

INSPECTION REPORT

BRACKEN HILL SCHOOL

Kirkby-in-Ashfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122961

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Kawalek

Reporting inspector: Alan Lemon
20165

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd May 2003

Inspection number: 249403
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Special
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chartwell Road Kirkby-in-Ashfield Nottinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Andrej Machalski
Date of previous inspection:	4 June 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Registered inspector	Design and technology Art English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
13101	Michael Kell	Team inspector	Science Geography Physical education Special educational needs	
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	English History Modern Foreign Language	How well are pupils taught?
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
7465	Richard Brent	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bracken Hill School is a community special school catering for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A minority of these pupils have additional special educational needs such as autism, sensory impairments and medical conditions. The school has 69 pupils and students on roll in the age range of five to 19. Boys outnumber girls by a ratio of three to one. The largest group of pupils are in Years 7 to 9 and there are 8 students over the age of 16. Five classes overall are organised mainly according to the age of pupils, although the three classes for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are organised by ability as well. All of the pupils are white and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. Twenty-eight pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment on entry is below that expected for their age and varies widely according to the severity of their special educational needs.

At the time of its last inspection, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in teaching, the curriculum, assessment and leadership and management. This entailed additional external support, monitoring and evaluation of standards, educational provision and improvement.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bracken Hill School is a good school. It provides its pupils with good opportunities for learning and teaches them effectively so that, overall, they achieve well. The leadership and management of the school are good. It has a very positive atmosphere which is enjoyed by parents, staff and pupils. Consequently, the majority of pupils are supported well and they have very positive attitudes to school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff have established a clear direction and high expectations, resulting in an overall very good improvement in provision.
- The very good monitoring and support of teaching has improved the quality of teaching, which is now good.
- The excellent improvement in resources and teachers' expertise in information and communication technology has led to a significant rise in the standards pupils' achieve.
- The provision for vocational education, the use of the community to support pupils' learning and extra-curricular activities are all very good.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development very effectively including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's very positive atmosphere leads to pupils' developing very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

What could be improved

- The expertise of teachers and classroom assistants in providing for the more specific needs of some pupils.
- The provision for teaching design and technology to pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- The consistent promotion of numeracy and writing across all subjects.
- Monitoring the consistency with which teachers use their assessment information to plan lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 2001. The improvement since then has been very good and this has overcome the serious weaknesses identified then. The impact of effective leadership and management in dealing with the key issues and moving the school forward is the principal reason for this improvement. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school. In information and communication technology improvement, overall, has been excellent. There has been good progress on developing the curriculum and procedures for assessment.

In many aspects of the school's work there has been at least satisfactory, but often good, or very good, improvement. Overall, pupils achieve more and their attitudes, behaviour and personal development are better.

Improvement has been very good in English and good in science, physical education and religious education. However, in history it is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 2	by Year 6	by Year 9	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	B	very good A
Reading	B	B	B	B	B	good B
Writing	B	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	C	B	C	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	B	

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

The performance targets set annually for groups of pupils are helping to raise standards. The school follows guidelines for setting realistic but challenging targets and the majority of pupils at least reached these and many exceeded them.

Overall, pupils are achieving well because they are taught effectively and provided with good opportunities for learning that are relevant to the needs of the great majority. The small number of pupils with additional needs, such as autism or sensory impairments, achieve less well but satisfactorily. The level of specialist knowledge required to teach these pupils is insufficient and slows their rate of progress. The demands made of higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being increased with entry, this year, for GCSE in mathematics and science. Students over the age of 16 are achieving well in preparing to leave school. Their vocational courses, both in school and at college, are well organised, challenging and provide them with a good range of qualifications. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of English

and their literacy skills develop well in the work they do in most subjects. The good progress made by many pupils in mathematics, especially in numeracy, is the result of lively, well-planned teaching. Over time, in science, pupils improve their investigative skills and scientific methods. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11 in the Entry Level Certificate in English, mathematics and science. They achieve very well in information and communication technology, which is a direct result of very effective leadership and management bringing improvements in teachers' skills, resources and support for the subject.

Pupils make good progress in music, physical education, citizenship and personal, social and health education. They make satisfactory progress in history, French and religious education.

Progress is good in art, although higher attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have half the time of others of their age and make less progress as a consequence. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in design and technology, but in Years 7, 8 and 9, provision is restricted by a shortage of teachers and progress is mostly satisfactory but sometimes unsatisfactory. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make unsatisfactory progress in geography because the level of demand is too low and they do too little work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes towards school. They enjoy the life of the school and their lessons. They get very involved in their work, concentrate well and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils respond very positively to rules and expectations. They show a high regard for each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils mature very effectively. They grow to be self-aware and self-confident individuals. Pupils share enthusiastically in the life of the school, being helpful to staff and each other whenever they can. Relationships are very good
Attendance	There is a good level of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good.

The special educational needs of the large majority of pupils are well met. However, teachers are not sufficiently informed about the best approaches to address the more specific needs of a few pupils who are autistic or have sensory impairments. Generally, teachers have good expertise in teaching the knowledge, skills and understanding they want pupils to learn and in

most instances they have a good knowledge of what pupils' learning needs are. Classroom assistants share this knowledge, working effectively alongside teachers and supporting pupils' learning. Mostly, teachers combine their knowledge of subjects and pupils' needs effectively in planning what they should learn and in deciding the best activities and resources for ensuring lessons are successful. Good strategies for teaching literacy are in place, working well in English and many other subjects in helping pupils' learn effectively to communicate, read and write. However, in some subjects, writing is not given the high profile it ought to have. The pupils who need to learn the use of sign language and other non-verbal means of communication effectively. The teaching approaches set out in the literacy strategy have greatly helped in the organisation of lessons in most subjects. This is ensuring that, whatever a pupil's ability, their work matches it and makes an appropriate level of demand. In many lessons, time is set aside at the end for teachers and pupils to review progress. The good organisation of teaching creates lively, engaging activities that stimulate pupils into making their best efforts and working at a productive pace. The numeracy strategy works well in mathematics lessons and is used successfully in some other subjects to help pupils learn number but, unlike the literacy strategy, it is not as well embedded across all subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. It is mostly well planned and is relevant to the different ages and needs of pupils. There is very good work-related education for older pupils. Learning opportunities throughout the school are greatly enriched through extra-curricular activities, the use of resources in the locality and links with other schools and colleges.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Relationships and the atmosphere in the school are very positive in reinforcing values and expectations that lead to pupils understanding right from wrong and holding others in high regard whatever the differences in race, religion or culture.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are cared for and supported well. School is a safe, exciting and enjoyable place. Very good attention is paid to promoting pupils' attendance and good behaviour. Their progress is assessed well although this information is not always used profitably to support further progress.

The school's partnership with parents is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led effectively and is managed well. Clear and inclusive aims and values are very well promoted and reflected in the work of the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors play an effective part in supporting and setting the direction for the school. They are well-informed about strengths and weaknesses. They use this knowledge and their good expertise to ensure the school follows the correct priorities for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school is broadly based and good. The monitoring of teaching is very good and has contributed to the sharp increase in the amount of very good teaching taking place.
The strategic use of resources	The school develops its resources effectively using a good school improvement planning process. Resources are used well in raising standards and well-managed professional development contributes effectively. The principles of best value are applied well in assessing value for money and use of resources.

The school has good learning resources, and an adequate number of teachers and support staff. The school's accommodation is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are being taught well. • The school sets high expectations for behaviour and helps their children mature well. • The school is friendly, encouraging and helpful towards parents, keeping them well-informed about their children. 	

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The large majority of pupils make good progress. This represents a marked upward trend in standards since the last inspection as a result of good improvement in teaching and in the content and organisation of the school's curriculum. Higher attaining pupils who are now gaining good passes in Entry Level Certificates are being pushed onto more demanding GCSE courses in mathematics and science. Performance targets are set annually and these are also helping to raise standards. Targets for different age groups of pupils use predictions of what they could attain over a year and estimates are based on P Scale measurements, which are specially adapted for pupils with severe learning difficulties. The attainment levels of the National Curriculum are used for those who are higher attaining. The results for 2003 show largely that each group of pupils have met their target and that some pupils have exceeded them.

