for lessons and system for positive behaviour management. In Years 7 to 11, the subject co-ordinator, who teaches all the design and technology at this phase, demonstrates his high level of subject knowledge by insisting on the highest standards of presentation and the pupils respond positively. Planning is clearly focused and activities chosen carefully to stimulate the pupils' interest. However, lesson planning does not always contain risk assessments.
94. Questioning is used very effectively throughout the planning and evaluation processes and the teacher and technician offer a good mix of support techniques, direct instruction and practical help in making sessions. This approach promotes speaking and listening. The pupils' numeracy skills are enhanced by routine estimating and measuring. Activities are carefully chosen to interest the pupils and the pupils are keen to undertake them. The teachers' and technician's enthusiasm for the subject are contagious and as a result, the pupils are keen to show off their folders and their ongoing work to visitors. There are very good links with ICT for the older pupils, especially in the areas of planning and recording and in CAD and CAM. Very good use is made of digital imaging in Years 7 to 11, especially in recording the pupils' work. However, the use of ICT in Years 2 to 6 is underdeveloped. The marking of work throughout the school gives insufficient feedback on what the pupils have learned and the skills they have acquired.

95. In lessons, all pupils, particularly those in Years 10 and 11, demonstrate very positive attitudes and most pupils behave well, treating the tools, materials and machinery with care and respect. They use short periods of 'time out' very effectively to come to terms with personal difficulties and to manage their anger. Pupils work well on independent tasks and older pupils, in particular, co-operate well in CAD and CAM activities.
96. The subject is taught mainly through resistant materials but there is some food technology, especially for younger pupils and some work on electronics, textiles and systems control. The subject co-ordinators provide good leadership overall, especially in Years 7 to 11, where there are very good links with ICT. However, support assistants are not used to best effect in the teaching of food technology. The co-ordinators have a clear vision for taking the subject forward in resistant materials and the pupils should achieve well in the externally accredited courses at the end of the year.
97. There is a well equipped workshop for resistant materials. However, the roof leaks and there are consequent health and safety issues over the use of electrically powered machinery because of this. The storage space for materials and ongoing pupils' work is poor and as a result of these concerns, the accommodation for resistant materials is found to be unsatisfactory. The accommodation for food technology, whilst well equipped, is only satisfactory overall because it is cramped. In Years 2 to 6 the accommodation is unsatisfactory because design and technology is taught in the pupils' classrooms, which are very small and cramped and affect the range of activities which can be offered.
98. The subject benefits greatly from a full-time workshop technician, who is a retired engineer. As a result of this, the equipment and materials are kept in very good order. The technician himself offers very valuable guidance and support to the pupils in lessons. Good attention is paid to health and safety issues overall and it is an integral part of the design and technology curriculum. However, there are no regular risk assessments of the specialist rooms.

GEOGRAPHY

99. All pupils achieve well. During the inspection it was only possible to observe one lesson in Year 8. Therefore, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning, although evidence from the teachers' planning and pupils' work was used to make judgements about the pupils' progress. From the pupils' workbooks there is evidence of good progress over time. Geography is not currently taught in Years 10 and 11 and this is not required nationally. However, plans are in place for the introduction of the geography unit administered by AQA leading to recognised accreditation. This would provide a clear pathway of learning beyond the programme of studies taught at present up to the age of 14.
100. The school policy seeks to develop pupils' interest in the environment and the world around us. In Year 2 pupils learn about different lives and lifestyles. They study distances and how to find your way from one place to another. By the end of Year 6, pupils know about their own area including movement around it and the different types of buildings. In Years 7 to 11, pupils study the development of countries, cities and towns. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of the environment and interpret graphs related to population and various local studies. They acquire reasonable knowledge and understanding through the study of business enterprise, organisation of industry, relationships between economy and society, technological developments and the role of government. Pupils of all abilities achieve a good understanding of the concepts introduced, for example the reasons for changeable

weather in this country and other parts of the world. In their workbooks they show an increasing skill in map drawing and interpretation. Their writing shows an understanding of the relationship between different areas of a town, the facilities that are needed for the community, for example recreational centres, playing fields and swimming baths.

101. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about teaching and learning. However, they were very good in the Year 8 lesson observed. The lesson was concerned with the relationship between wind and waves on coastal erosion. There was a good discussion, developing hypotheses about the connection between wind and waves and the coastal erosion. This generated considerable ideas that embraced many other areas of the curriculum, for example language development and care of the environment. The routine of introducing specialist vocabulary is a very good practice with clear coverage of new words on a screen using the overhead projector. Key words introduced were corrosion, hydraulic action, attrition and erosion.
102. Geography is effectively managed by the two co-ordinators. They provide very good leadership and, as a result, pupils are motivated and develop an interest in the subject. There is a clear focus on improving the range of opportunities in the subject by developing the use of ICT. Cross-curricular work is very prominent in language development, history and PSHE. Resources and accommodation are good with sufficient display space shared with history. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. Assessment and recording of individual progress are good and this information is used well in planning future lessons.

HISTORY

103. Provision is good. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. A scheme of work has been developed and the planning has improved. This has had a positive impact that is reflected in pupils' progress. Also accreditation has been introduced in Years 10 and 11 through a study of a unit administered by AQA, which has enhanced the study of the subject.
104. During the inspection five lessons were observed covering the whole age range. These observations, the examination of pupils' work in books and on display and teachers' records, and discussions with teachers show that pupils achieve well over time. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand the differences between how we live today and the lives of their parents and grandparents including the toys they had, the clothes they wore and the houses they lived in. This work has helped them to understand the passage of time and to reflect on the human life-spans. By the end of Year 6, pupils have gained further insight into the passage of time and changes that have occurred from Victorian times to the present day. A very good display of artefacts and pictures stimulated pupils' interest and enhanced their knowledge.
105. Pupils of all abilities learn well in lessons and make good progress over time. The scrutiny of pupils' work gives a clear indication that, by the end of Year 9, they have gained a good understanding of complex historical issues and interpreted data from the ancient Greeks to the present day. In their final year at school they use historical sources competently. An example of this was the project on World War I that included good elements of history, English and geography. The project contained a detailed study of a map of Europe and the fears of soldiers living in the trenches.
106. The quality of teaching is good overall, with many very good features. Teachers' planning shows clear aims and objectives and consideration is carefully given to different pupils' needs. At the beginning of lessons there is a good recap on previous learning using the displays in the classroom. One lesson in Years 2 and 3 used the

'Remembrance' period to recall the soldiers who were killed and the poppy as a symbol of the memory of their deaths. A very good Year 5 lesson used a video depicting the Victorian age. This generated good discussion among the pupils who showed a good understanding of the differences between rich and poor families. Information from the Internet was used in the secondary department to teach the causes of the troubles in Northern Ireland and the conditions in the trenches during World War I that caused a long stalemate. In the written task that followed, the pupils' very positive responses showed how well they had grasped the objectives of the lesson. For example, some pupils noted that the soldiers suffered from depression and this affected their will to fight.

107. History is effectively managed by the two co-ordinators. They provide very good leadership and as a result pupils are motivated and develop an interest in the subject. There is a clear focus on improving the range of opportunities by developing the use of ICT. Cross-curricular work is very prominent in language development, with the introduction of key words, as well as many geographical facts. History lessons, through the range of experiences offered, have a positive impact on the pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Assessment procedures are used more precisely than previously to identify what pupils need to learn next, and this has had a positive effect on the teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