2. A small minority of pupils who have additional special educational needs, such as autism or sensory impairments, are not making as much good progress generally because the expertise required to meet their particular needs is not developed sufficiently. A pupil with autism, for example, was not accessing learning opportunities to as good an extent as others in the class because the management strategies being used to support his learning were not effective in helping him remain settled and concentrating.

3. Pupils throughout the school make very good progress in information and communication technology. The opportunities they have for learning are very effective. This is a result of expert use of very good equipment and programs both in discrete information and communication technology teaching and in supporting teaching in other subjects. Pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieved very well in making pictographic charts from their tally data on each class groups favourite foods. Progress was made because of the visually rich demonstrations using a projector and wall sized screen to show the use of the database program. The program itself is very well suited to giving these pupils access to making and understanding graphs and charts.

4. Pupils and students make good progress in literacy and this is promoted effectively through English lessons and by the contributions in the teaching of other subjects. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence course followed by students over the age of 16 encourages the development and use of literacy skills to complete the modules of study. Students make good progress in reading information and instructions, maintaining written records and accounts and engaging in discussion. Consequently, in 2002, two students built up nine accreditations independently in their course and, with some help, gained a further two accreditations. The strategies for teaching literacy have been developed successfully and account for the transformation in pupils' achievement. In 2002, four Year 11 pupils gained Entry Level Certificates in English, an achievement matching their progress. Discussion and questioning are central in teachers' approaches to lessons and as a result pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. They attend carefully to what is being said, are thoughtful in their responses and give the reasons for what they say. Pupils, who need to, use sign language, symbols and pictures to communicate. Reading is taught well so at the earliest stage pupils recognise what books and words are. They make good progress in acquiring reading skills, from understanding that words convey meaning to enjoying reading aloud. They understand what they read from a wide range of material such as stories, news and Internet information. Likewise, in writing pupils begin by forming letters and copying words, in time developing neat

handwriting and composing sentences. Eventually, they adjust their writing for different purposes such as letters, stories, information and lists.

5. Lively, well-planned teaching helps most pupils make good progress in acquiring number skills. In 2002, twelve Year 11 pupils gained Entry Level Certificates. The Years 1, 2 and 3 group of pupils are helped to achieve well. They gain good advantage by being taught with strategies from the foundation curriculum for children under the age of five. This ensures they consolidate the basis for making progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Mathematics lessons also succeed in promoting good achievement by making effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy. Although this is soundly in place in other subjects' contribution to numeracy it is not promoting pupils' progress as effectively as in mathematics lessons. Over time, pupils build well on the knowledge, understanding and skills with number, solving problems and applying what they know to real-life situations involving money, percentages, decimals and fractions. Students over the age of 16 make satisfactory progress in applying number skills to managing everyday situations such as shopping and using public transport. Higher attaining pupils have a broad knowledge that includes recognising shapes and their properties as well as a variety of measurement.

6. Progress is good in science. In 2002, six Year 11 pupils passed the Entry Level Certificate. Having learnt through discovery and positive interactions with adults and others in their group, the youngest pupils are aware of themselves and the world around them. They know the names for parts of the body and carry out simple investigations. By Year 6, pupils know how our skull and ribs protect vulnerable organs. The significant emphasis on investigative learning and scientific methods by the end of Year 9 and through to Year 11, helps pupils achieve a good understanding of the detail in seed germination, soluble substances and electricity.

7. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in geography between Year 3 and 6. The demands made of pupils in relation to the subject are too low, resulting in them producing little work and repeating work in areas of knowledge, skills and understanding that they have already learnt. The group of higher attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make less progress in art than others of the same age. They are given half the lesson time of others and, because they are a large group, the small art room does not allow their creativity sufficient scope. All of the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 do not achieve as well as they could in design and technology. The opportunities for learning are too narrow largely because the subject is taught by a part-time temporary teacher and this limits the breadth of study. The lack of time to teach the subject this creates raises complications for the two groups of pupils with severe learning difficulties meaning that for some lessons they are taught outside the technology workshop. At these times the absence of resources and subject expertise militates against these pupils making progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' and students' attitudes to the school and work are very good and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. At the time of the last inspection attitudes and behaviour were improving well and this trend has continued. Parents say that their children like school, and discussions with pupils and students confirm they are enthusiastic about lessons and keen to participate in the many activities available. Arrival at the school in the morning is a welcoming and enjoyable experience for most. Pupils greet friends and staff in a cheery and polite manner and are clearly enthusiastic. In most lessons, pupils concentrate and persevere with tasks, are eager to contribute and often are engrossed. They take considerable pride in their achievements.

9. Behaviour at the school is very good and there is very little unsatisfactory or unpleasant behaviour. Pupils and students respect and observe their code of conduct and respond very positively to the individualised care and support they receive. The school is an orderly environment which successfully supports learning and personal development. Pupils show a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and good respect for the feelings and views of peers. Around the school, at breaks and lunchtimes, behaviour is very good. Pupils are confident in conversing and keen to ask questions. Records show there are occasional incidents of poor behaviour usually when pupils are particularly troubled with personal difficulties. There have been no exclusions at the school in the last year.

10. Pupils' levels of personal development are very good. The very good relationships with staff and between pupils and students are strengths and make a considerable contribution to learning and personal development. Pupils interact politely and show increasing levels of social skills and confidence. The strong relationships are based on high levels of trust and are often exemplified by the positive use of humour. They benefit from the consistent valuing of their efforts and achievements and from the very good opportunities provided to enhance personal and social skills. Most pupils and students make significant gains in self esteem and self confidence as they progress through the school and many start to take more responsibility for aspects of their own learning and development.

11. Attendance at the school has improved since the last inspection, is now good and above the average of similar schools. The good attendance reflects both the enthusiasm pupils have for attending school and the very effective work the school is doing to monitor and encourage families to ensure that children attend.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. Teaching and learning are good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection reflecting the success of the work done to make teaching better. For example, very good and better teaching has increased from 8 per cent to 28 per cent in the space of two years. Teachers plan their lessons well for the most part: they manage pupils' behaviour and their activities very well, and they make very good use of the time and resources. Consequently, the needs of the majority of pupils are met effectively and enable them to learn effectively. Some of the pupils with additional special needs, however, such as those with autism, or those who have difficulty hearing, do not have their needs met as well as most. This is because members of staff have not yet had sufficient training in the best methods for teaching them. These pupils' learn satisfactorily, but not always as effectively as that of the other pupils in their class.

13. In most subjects, teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They know their pupils well, and, apart from the few pupils with additional needs, how to teach them effectively. Teachers' subject knowledge is especially good in English, where a great deal of effort has gone into staff development, especially through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. This has brought a good structure to the long-term planning as well as to the organisation of each lesson. Lessons very often take the form of a good introductory "warm-up" activity. This is followed by a main activity that is generally in groups with different levels of work for each one, and ends with a review of what has been learned. This has been so successful in the English lessons that the system has been adopted throughout the school in other subjects. In a few subjects, there are one or two teachers whose knowledge is sometimes lacking, such as in some lessons in religious education, design and technology, and computing. In other subjects, including music and physical education, teachers have demonstrated very good knowledge and skills in how to teach their subjects. In most subjects teachers plan their lessons to include some support of literacy skills. This is done particularly well with speaking and listening, and it generally includes reading and writing. Basic skills such as spelling, correct vocabulary, signing, recognising symbols and reading, are generally

well supported across the school. There are some subjects, however, in which the encouragement of writing skills is neglected, such as in history, geography and French. There is scope to improve this literacy support without losing the essential pace and motivation that characterize many of these lessons. Numeracy skills are well encouraged in lessons such as science, design technology and physical education, but more often, teachers do not plan deliberate opportunities to include reinforcement of counting skills as part of their lessons. Teachers use computers and related equipment well to support pupils' learning throughout the curriculum. In all of the classroom subjects, teachers enhance pupils' learning with the use of good software for information, reading, number skills, and access to the Internet.

14. Mostly, teachers use effectively the introductory activity of their lessons and the final review of what pupils have learnt. The organisation of group work is particularly well aimed at meeting the needs of higher attaining and lower attaining pupils, with different resources, support and guidance during the lesson. This enables all pupils to learn well. Sometimes, the lesson aims lose some of their force because they are stated in terms of what the teacher will be doing, rather than what the pupils are expected to learn. This can lead to some lessons being a series of activities that are undemanding, and not focused on exactly what the teacher wants the children to learn. This was observed on occasion in design and technology, history, and religious education lessons. The classroom assistants are generally very effective in dealing with the behaviour of a minority of pupils who sometimes find it difficult to settle. They are also skilled in supporting teachers by taking charge of small groups during lessons. Classroom assistants prompt and encourage pupils very well and they have very good relationships with them.

15. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave, will listen to what is being said, and will join in with discussions and practical lessons. The work that is set is challenging. Pupils have to think what they are doing, and they have to concentrate hard in order to get things right. In a few instances, however, there is little expectation that this will happen, and teachers are content to allow pupils to fill time with undemanding work such as colouring in a worksheet, or finding a picture in the Internet.

16. Good methods of teaching are used throughout the school, in all subjects. Teachers generally explain clearly so that all pupils understand what the lesson is about. They often use signing to help the lower attaining pupils. Their demonstrations are clear and helpful, whether in physical education, science or art. Resources, such as mock Tudor clothes, maps, models, scientific apparatus, physical education equipment, videos in French, are used effectively to motivate pupils, and to help to meet their learning needs. One of the most effective techniques is that teachers constantly pose questions that they encourage pupils to answer. Teachers then explain the next step, and more questions are posed for pupils to consider. In French lessons, pupils are encouraged to speak to the teacher and to each other in French, as well as join in a vocabulary game. Science lessons involve good experiments that challenge the pupils.

17. Pupils mainly know how well they are learning because teachers round off their lessons looking at, and evaluating with pupils, the work they have been doing. Pupils are often encouraged to discuss each other's work in positive ways, and teachers say what needs to be done next. Equally, teachers mainly mark pupils' work with clear comments, marks out of ten, stars or points. Often, this marking is done with the pupil present, so the teacher can expand on what is written, especially in the case of the pupils who are unable to read well. Homework is set from time to time. It often takes the form of reading, and, for instance, doing research for a project in mathematics, geography or computing.

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

18. There are a good range of learning opportunities, overall, which meet statutory requirements and give pupils a broad experience of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Since the last inspection, when the need to improve the planning of the curriculum was a key issue, much work has been completed on planning what pupils will learn. Good progress has been made in providing a “broad, interesting and accessible curriculum”. There has also been good progress, overall, on improving the planning of what is taught in subjects. The format designed by the school to ensure planning is consistent across subjects is not always used in the way intended, for example, the learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities are not always made clear. However, the deputy headteacher, who is responsible for curriculum, monitors planning effectively and these inconsistencies are being efficiently dealt with.

19. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 have access to all areas of the National Curriculum, although there is some imbalance in the time allocated to subjects. This is the case in Years 1 and 2, because the school is in the process of moving towards a foundation curriculum, which should be more appropriate for the needs of the children entering the school. In Years 7 to 9 there are some minor differences in the numbers of lessons allocated to different subjects in the three classes. This is partly due to the decision to divide a class in two, midway through the school year, which has led to some timetabling complications. Some imbalance exists in art and design for the group of Years 7, 8 and 9 higher attaining pupils who are given half the time of others for the subject, which means they achieve less well. The lack of sufficient time to teach design and technology leaves learning opportunities too narrow in Years 7, 8 and 9.

20. The school has a flexible curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 offering a good range of opportunities including college courses and work experience. To enable this, pupils are formally disapplied from studying design and technology and a modern foreign language. Pupils gain qualifications, mainly through the Entry Level Certificate in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. There is also provision for more able pupils to take GCSE examinations at foundation level in mathematics and science. In addition, some of the pupils’ work is accredited through the Youth Award Scheme. Students over the age of 16 gain accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence course and activities such as work experience are also accredited.

21. While there is satisfactory provision for the few pupils with additional learning difficulties, there are no clear guidelines showing how the school will address the needs of pupils with sensory impairment and autism. Some pupils’ Statements of Special Educational Needs identify the provision and actions to be taken. This ranges from particular staff training, in order to work more effectively with pupils with autism, to the implementation of particular visual stimulation programmes and communication strategies for sensory impaired pupils. However, this provision is not sufficiently in place.

22. The strategy for literacy is being developed well, and the strategy for numeracy satisfactorily, for the groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6 and in Years 7 to 9. While what is taught to most pupils is drawn from curriculum plans for pupils of a younger age group, a lot of work has been done on making the curriculum nevertheless appropriate for the age of the pupils, for example, by using the Big Books especially developed for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The promotion of literacy in other subjects is generally good, with pupils being given opportunities to read and write for different purposes, and with key subject vocabulary being focused on in many lessons. However, good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing are missed in some subjects. There are examples of the use of number in other subjects, but a lack of formalised planning means that opportunities are sometimes missed.

23. Extra curricular activities are very good. Opportunities for activities to take place after school are, of necessity, limited because transport is available only at the end of the school day. However, pupils have very good opportunities for a range of lunchtime clubs which provide support for the curriculum and help with pupils' social and personal development. Pupils are able to choose from a range of activities such as chess, computing, painting, dance and outside games. Some residential experiences are also available, for example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 were planning a stay at Matlock later in the term. Students over the age of 16 have a variety of activities, including some after school.

24. Careers and work related education are very good. Pupils in Year 9 have an introduction to careers education. This is developed into a programme from Year 10. There are close links with the local careers adviser from the Connexions service who visits the school on a regular basis to interview pupils, and to participate in some lessons. There is a well developed careers library, with access to careers software. The school has received an award from the careers service for this library provision. As part of the more flexible curriculum, pupils in Year 11 have taken part in "Work to Qualify" through the Nottinghamshire Education Business Alliance. They undertake work experience on two days a week, for which they are well prepared and which is carefully monitored. They keep a log of this, and they receive a certificate when they have completed the placement. Pupils in Year 10 attend the local College to participate in courses such as catering and motor bike maintenance. These are two year courses and lead to certification through the Open College Network. Students over the age of 16 have the opportunity of attending the local further education college for taster courses. These students are also offered opportunities of work experience at some point during their time in the class, when it is felt to be appropriate for them to do this. All these experiences help to give pupils and students an understanding of life outside school and prepare them for the transition to further education or training.

25. The school has very good links with the community, which contribute well to pupils' learning. Many of the curriculum related visits which pupils undertake are within the local area, for example, to the local library and church. Pupils visit the local Methodist community centre to attend coffee mornings, providing good support for the development of their social skills. Visitors from the community are involved in talking to pupils about aspects of their work or in contributing to subjects such as personal, social and health education, for example, police and representatives from the health services. Links with local business are established through work experience in areas such as retail, catering, horticulture. Businesses and other groups raise funds for the school, for example, a donation from McDonalds allowed for the purchase of plants, while a sponsored head shave run by the local pub funded the provision of water for the healthy schools campaign.

26. In response to the last inspection, the school has further developed links with schools and colleges and these are now good and help to broaden pupils' opportunities, both educationally and socially. Pupils for whom it is appropriate are offered an opportunity of spending an hour a week in their local primary or secondary school. They are accompanied by a classroom assistant who is responsible for monitoring the placements and who keeps detailed records as well as liaising with parents. There are a small number of pupils who spend part of the time at Bracken Hill and part of the time in their local schools, and links with these schools are well maintained. Good use is made of sharing resources with the primary school and nursery sharing the campus.

27. The school's provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is, overall, very good. Its strong, successful ethos that involves all pupils and ensures they feel welcome valued and part of worthwhile endeavours. This is among the foremost qualities of the school parents praised. At the start of each day pupils are warmly welcomed by the headteacher and staff and at the end of the day sent off in the same friendly manner. This valuing of pupils suffuses the school day and is passed onto those who drive them to and from school each day. This contributes very well to pupils' social development, which is reflected in warmth, understanding and appreciation shared between pupils, it not being uncommon for a pupil to spontaneously praise another for their achievements.

28. Teaching is often lively and sets out to get pupils actively involved in learning. Consequently, spiritual development is promoted well through several subjects and in the many discussions encouraging pupils to relate their feelings, values and beliefs to lesson topics. In one excellent lesson on personal, social and health education, pupils explored and shared experiences of what made them angry, sad or happy. One higher attaining pupil told her group: *"My cousins make me feel happy because they love me and I love them."* Religious education provides pupils with sound opportunities to learn about different faiths and the cultures associated with them. The school has contact with a person of the Sikh religion who, at the suggestion of a pupil, visited to explain his beliefs and values. Both school and class assemblies are well-planned, monitored and effective in reinforcing a sense of community and the values that support community life. They cover a plenitude of themes reflecting cultures and religions across the world as well as the key dates of British history and culture.