108. In Years 3 to 6, most pupils' achievements are good. However, for pupils in Year 2 and some pupils in Year 3, achievement is just satisfactory, because there are no discrete ICT lessons and ICT skills are not progressively and systematically taught through other subjects. In Years 7 to 11, the pupils' achievements are good. At the time of the last inspection, the pupils' progress was judged to be poor throughout the school and so the improvement in standards is good in Years 2 to 6 and very good in Years 7 to 11. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have not previously had access to externally accredited courses, like GCSE, but the first group of pupils will sit these examinations at the end of this school year.
109. Pupils in Year 2 and some in Year 3 undertake simple wordprocessing in whole-class books, some with considerable help. By the end of Year 6, pupils know how to open programs and files and select and change the size of fonts. They know that there are different kinds of communication. They know the importance of entering data accurately into a data base for them to work and can produce spreadsheets showing the height of boys and girls.
110. By the end of Year 9, the pupils have developed good keyboard skills and produced a variety of word-processed materials. They select and arrange pictures and text for a presentation. They produce a spreadsheet, showing the income of a second-hand car salesroom. Pupils use the Internet to find information, for example about the Battle of Hastings in history.
111. By the end of Year 11, the pupils alter data on a spreadsheet to demonstrate what happens when one or more entries are changed. The subject links well with design and technology through the production of sophisticated computer aided designs (CAD), which lead on to computer aided manufacture (CAM).
112. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 2 to 6 and good in Years 7 to 11. The two lessons seen in Years 3 to 6 were judged to be satisfactory. The four lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 varied from very good to unsatisfactory. The teachers' knowledge and understanding and planning of the subject are satisfactory in Years 2 to 6 and good in

Years 7 to 11. Not all teachers are confident or competent in using ICT in their subject. As a result of this, very little use of ICT was observed in other subjects during the inspection, except for some in history and English. Overall, the use of ICT for recording, presentation and research in other subject areas and to enable pupils to access other subjects is unsatisfactory.

113. Where teaching is good or very good, the school's lesson routines and behaviour management systems are used effectively to promote a purposeful learning environment. The teachers insist that the pupils treat the equipment with respect and they respond positively to this. Questioning is used effectively to enable pupils to recall what they know and to relate the work to their own experiences. The activities are stimulating and interesting. Support staff offer well-focused help and support, particularly to enable the less able pupils to complete the same tasks as their peers by overcoming their difficulties with text. The pupils get carried along by the enthusiasm of the teachers and support staff. Work is marked regularly, with feedback on learning and annotations which indicate the help and support the pupils have received in order to be able to complete the tasks. One notable lesson involved the pupils in using the interactive whiteboard in compiling a spreadsheet and they responded with enthusiasm and motivation. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, tasks are not made entirely clear to the pupils, activities go on for too long and there is no early positive intervention to prevent disruption. In addition, marking gives insufficient feedback and homework is not used systematically to reinforce the work done in lessons and to encourage pupils to undertake their own independent research.
114. The pupils' attitudes are good overall and sometimes very good, especially those of older pupils, and this contributes to their learning. The older pupils produce work folders and portfolios of a very high standard and they are obviously proud of them. Most pupils behave well in lessons and treat the equipment with respect. They use short periods of 'time out' very effectively to come to terms with current concerns and to manage their anger. Pupils work well on independent tasks and older pupils, in particular, co-operate well in the CAD and CAM activities.
115. The subject co-ordinators provide good leadership overall. There is a clear vision for taking the subject forward and the pupils should achieve well in their first externally accredited courses at the end of the year. The computer suite in the secondary department is very well equipped with computers, software and an interactive whiteboard, which is used very effectively. There is a small computer suite in the primary department, but it is poorly laid out and very cramped. Although there are single computers in most classrooms, they are difficult to use in lessons because of the cramped nature of the rooms, especially in the primary department. It is almost impossible to organise teaching and learning in a situation where two pupils are using a computer and additional computers would not fit into the rooms. The school does not currently have any notebook or laptop computers and these would be easier to use in the cramped classrooms. The school has made good progress since the last inspection but there is still insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

116. At the time of this inspection, French was taught in Years 7 to 9 by the head of the primary department. Pupils achieve well and teaching and learning are good overall. These judgements are based on three lesson observations, examination of pupils' written work and discussion with the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator provides good leadership in French and this is additionally a good link between the secondary and

primary departments for both staff and pupils. However, resources to support teaching are barely adequate. At the time of the last inspection French was only taught in Year 7 and did not meet requirements. Therefore, improvement has been good.

117. Achievement is good overall. Pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in speaking and listening but their progress in writing is just satisfactory. This is because the teacher gives great emphasis to developing the pupils' vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills but a low priority to giving them written tasks in French. Pupils acquire new vocabulary at a good rate and improve their pronunciation and recall well. Throughout the three year groups, they make good gains in using words, phrases and sentences related to greetings, days of the week and time, numbers, families and friends, classroom materials and leisure activities. Nearly all the pupils in Year 9 willingly participate in a simple conversation in French, for example about their names and ages.
118. Teaching and learning are good overall. The teacher is very skilled at managing pupils with SEBD and has an adequate knowledge and understanding of French for the level she is teaching. Lessons are planned well and delivered at a good pace. However, in a good Year 7 lesson the teacher lost the focus on 'combien de' at one point and consequently learning was not sustained at the initial very good level throughout. Lessons in both Year 8 and Year 9 were judged to be very good in terms of speaking and listening. Pupils in Year 9 are highly motivated by French. They appear to be very interested in learning another language and, when asked, say that it is , 'one of the best things about school'. Two pupils volunteer to stand up and read their completed worksheets. The overall judgement of good teaching takes into account the written work seen. Pupils in all three year groups have completed a small number of very basic written tasks. Given that pupils did no written work before this teacher took over the subject this is a considerable improvement. Considering the quality of their writing in English, the teaching of and progress in writing in French are judged to be satisfactory.

MUSIC

119. Music has maintained the good standards previously reported at the primary level. Music is now also taught in Years 7 to 9. This is a good improvement because at the time of the last inspection the school was not fulfilling statutory requirements. The curriculum has also improved significantly since then. It is now broad and balanced and the staff are beginning to use music as an effective means of meeting the specific needs of particular pupils, for example through the development of rhythm and for relaxation. Teaching was satisfactory overall in the small number of lessons seen. However, taking into account other evidence, pupils' progress over time is judged to be good.
120. In the primary department it was only possible to observe one lesson. Therefore, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the teaching, although evidence was taken from teachers' planning and a recording of pupils performing as part of the inclusion programme with the local primary school. As a result of a discussion with the co-ordinator it is clear that teachers use a combination of skills, plan appropriately and are ingenious in their use of resources. Classroom support staff work together well often using a high level of musical ability, to enrich the lessons and ensure equal involvement for all pupils.
121. In Years 7 to 9 music is taught by a member of the Lancashire peripatetic music teachers' pool who is bought in by the school. She works well with the staff and has been involved in developing the resources for these year groups. The school now has guitars, keyboards, drums and various other percussion instruments. The programme of study includes units called 'underground music', 'graphic scores', 'the blues' and

'let's dance'. The teacher used very good sensory techniques to convey both rhythm and meaning to pupils who have complex emotional difficulties. Throughout the two lessons observed time was allowed for pupils to absorb their learning and for staff to monitor independent actions. The lesson ended with the pupils having freedom to express their feelings using drums and keyboards. Here as elsewhere in the school, music was used to mark key points in the day and provide another enjoyable channel of communication.

122. In the primary department, in one of their daily meetings, the pupils sang together well. Pupils enjoyed themselves and were singing to recorded music with pleasing sound. In the music lessons with Years 8 and 9, pupils were asked to beat rhythms on drums and other surfaces. A discussion followed about 'loud' and 'soft', 'fast' and 'slow' and the mood of different beats. The physical experiences of the music allowed the pupils to respond more effectively to different sound effects, for example a puffing train. This lesson summed up much of the music teaching at the school. It provided a fun experience, while developing basic musical skills. The experience given to the pupils made use of language and symbols. The pupils were given an opportunity to compose and evaluate their work using keyboards and drums. However, there was insufficient variety of activities and the tasks went on for too long for this group of pupils. As a result, some became bored and disruptive.
123. Although music has developed well, there are some aspects that currently limit further progress. The co-ordinator has managed the subject well, but does not have enough time to take the subject further. Assessment procedures are not as clearly defined or used as consistently as in other subjects. Resources, very much enhanced since the last inspection, are still not adequate to support this subject, which is an important channel of communication for pupils. The co-ordinator and staff have discussed the development of a topic-based curriculum and this has a lot to commend it. Time will be needed if this planning is to further enhance what is already a subject that enriches school and pupil life. Some pupils have had the experience of performing together with mainstream peers but such opportunities do not happen often enough.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