29. High expectations for good conduct, supported by very good relationships, promote pupils' moral development very effectively. Pupils play a willing and responsible part in the day-to-day organisation of the school, helping, for example, set out chairs for assemblies and participating in the work of the school council. The good provision for teaching personal, social and health education and citizenship ensures pupils have the opportunities to explore moral values in relation to their own lives and experiences. Pupils are taught about the diversity of ethnic identities and cultures making up modern Britain and learn the appropriate lessons regarding respect and tolerance of peoples of different races and outlooks. This is reinforced effectively in the displays around school of images, artefacts and writings from many cultural and religious sources.

30. Pupils' cultural development is supported effectively by the wide range of opportunities in and out of school to experience and appreciate the diversity of culture. Pupils go out to visit a variety of religious sites and a Holocaust memorial centre nearby and, also nearby, D H Lawrence's birthplace. English lessons make a good contribution through the study of Shakespeare, drama and poetry. Theatre groups regularly visit and perform. The curriculum for music and art incorporates works from different periods and cultures. In music, musicians have visited and performed for pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and support are effective, consistently applied and have a positive impact on pupils' achievement and personal development. All members of staff know pupils very well and always have their best interests and well being in mind. Pupils approach teachers, teaching assistants and specialists, like the school nurse and the speech and language therapist, freely with any concerns or worries. The procedures for dealing with child protection issues are good and meet requirements. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. The support available from external agencies is well used to ensure a good quality care for pupils. The provision specified in

pupils' Statement of Special Educational Needs is largely met, although pupils with additional special needs are not always fully provided for.

32. Health and safety procedures are good and all staff conscientiously ensure that pupils know and adhere to safe practices. However, staff have not yet received formal handling and restraint training although this is planned for the near future. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and there are good procedures to ensure parents are quickly informed of any illness or injury. In lessons care is taken to ensure that pupils followed safe procedures and practices.

33. The procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The headteacher, administrative staff and the educational welfare officer work very effectively as a team monitoring and following up absence on an individual pupil basis. Flexible strategies are used effectively to encourage attendance and to help pupils experiencing difficulties to develop a greater interest in school and their learning programmes. The close monitoring of absence and the use of imaginative strategies to encourage attendance have been instrumental in both improved attendance levels and improved attitudes to school evident since the last inspection.

34. The school is vigilant in the day to day monitoring of pupils behaviour. Reward and incident records are effectively used to monitor individual pupil behaviour and staff quickly identify and implement appropriate intervention strategies for pupils experiencing difficulties. Whenever necessary the school makes sure that parents are fully involved in agreeing and monitoring behaviour improvement plans. Pupils understand the behaviour code and all staff encourage pupils well through the use of praise and the public celebration of effort and achievement.

35. The procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. Day to day records are well used to monitor pupils' personal and social skill development and the school is quick to effect short term targets for improvement where necessary. Longer term personal and social skill targets are included in individual education plans. Formal review documentation does not always show the progress made against all personal development targets. Very good support for personal development is achieved by giving pupils opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of school life and by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning and development as they progress through the school.

36. There have been good improvements in the school's procedures for assessing pupil achievement, particularly the ways in which it uses this information to monitor and evaluate pupil progress. Overall, the school employs good procedures for assessing pupils' achievements. Teachers and classroom assistants make good use of opportunities that present themselves during lessons to assess what pupils know, understand and can do. They do this through effectively targeted questions during group work and well structured time for rounding off lessons when pupils review what they have learnt. Pupils' work is generally well annotated by teachers, who give pupils information about what they need to do in order to improve, but this is not always done consistently or in a form that pupils always understand. It does though provide an important record of the context in which pupils achieve success, and work is evaluated against attainment levels of the National Curriculum or against P Scale levels for those pupils who are still working towards the first level of the National Curriculum. Teachers use the information they obtain from assessing pupils' achievements in a satisfactory way to plan future work that meets individual needs. However, there is inconsistency as some teachers do not evaluate their lessons using the learning objectives in their planning or use evaluations well to assist planning for future lessons.

37. The school has good procedures for setting annual performance targets for all pupils based on P Scales. These are being used effectively to build individual profiles of pupil

attainment and to track their progress over time. However, the school is not yet involving staff in meetings to ensure that they are all applying assessment criteria in the same way to judge the level of each pupils' work. All pupils have Individual Education Plans based on targets for literacy, numeracy, and personal development and they are generally written in ways which are sharp and precise enough to enable judgements to be made about whether pupils meet them. Overall, pupils make good progress in achieving these personal targets but teachers do not carry out and record these evaluations consistently. Consequently, there is not a clear link between the targets set in one Individual Education Plan and those written for subsequent ones which would indicate structured and progressive planning towards longer term aims.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

1. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive. The relationship between the school and the vast majority of parents contributes favourably to pupils' learning and development. Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress of their children. There is much agreement that their children enjoy attending the school and that if the school was open at weekends and during holidays their children would be very happy to attend. Parents are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching, the fact that they are kept well informed, the approachability of the school and the way in which the school helps children to mature and become responsible. No significant concerns were raised by parents.

39. The school provides parents and carers with good quality information. Regular newsletters, letters and phone contacts ensure that all parents are kept aware of the school's news. Information on progress is conveyed formally through Individual Education Plan reviews each term, at the annual review of Statements and in the text of the annual report of each pupil's progress. The quality of information provided is good although progress against all Individual Education Plan targets is not consistently reported. The school is quick to identify any pupils experiencing difficulties and parents are always involved in agreeing targets and strategies for improvement. In reporting these and the very well received practice of phoning home with good news messages ensure that most homes are contacted at least weekly.

40. The school has developed a good partnership with parents. A significantly sized group of parents are regularly in school and very involved in supporting routines and their children's education and development. Parents help with outings and trips and play an effective role in helping with swimming each week. The school is constantly looking to further develop the partnership and regularly consults and seeks views on aspects of the provision and organisation. Parent workshops on a range of relevant topics are well attended and well received. The partnership with parents has improved since the last inspection and there is now a good level of support from many homes where parents are happy to reinforce the expectations of the school with their children at all times.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The leadership of the school is good and so is the way in which it is managed. This is a significant shift upwards in effectiveness in the last two years since the last inspection. The strengths that were seen emerging in the leadership of the headteacher have been a significant factor in bringing about necessary but very good improvements overall in that short time. The issues arising from that inspection have been set about with determination and effective strategies to the extent that shortcomings have been largely overcome. Through the leadership and vision of the headteacher the best conditions have been created for enabling the school to move forward. There is a clear sense of purpose among the staff who work hard to make sure pupils and students gain a good education. The headteacher has

developed very clear aims and values, which are significant in the school's work and are its strength. A well established ethos ensures all pupils' needs are met and puts concern for, and support of pupils, to the fore. This is enabling them to be self-confident, manage challenges and to experience enjoyment in learning. Parents recognise this as a key strength and some described the positive transformation their children went through on coming to the school. Good leadership is now permeating much of the school's work. Those with responsibilities are clear on their accountability. Teachers with an oversight of subjects are known as 'curriculum leaders' in order to underline the expectation that they have that responsibility and in carrying it out, look forward, use their initiative and innovate. For example, information and communication technology, which had been wholly unsatisfactory, has seen excellent improvement and is now very good in many respects because of the very good leadership and management of the subject leader.

42. In managing the school effectively, responsibilities are at present mostly clearly delegated. The appointment and effectiveness of the deputy headteacher has been a key element in leading and managing core areas of the school's provision, particularly in relation to effectively monitoring and supporting curriculum development. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good overall and the headteacher's assessment of the effectiveness of the school is accurate. There has been significant change to much of the school's provision in the last two years and some changes are still in the process of implementation which gives rise to some inconsistencies in practice by teachers. While this is being dealt with in relation to curriculum planning, the oversight of assessment procedures is less secure. The observation and support of teaching is very good and the impact of this is seen in shifting the overall quality of teaching from satisfactory to good and, in particular, increasing very good and better teaching. Much of the management structure is in place barely a year but has been well supported with consultancy exercises and training. The continued professional development of teachers and other staff is well-co-ordinated. The management of the analysis and recording of pupils' performance in relation to P Scales is carried out in a thorough manner. Curriculum leaders have time to exercise their influence and monitor and support the work of colleagues in their subject. English provides a good example of a curriculum leader observing teaching, scrutinising colleagues planning of what they intend to teach and analysing pupils' work to compare what is being provided for pupils and the actual benefits to them in terms of progress.

43. The governors are playing an increasingly influential part in setting a direction for the school and have consolidated their role well in the past two years. Several have considerable experience of school governance in a variety of schools, which ensures that their statutory responsibilities are addressed well and that they understand the critical role governors must play in contributing to the school's effectiveness. There is a broad range of expertise among the governing body that equips it well for educational, financial and strategic development matters. Their meetings are strongly focused on a well-informed discussion of the school's strengths and weaknesses as well as clarity concerning effective actions. In this respect, good use has been made of the number of external evaluations carried out recently to identify the priorities and track the school's progress.

44. Overall, the school makes good use of its resources. The principles of best value are understood well in school and by governors on the Finance Committee. In planning the use of the school's money considerable care is taken to obtain good value from spending and to ensure that investments bring the benefits intended. The school has a good level of income by comparison with similar schools and has built up over two years a significant surplus of funds. These are now targeted largely in paying for an additional teacher, which has allowed a large group of pupils with severe learning difficulties to be split into two smaller more manageable groups. Decision-making in relation to spending the school's income is securely linked to the school improvement plan priorities. These are reached by a thorough

examination of what needs addressing and what can be managed within the limitations of the budget. For example, curriculum leaders identify the key issues for development in their subjects, which they extract from their monitoring and the issues for action stated in external evaluations. The implications for training are also plotted in relation to developments and the school moves forward in a coherent way. The significant investment in information and communication technology equipment, programs and training has resulted in a very positive outcome in terms of pupils' progress. Generally, the learning resources owned by the school are used well, for example, the library to support reading. Very good use is made of facilities in the community, such as the public library, schools, colleges and work related placements to broaden the opportunities for pupils.

45. The number of teachers is adequate although the lack of sufficient time for teaching design and technology is affecting standards in Years 7 to 9. This, together with the recent division of a group of Year 7 to 9 pupils, is currently giving rise to over-complicated timetabling, which affects the quality of teaching occasionally. The appointment of a teacher of design and technology, creating more time for the subject, should alleviate much of these difficulties. New staff have induction plans but key issues are not given enough priority, for example, urgently developing a new teacher's expertise in teaching pupils with severe learning difficulties and training a classroom assistant in managing pupils with autism.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. The headteacher and governors with the full support of the senior management team and staff have achieved very good improvement in a short time. To consolidate their achievement and continue improving the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Meet effectively any specific special educational needs of pupils, beyond their major learning difficulties such as autism, sensory impairments or medical conditions, listed in their Statements of Special Educational Needs or later identified in the review of their Statements by developing the knowledge of teachers and classroom assistants:
 - i. So that they know and understand the nature of pupils' specific needs.
 - ii. They know the most effective approaches for addressing these.
 - iii. They ensure these pupils are well supported in making progress.
(paragraphs 2, 12 and 21)
- (2) Improve the provision for design and technology for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 by:
 - i. Ensuring staffing levels and expertise are adequate.
 - ii. Broadening pupils' learning opportunities in the subject.
 - iii. Making the technology workshop accessible to all groups of pupils for all of their practical lessons.
(paragraphs 19 and 73 through to 77)
- (3) Improve, where necessary, the contribution made by subjects to promoting pupils numeracy and writing.
(paragraphs 22 and 53)
- (4) Monitor more closely how teachers assess their pupils' progress and use their assessments to plan what they teach to ensure this is carried out consistently and effectively.
(paragraphs 36 and 42)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	16	34	11	1	0	0
Percentage	3.0	25.0	53.5	17	1.5	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 point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	69
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27

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	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.38

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

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
69	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	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: Y1 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	8

Education support staff: Y1 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	378.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	850060
Total expenditure	790000
Expenditure per pupil	12108
Balance brought forward from previous year	88374
Balance carried forward to next year	68605

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	69
Number of questionnaires returned	17

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	12	12	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	24	6	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	59	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	44	6	0	13
The teaching is good.	94	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	88	12	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	18	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	76	24	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	76	18	6	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	82	18	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	76	24	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

47. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in English against prior attainment. A few pupils who have additional special needs make satisfactory progress, rather than good. This is because staff have not yet been trained in the best techniques to teach pupils, such as those with autism. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress that pupils make in the different aspects of English. Pupils progress well in reading and writing, for instance, of poetry or writing for different purposes, such as letters or articles for a newspaper, or a story. They take part in drama and role play lessons, and there are discussions in almost every lesson. These make a good contribution to speaking and listening skills. In most subjects, teachers make good efforts to include some written work in their lessons, though this is not always the case. In English lessons, teachers often make good use of computers to help develop their pupils' reading and comprehension skills.

48. By the end of Year 2 pupils progress well in developing speaking and listening skills. They listen to what they are being told, and they join in with their own contributions to discussions. They echo words to poems and rhymes, or lines from a familiar book, such as *"The Train Ride"*. Higher attaining pupils write words, but their letters are very large and sometimes not recognisable. In reading, they realise words convey meaning and some pupils recognise their own names. Several pupils understand some sign language and symbols. They use these symbols as a means of reading and understanding the day's timetable.

49. By the end of Year 6, pupils' good progress sees those who are the highest attaining reading fluently and expressively, tackling stories such as *"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone"*. Others read hesitantly and, although there is not a lot of expression, they understand what they have read. Lower attaining pupils struggle to read individual words even when they are part of a sentence they are familiar with. They follow words with their finger and blend the sounds of letters effectively to say the words. Mainly, pupils speak clearly and have a fair idea of what they want to say. They listen carefully to what they are told, and take turns to contribute their own thoughts to lessons. The writing of higher attaining pupils is very easily readable; it is neat, with well-formed letters. When writing their own sentences, the meaning is clear and pupils read them out to the rest of the class. Pupils' spelling is not always accurate, but understandable, when they are producing their own ideas. When copy-writing, the lower attaining pupils tend to make mistakes with the spelling, or get some letters the wrong way round.

50. By the end of Year 9, many pupils hold a sensible conversation, or take part in a reasoned discussion with their teacher or their classmates. Other pupils find it difficult to organise their thoughts into sentences. Most pupils listen closely to what they are being told and they understand what is being said to them even in quite complicated topics. Their handwriting is generally neat, and some pupils are beginning to establish their own style. Pupils present their work in an organised way, although many pupils are resistant to writing more than a short passage about any subject. The higher attaining pupils enjoy reading their work to the class, or taking part in role play and drama lessons. They read with little expression, but generally understand what they have read.

51. By the end of Year 11, lower attaining pupils read without fluency or extracting any real meaning. Higher attaining pupils read a range of texts such as stories, Internet information pages and newspaper articles. They understand much of what they read and talk about it afterwards. They understand what the parts of a book are, such as the glossary and the index, and they know how to use the library. Pupils write in a variety of forms, such as recipes

and menus, stories and accounts of visits they have been on. They learn to use different sources of information, including timetables, television listings and sets of instructions. When taking part in class discussions, they listen to each other and to the teacher, and sensibly make their own contributions.

52. By the end of Year 13, higher attaining students continue to write neatly, although they do not write any extended passages. The lowest attaining students' write using poorly formed letters which is not easily readable. Their reading is very uncertain, with limited recognition of many letters. Higher attaining students read from books, magazines and the computer screens, although they tend to rely on prompts from staff, or using the pictures to help them to guess what a sentence might say. Students mainly speak clearly and are well understood by each other. The higher attaining students listen to what they are told, and they try to follow instructions carefully.