124. The school promotes PSHE as a vehicle to enable pupils to realise their full potential. It is taught as a discrete subject and it makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Citizenship has been introduced since September 2002 and is taught as part of the PSHE programme for all pupils in Years 7 to 11. Pupils throughout the school receive one lesson of PSHE per week with the exception of Year 4, who' because of current timetabling difficulties, do not. This is unsatisfactory.
125. The provision for PSHE and citizenship are good. All pupils make good progress. There is a school policy for both PSHE and citizenship and a good scheme of work which is relevant to the pupils. The pupils in Years 2 to 6 follow the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's national exemplar programme of study adapted to their needs. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 cover a suitable range of topics including mental health, stress, relaxation, bullying, sex education, drug education and healthy eating. Under citizenship, pupils in Years 7 to 11 cover such topics as the young citizen and the law, introduction to democracy, and a range of ethical issues. Both departments are well organised and the two co-ordinators work well together. Outside agencies assist with the delivery of various topics, for example the school nurse helps with sex education and other personal issues with the girls, and the learning mentor makes a strong contribution to the social development of the pupils who are referred to her. The police and the drugs awareness team deal with the prevention of drug abuse and crime.

During their citizenship sessions, pupils in Years 8 and 9 have been involved with a community garden project when they turned part of the school grounds into a thriving vegetable patch.

126. The subject is assessed through PIVATS (performance indicators for value added target setting). These materials have been effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the pupils attending this school. Monitoring takes place when time allows and there is accreditation to be gained through NPRA certificates and the Certificate of Achievement.
127. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned well and good discussions take place. During a Year 6 session, pupils had a very lively discussion on the consequences of different crimes such as shoplifting, car theft and damage of property. One more able pupil forcefully expressed the view that graffiti on certain property such as a skate board park is acceptable whereas graffiti at a bus stop or outside a house or shop is not. Pupils in Year 11, when studying various kinds of contraception, displayed a very mature attitude to this sensitive topic during discussions. Speaking and listening and reading play a very significant part of all the lessons. However, most pupils are very reluctant to write down their thoughts and ideas. The use of ICT in this area is underdeveloped.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. The provision for the pupils' physical development is much improved since the last inspection. The previous report stated that the options were the only opportunity for pupils to participate in organised physical activities in the secondary department and progress was unsatisfactory for those pupils. Progress was described as satisfactory in the primary department. The headteacher states that this situation was due to a lack of staff expertise and reluctance by some pupils to participate in challenging or competitive physical activities. Currently a teacher who has been at the school for two years teaches physical education in the secondary department although he is not a specialist. Several staff are involved in teaching in the primary department. Physical education is now timetabled once a week for all pupils and physical activities remain prominent in the 'options' sessions.
129. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall throughout the school. In spite of the improvement since the last inspection detailed above and good teaching described below, there is still some lack of structure to the school's provision. The pupils' skills are not being developed systematically across the different aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Many pupils demonstrate skills and understanding in line with national expectations for their age and this natural ability is not being fully exploited at present. The provision for physical education makes a very substantial contribution to the pupils' moral and social development.
130. Teaching and learning are good overall. They were good in most of the eight lessons observed within the range from excellent to satisfactory. These observations included pupils in all year groups participating in a range of planned physical activities. A very good dance lesson was seen involving a mixed group of pupils from Years 2 to 4, in which some challenging behaviour was managed very well and most pupils memorised a long and varied sequence of movements. In spite of some over-reaction to minor incidents by individual pupils, Year 5 pupils made good gains in a lesson on large ball skills. This was because the teacher and support assistant both had good subject skills and the activities sustained pupils' interest. Three badminton lessons were seen in the secondary department. One was a Year 9 lesson in the school hall. This was judged to be excellent because pupils acquired new skills both physically and socially, including

accepting the referee's decisions and developing teamwork and sportsmanship. A good Year 10 lesson was also seen. Year 11 pupils were seen working well at a local leisure centre with an input from one of the centre's staff. This is part of a programme of activities which also includes swimming, golf and football at various local facilities aimed at developed the pupils' both physically and socially. A mixed group of pupils from Years 7 to 9 were observed playing football as part of 'options' and this was judged to be a satisfactory lesson with pupils demonstrating a good range and level of basic ball skills.