53. English is taught well throughout the school. The teaching in some lessons is very good, especially where the lessons are particularly well structured and the teaching is lively and challenging. Teachers generally are adept at organising a good selection of resources to make the lessons more interesting, such as overhead projectors, videos and symbol cards. This gets pupils fully involved and they are quickly able to grasp the challenges being presented. In this respect, teachers use whole-class introductions very well to get the lessons started positively, and then often continue with very well planned group work. This group work is well aimed at pupils of differing abilities, and it is well supported by the skilled classroom assistants in each class. Staff have high expectations that pupils will behave well and pay attention in lessons. Pupils mostly respond well to this. They work hard, listen, and work well individually or in groups. Relationships among pupils, and with staff, are very good, although some pupils' behaviour needs to be handled firmly and positively on occasions. Teachers give good feedback to pupils about how well they are progressing in each lesson, talking with them, and having a review at the end of most lessons. The marking of pupils' written work is very effective in helping pupils to see what they have achieved or what needs to be improved. On the less positive side, some teachers do not give sufficient priority to pupils' writing skills, and there is no regular setting of homework, although the school has tried to encourage pupils to take some work home, such as reading. Occasionally, teachers have expectations that are too high – they try to get too much into a lesson, or move along too quickly, before the pupils have properly absorbed the early parts of the lesson.

54. This subject is very well led, and it is managed well. There is an experienced and well qualified subject leader who has overseen very good improvement since the previous inspection. She has a clear view of how well different aspects of the subject are progressing throughout the school. There are regular observations of teachers, and checks on lesson planning and the quality of pupils' work. The plans of what is to be taught are good, being well based on National guidelines, and prepared in detail by staff. Pupils' progress is checked and recorded very well, and good use is made of this assessment information when deciding on the priorities for future teaching, such as increasing the amount of time given to reading for some pupils, or to writing for others. The subject leader has clear and appropriate plans for developing the subject further. The resources are good, with innumerable books and table-top activities in each classroom, and there is a small but comfortable and well-used library. To help meet pupils learning needs, there are also regular trips to the local public library, sometimes for story-telling and poetry sessions. This subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development, through, for example, their work with Shakespeare in English and drama lessons, and the range of poetry, story and factual books that pupils read, or listen to.

MATHEMATICS

55. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is good overall. It is good for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory for those in Years 7 to 9 and for students over the age of 16. This represents an improvement from the last inspection when achievement was judged satisfactory overall.

56. The youngest pupils are admitted with very limited mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. Initially, they work on pre-mathematical skills, for example, they sort objects and colours. They make good progress and by the end of Year 2 most count to 10, while higher attaining pupils count to 100 in steps of tens. Most recognise and write numerals, name two-dimensional shapes and identify longest and shortest, more and less. They develop a sense of direction, identifying forwards and backwards, with the more able understanding left and right. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils know number bonds to 20 and count to 100 and add and subtract hundreds, tens and units. They use this knowledge to calculate money and to complete sequences of numbers. They double and halve numbers and recognise odd and even numbers. Lower attaining pupils recognise numbers to 10 and develop some independence in counting to 10. Using cubes or other objects they add to 5. They name shapes such as circle and square

57. By the end of Year 9, lower attaining pupils make use of practical mathematics, for example, counting classroom equipment as part of their project on the school. While most count by rote to 10, many count independently and recognise numbers to 10. Most recognise coins and select appropriate amounts for shopping. Higher attaining pupils recognise that half means two equal amounts, and divide numbers and amounts of money into equal parts. They add three digit numbers, and understand negative numbers. By the end of Year 11, lower attaining pupils tell the time, with some recognising the hours and half hours, and others being aware of the minutes. They use cubes to add and subtract numbers to ten and recognise standard abbreviations for weights and measures. Some interpret pictograms and pie charts. Higher attaining pupils know the names of different types of triangle and angle. They add and subtract using decimals and calculate equivalent percentages and fractions. Most students over the age of 16 know how to use money in "real life" situations such as planning days out and buying meals. They select items from catalogues and work out the costs. Higher attaining students deal with large sums of money, while others work in sums up to £20. Lower attaining students recognise coins.

58. Teaching is good, overall. The best teaching is based on clear planning which identifies what pupils will learn. These plans also identify the ways in which the needs of different pupils will be met. However, learning is less effective when, on a few occasions, teachers have not planned work to meet the individual needs of the pupils with the result that some find the work either too difficult or too easy. In these instances, pupils' individual targets are included in lesson planning. Lively introductory sessions involve pupils well and develop many of their mathematical skills. For example, in a very good lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11, there was a swift review of a previous lesson, focusing on words connected with time, which reminded pupils of what they had discussed and provided the teacher with information about what had been remembered. Teachers use different methods to help pupils to understand topics. For example, in a very good lesson for Year 1 and 2 pupils, they were helped to understand directions by moving cars on a road mat, playing a grid game, and using a programmable robotic toy. An understanding of mathematical language is developed in a variety of ways. For example, in a lesson on symmetry, the variety of activities and the discussion ensured that pupils' gained an understanding of the concept; while in a GCSE group, there was very good consolidation of terms related to different types of angle and triangle.

59. A good variety of resources is used to help pupils' understanding and most teachers take care to ensure that these are suitable for pupils' ages. Pupils generally respond well to questions, and are often enthusiastic about the different activities. Whole class sessions at the ends of lessons are well used to check pupils' understanding and to remind them of what they have done in the lesson. Marking is usually carefully completed so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. In some cases marking is limited so that pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers provide good support for the development of pupils' literacy, as they focus on key words for the different topics.

60. While the management of pupils' behaviour is good generally, on a few occasions inappropriate behaviour is not consistently dealt with. Teachers are not always aware of the range of strategies needed to teach pupils with autism so that they are not enabled fully to engage in lessons. There is some variation in the quality with which teachers round off lessons usually because not enough time has been left to discuss pupils' work fully or to check their understanding adequately. There are examples of mathematical ideas and language being developed in other subjects. However, although this has been the subject of discussions among the staff, a policy for the development of numeracy across the curriculum has yet to be formalised and opportunities are missed.

61. The mathematics co-ordinator monitors teaching and the planning for what is taught. This is providing useful support to colleagues. The strategy for numeracy is in place for pupils in Years 1 to 9 and the format of mathematics lessons reflects this. The curriculum is based on these strategies at levels appropriate to the pupils in the school, but a common format for planning has yet to be devised. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' work but these are not always used to best effect to ensure that future plans are based on pupils' needs. Resources are good and provide a helpful support for pupils' learning, enabling them to engage in many practical activities. Most of the staff have been involved in training in the use of information and communication technology and some useful mathematics programs have been purchased. There were a number of examples of these being well used in lessons but sometimes good opportunities are missed.

SCIENCE

62. The school's provision for science is good, which represents good improvement since the previous inspection. The key issue then was of pupils' underachievement in Years 7 to 9 and this has been addressed effectively by increasing the time allocated to the subject. Pupils achieve well in developing their knowledge of the living and physical worlds and increasing their understanding of scientific investigations and the skills required to carry them out. Consequently, pupils achieve success in accredited courses at the end of Year 11, such as the Entry Level Certificate. Higher attaining pupils are taking the GCSE examination for the first time this year. The progress made by pupils with additional learning needs is satisfactory because although teachers try hard, and generally successfully, to ensure that they are included in all activities they do not always have clear strategies that enable them to do this.

63. During their time in Years 1 to 6, pupils develop a growing understanding of themselves and the world around them. They record what they know and what they have seen and done, such as discovering different sound sources around the school. Pupils also examine some of the characteristics of living things. Therefore, by the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils know the names of the main external parts of the body and the five senses. They understand the concept of push or pull forces and know the names of different sources of light, such as stars and car lights. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils know the differences between living and non-living things and understand how bones such as the skull

and ribs protect delicate organs. They also carry out simple investigations, for example how temperature causes changes in state.

64. Pupils are given many opportunities to carry out investigations in Years 7 to 9. Therefore, by the end of Year 9, they have developed a number of practical and investigative skills. Higher attaining pupils improve their understanding of the procedures associated with carrying out investigations, such as the conditions necessary for seed germination and how different substances dissolve in water and white spirit, and they relate their knowledge to everyday situations, such as the use of these liquids as cleaning agents. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 further develops pupils' scientific skills by placing an increasing emphasis on investigations as they work towards accredited examinations. The highest attaining pupils are beginning to approach these investigations with developing understanding of the scientific procedure of planning, collecting and recording data, analysing results and evaluating the experiment. They record their results and display them in different forms, such as line graphs to show the effect of temperature on the rate of chemical reactions and the effect of different forces on a spring. Pupils also make good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of the living and non-living worlds. They know that variations can occur between animals because of inheritance or the effect of the environment, understand the relationship between different lengths of wire and their resistance to the flow of electricity and know about atomic structure and how this is represented in the Periodic Table.

65. The quality of teaching is good, overall. All lessons are underpinned by high quality relationships, with older pupils working well together as they carry out investigations. Detailed planning identifies very well what teachers want pupils to learn and they are then adept at presenting pupils with a good variety of activities that enables them to achieve these objectives. Therefore, pupils have very good attitudes to science, working hard and with interest. Teachers of pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good subject knowledge and are particularly skilled at promoting learning through carefully worded and targeted questions and investigative work. Good resources are used well and all teachers use new technology particularly effectively to extend pupils' learning. These activities ranged from a group of Year 9 pupils who researched information on meteors on an Internet site, to Year 2 pupils, who used an interactive CDROM to build up information about themselves. Teachers also make good use of opportunities that present themselves to promote other basic skills like literacy, by the teaching of key vocabulary, and numeracy through developing mathematical vocabulary such as big and small and heavy and light. However, while this enthusiasm for promoting scientific knowledge through pupils finding out things for themselves is entirely appropriate, it does mean that on occasions there is a lack of attention to detail. At these times opportunities to consolidate knowledge are missed. For example, there was a lack of references to the correct unit when pupils were weighing marbles and situations, which would allow the reinforcement of the scientific concept of a fair test were not used.

66. Science is well led and managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader. There have been significant developments in the quality of whole school planning and the procedures that have been introduced to assess and record pupils' achievements. The subject leader has been able to observe other teachers and this has helped to raise the quality of teaching and learning. However, monitoring other teachers' lesson planning and evaluations and their assessment records is not yet sufficiently systematic and robust to ensure that they match the subject leader's own high standard of documentation. In addition, the school uses both immediate and more distant areas to enrich learning, such as pond dipping in the local park and studying a woodland habitat. However, the full potential of all available additional community resources is not yet being exploited. A dedicated science room allows pupils in Years 7 to 11 to be taught in a specialist area and although this is rather small for the largest groups, and lacks some amenities, it does provide satisfactory accommodation.

ART AND DESIGN

67. Pupils' achievement is good overall because art is largely taught well. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory progress but could achieve more. This is as a result of these pupils being hindered by having less time to study art than others of the same age. The art room is too small to accommodate this large group and this also contributes to them making less progress.

68. The group of youngest pupils who are in Years 1, 2 and 3 benefit from the effective use of foundation curriculum strategies to promote children's creative development. This is giving a good focus to pupils' self-image and to them acquiring a broad range of basic skills. There are good opportunities for them to explore and explain what they are doing. In a self-portrait task pupils chose from a variety of materials those that suited their purpose of creating a face picture. In discussing their work they learnt words for facial features and looked closely at their own and each other's faces. The higher attaining pupils make recognisable faces. However, the approach to working with pupils with autism is not effective and these pupils made less progress. Up to the end of Year 6, pupils are stimulated by interesting creative activities and resources. Pupils use brushes or other means to spread paints and choose their own colours. Higher attaining pupils exercise control in how they apply paints, for example, in finger painting by carefully drawing concentric circles of different colours and making sequences of these.

69. By the end of Year 9, pupils with severe learning difficulties, are generally not attaining at a level much beyond younger pupils but have broadened out their creative and imaginative work. Integral to this is effective teaching attending to developing their knowledge and understanding and basic skills. They have, with support, made a simple model of their school using an assortment of painted cartons. This is linked well with learning where rooms are in relation to one another and features of rooms like doors and windows. They are challenged well and think where the windows are in relation to doors. This involves a good amount of counting and using new words. Higher attaining pupils explore tone, texture and pattern through drawing, painting and collage. The most able pupils work imaginatively with tones, carefully selecting colours to create compositions moving between light and dark. Not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study art but those that do go on to consolidate their knowledge and skills in working with line, tone and pattern.

70. Students over the age of 16 achieve well in relation to the requirements of the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' study module 'Making Pictures'. They stipple colours skilfully in a landscape painting, creating well modulated tones and the strong impression of space.

71. Teaching and learning are good, overall although the expertise with which art is taught is satisfactory. However, teachers have a good knowledge of most of their pupils needs and plan art activities effectively so they address their broad range of learning difficulties. A few pupils who have specific needs such as autism, sensory impairments or medical conditions are not as well catered for as the majority of pupils. However, the group of Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils with severe learning difficulties, for example, were positively encouraged to extend and use words to describe their model of the school. Despite considerable difficulties the teachers succeeded well in getting the group to concentrate and sustain their involvement. They were taken on a walk around the perimeter of the school and identified rooms, features like windows and doors and colours. Students over the age of 16 are guided in a carefully planned way through refining a technique of building progressively darker tones over light to create a sense of space in a landscape painting. The work supports the requirements of their ASDAN course very well. Overall, lively introductions to planned activities at the start of lessons get pupils interested and involved. While learning objectives are not spelt out clearly

enough in some lessons, the teacher's explanations and demonstrations provide reasonable direction for pupils. Higher attaining pupils in a group made up of Years 7, 8 and 9, were led well into thinking about a range of possibilities for designing a mask through the teacher's descriptions and actual examples. There were gasps of delight when they saw a coloured feather headdress used in the Brazilian Mardi Gras carnival. However, there was not enough time for pupils to refine their ideas, the pace was too rushed and pupils learned less in terms of the overall scope they had. Lessons are usually rounded off effectively by sharing an appraisal of pupils' accomplishments. This was particularly well done with students who pointed out clearly what they thought had worked well and not so well in their landscapes.

72. The improvement in art since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Overall, pupils are achieving more as a result of sound leadership and management in refining the curriculum, which has had the effect of improving teaching and learning, particularly in relation to pupils between Years 1 and 6. However, there is a lack of a clear rationale for why the higher attaining group of Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils have less time than others to study art together with the fact that the subject is not seriously promoted in Year 10 and 11. As was pointed out in the last inspection report, higher attaining pupils have the ability to gain accreditation for their work up to GCSE level yet there remains no opportunity for them to do so.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

73. Between Year 1 and the end of Year 6, pupils are achieving well. What pupils should be taught and the best approaches for them to learn, whatever their ability, have been carefully planned for the majority which results in interesting and challenging activities. They make good progress from thinking through and making simple assemblages in Year 2 to more demanding problem-solving tasks, involving designing and making, by the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 2, pupil experience and develop knowledge by building and taking toys apart. They begin to set out ideas through discussion and simple drawings. From scrap materials, pupils choose the best shapes and components to make a model fire-engine. Higher attaining pupils select cotton reels for wheels and work out a way of attaching these to a small box for the fire-engine's body whereas lower attaining pupils make a body shape without wheels. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils make detailed drawings representing their ideas for a desk lamp showing a base and articulated arms. In lessons, they explore and experiment with ways of making simple strong structures, for example, whether paper-clips are any use in connecting materials securely. They know a sheet of paper is made more rigid by rolling it up and how joints at corners are strengthened.

74. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The scope for learning a broad range of knowledge and skills is currently hampered by not having a full-time design and technology teacher. In the narrow range of study provided, mainly by a part-time temporary teacher, most pupils progress well in making and assembling a powered model vehicle as well as in their knowledge of using tools and materials for that purpose. Pupils with severe learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress when, because of complicated timetabling, they are taught alternate lessons outside the design and technology workshop. They are not given the good, challenging learning opportunities that are otherwise available most of the time for all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils work safely in the workshop, handling small and powered tools with care. Higher attaining pupils have a good vocabulary of terms, for example, naming hand tools and explaining what a vacuum forming machine does. They know what a chassis is and demonstrate the method of delivering power to the rear wheels of their model. While pupils with severe learning difficulties have a smaller vocabulary, in the workshop they know their model is a car with wheels and it is made of wood. One recalls the framework is a chassis and another remembers the wheels are joined with an axle.

75. Pupils are disapplied from studying design and technology in Year 10 and 11, which is unfortunate as pupils remaining at school beyond the age of 16 resume lessons in design and technology. Students over the age of 16 achieve well in relation to the demands of their ASDAN course. They work as independently as possible in designing and making a storage box of their choice to contain small items such as jewellery or video tapes. Students plan their boxes with basic sketches, setting out measurements and the components they will need for its construction.