131. The registered inspector spent over an hour with the Year 6 pupils participating in the outdoor pursuits inclusion project with Years 5 and 6 pupils from the nearby primary school at a specialist centre about twenty minutes drive from the school. This was a very successful activity in terms of social inclusion. Over the course of the project these pupils will experience a wide range of adventurous physical activities that are not provided as part of all schools' day-to-day physical education programmes. During this visit, there was no discernible difference between the performance of the Beacon pupils and their mainstream peers in the indoor climbing activities observed.
132. The school makes good provision for the teaching of swimming, in accordance with national requirements, in the primary department. A fairly large mixed age group were observed at a local public facility. The pupils were grouped by ability and school and pool staff worked well together to develop the water skills of all pupils. The non-swimmers were making good progress in developing confidence in the water. The 'beginners' group all swim 10 metres and are making good gains in technique and style. The most able group all swim at least 25 metres, which is the national target by the end of Year 6. Very good attention was given to health and safety issues by the deputy headteacher and pool staff.
133. The school is well placed to continue to improve its provision for physical education. The two co-ordinators provide good leadership and the new secondary co-ordinator is keen to move the subject forwards. Procedures for assessment are good in the primary department and satisfactory and improving in the secondary department. The co-ordinator is working towards pupils' accreditation through the Junior Sports Leadership Awards. Resources are good although storage and access are rather problematic and the accommodation inside and outside is just adequate. Some of these difficulties are successfully overcome by the effective, and improving, use of community facilities and links with other schools. The co-ordinator has correctly identified the need to develop teachers' expertise, through training and improved guidance, in the specific area of gymnastics. There are good opportunities for pupils in the primary department to benefit from residential experiences with an outdoor pursuits focus. There are plans to re-introduce the same opportunities in the secondary department next summer. Primary pupils have received football training through an outside agency. The secondary co-ordinator is developing a school team to participate in a football competition with other special schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

134. Provision is based on the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus. It is good overall and at times it is very good. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. The leadership, by the deputy headteacher, gives the subject status within the curriculum. He has a specialist qualification in the subject and, with his knowledge and understanding, he provides a constant support to the primary department co-ordinator in their regular discussions. There is a firm belief that religious education needs to be presented well if it is to influence pupils who often have very negative views of the subject and its teachings.

135. By the end of Year 6, pupils have studied aspects of three world religions. Resources to support the teaching of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are very good and include artefacts such as a Muslim prayer mat, the Holy Qur'an and a small statue of Buddha. There is a good range of video material to support world faiths such as Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism and a range of 'Big Books' covering Buddhism, Sikhism, Muslim and Christianity. There are good ICT resources to complement the scheme of work and a number of CD-Rom. The school also uses a good range of websites. In Christianity, pupils' work on Bible stories, such as 'The Good Samaritan', and in a Year 8 lesson, they were asked to write the story in a modern context. This gave a clear view of the pupils' understanding of the story and its validity in society today. Pupils' work is assessed from such semi-formal writing and they are rewarded by a series of attractive certificates of achievement.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and at times it is very good. Teachers work from good quality long-term objectives to produce good lesson plans. These often involve pupils in reading aloud from enlarged pages of the Bible, as was the case in the lesson on The Good Samaritan, or from a textbook, as in a lesson dealing with the Trinity. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils showed their understanding and recall of symbolism and they were given good opportunities for spiritual development as they focused on a lit candle whilst listening to a reading of 'The Gift of Jesus'. They answered questions about light mentioned in the story confidently.
137. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject is monitored through classroom observation sheets that give the co-ordinators a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Subject co-ordinators ensure that displays, such as that of Muslim prayer mats, promote the subject across the school. Leadership ensures that the subject's contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good across all four elements. The subject policy is good and good schemes of work to guide teachers' planning have been developed. The teaching time allocated to the subject is good, as is the assessment of individuals' knowledge and understanding of the subject. The improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has ensured that all classes have one lesson each week and the subject now meets statutory requirements.