76. Teaching is good in Year 1 to 6. It is satisfactory overall in Year 7 to 9 and good for students over the age of 16. Most teaching is based upon a secure grasp of design and technology and the ways in which the subject should be made relevant to meeting the needs of pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching was largely the result of insufficient knowledge of the subject as it should apply to pupils with severe learning difficulties. Lessons are usually approached with clear learning objectives and up to the end of Year 6 teachers pose interesting and demanding problems for pupils that encourage them to think systematically and reach solutions. For example, one class worked successfully in small groups to find ways of making a framework strong enough for a shelter and learned, through experimenting and applying some basic principles about structures and joints taught to them, about the best materials and ways of building a good framework. While there is less emphasis on problem-solving in Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils learn skills to measure, cut and assemble a wooden chassis and incorporate wheels, axles and a simple drive mechanism. They also learn the principles of vacuum forming and with plastic sheet make a body shell to fit their powered vehicles. The emphasis on pupils discussing and evaluating their work is effective in them learning the subject vocabulary and consolidating their knowledge of designing and making. Teachers have a good understanding of most pupils learning needs, for example, being especially sensitive to some pupils' anxieties about operating power tools and the noise they make. This leads to very good attention to reassuring those pupils and supporting their inclusion in lessons.

77. The standards judged at the time of the last inspection have largely been maintained despite the current problems with staffing. No judgements are possible in relation to food technology as no lessons took place during the inspection and this had been the weakest aspect of the subject. There is a sound improvement in the quality of the plans for what should be taught, particularly for Years 1 to 6. This is where the subject leader is a teacher and has had most impact. Further improvement in Years 7 to 9 is hindered by not having a full-time teacher for the subject and, at the moment, a lack of capacity to broaden the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

78. The school's overall provision for this subject is satisfactory with all pupils learning geography up to Year 9. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 7 to 9 achieve satisfactorily. However, pupil progress over time in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory because even though they do some interesting and well planned activities in lessons even the highest attaining pupils produce little work.

79. The focus of work in Years 1 and 2 is on increasing pupils' understanding of their environment. The school site and surrounding areas are used to develop this knowledge by extending pupils' experience. Pupils examine features of their town through activities such as shop surveys and making comparisons between busy and quiet streets. The highest attaining pupils at the end of Year 2 also demonstrate knowledge about their own area as they identify aspects of it that they like, such as the park, and amenities that they wished they had, like a video shop. This encouragement of awareness of the immediate and wider environments continues as pupils move through Years 3 to 6. Therefore, pupils at the end of Year 6 understand how places can be represented in simple pictorial maps and they begin to relate these to places they visit. They study other local areas and the highest attaining pupils record their observations. By the end of Year 9, pupils have extended their knowledge of other places and environments. They know the characteristics and world locations of tropical rain forests and of volcanoes and earthquake activity, and they understand how natural and human processes can affect and change features of the landscape such as coastlines.

80. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Some teaching has good features, such as the management of pupils, the variety of learning resources and the planning of activities that facilitate learning. However, while lesson planning identifies what teachers want pupils to learn, objectives are not always sufficiently demanding, particularly for the highest attaining pupils. Consequently time is not used efficiently because staff teaching different groups spend too long repeating activities when it is clear that pupils have understood the concepts involved and there is no additional work available to extend their learning. In addition, on occasion there is not always sufficient challenge in the work that pupils are required to do for themselves. Work is not always age-appropriate, such as simple tasks requiring them to colour in pictures.

81. The subject leader has produced effective plans for what should be taught that ensure that pupils develop their geographical skills and knowledge as they move through the school. Colleagues' planning is monitored and the subject leader has had the opportunity to observe other teachers teaching the subject. However, some aspects of assessment are not yet in place, such as procedures to accurately judge pupils' work and moderate their attainments.

HISTORY

82. Pupils learn history up to the end of Year 9. They make satisfactory progress throughout this time. The youngest pupils learn that there are differences between the present time, and some past times. They learn that some things are old and some are new, and understand differences such as the way seaside holidays have changed in the past 50 years. They also gain an awareness of passing time by thinking about their own family tree, and when their parents and grandparents were babies. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learned some elementary facts about times and peoples in the past, such as when the Saxons or the Vikings came to England. The higher attaining pupils begin to develop an idea of the flow of historical time; that some periods were much longer ago than others. By the end of Year 9, their awareness has developed to include "olden times" such as the Crusades, the Elizabethans and the great age of Queen Victoria and the people of the British Empire. They also include more recent happenings such as the life of John Lennon, and the plight of the Jews in the Holocaust.

83. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is well managed, and teachers use a good range of resources to interest the pupils in the topics. However, some lessons have very low expectations of what pupils will actually learn, such as, "To learn two things that David Livingstone would take on his journey across Africa". Some pupils thought of ten or more things in the first 10 minutes of the lesson, but there was no check at the end of the lesson to see if all the pupils had learned anything. Similarly, there is rarely any expectation that pupils

will write anything about what they have learned. Instead, they colour pictures or occasionally find a picture on the Internet. The teachers have not yet found a way to balance the interesting activities that they lead, and the desirability that pupils should write about what they have learned, at least on some occasions. This would help to extend pupils' writing skills, and would provide the teachers with a clearer idea of how well pupils are making progress in their understanding. This, and the great reliance on worksheets, were also criticised in the previous inspection report. The school has not made sufficient progress in this respect since then. Staff have sound relationships with their pupils, and they manage their behaviour satisfactorily. Classroom assistants are mainly very good in leading small groups of pupils in challenging activities, and at managing the behaviour of individuals.

84. Good resources have been built up to help pupils' learning, and there is a satisfactory plan of what should be taught in the long term. Pupils have been taken on visits to places of historical interest, such as D.H.Lawrence's birthplace, and a great mansion in Nottingham. The subject leader has, as yet, no clear plans for how the subject could be developed in the future, and consequently improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

85. Provision is very good. There has been excellent progress since the last inspection and improvement continues through further training to increase the skills of staff in using resources. Standards are appropriately high and pupils make very good progress against their information and communication technology specific targets in individual education plans. The subject pervades all areas of the curriculum and some up to date resources have been introduced which are having a positive impact on the development of communication skills throughout the school. A most capable subject leader receives invaluable help from an equally capable learning support assistant. Both offer very good support to all staff and pupils in developing their skills in the use of the wide range of standard and specialist information and communication technology equipment available to them. Pupils' achievement is very good as a result of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, very good resources and the staff's commitment to raising standards still further.

86. By the end of Year 2, pupils have encountered and experienced a wide range of communication resources. Their awareness and ability to communicate improves as they explore options and make choices to communicate meaning. Higher attaining pupils recognise that everyday devices respond to signals and make good choices when using devices such as a programmable robotic toy. Similarly, as a result of skilful teaching, they make up their own tunes using a music program.

87. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have developed a good level of independence in the use of computers and set up and use basic skills programs independently. The achievement of lower attaining pupils is helped by imaginative support from staff which includes strategies such as slowing the mouse and progressively adapting individual keyboards. As a result, pupils create interesting pictures using paint programs. The more able produce interesting work on habitats by recording, saving and sharing ideas in different forms, including text and tables.

88. By the end of Year 9, many pupils import pictures from the Internet and cut and paste; good examples were also seen of pupils using programs to produce some stimulating paper wrapper designs using tile tools to give a repeating pattern. They open competently a saved spray picture in Word and print it with text researched from their records of cars in the staff car-park.

89. By the end of Year 11, most pupils find and interrogate information and explore patterns and relationships. They also combine different forms of information from a variety of sources. These capabilities were seen in two classes working on a multi-media presentation about themselves: it also demonstrated the weakness some of them had in generating and adapting their work

90. Many students, over the age of 16, produce letters, their curriculum vitae and poems. They use “*Word Art*” and graphics to draw pictures using lines and shapes. Good examples were seen of the use of spreadsheets and they understand the principles of desktop publishing.

91. The information and communication technology curriculum has very good arrangements to ensure that subject teaching contributes towards the sharpening of pupils’ literacy, numeracy and scientific skills. From Year 1, pupils’ reading is helped by the use of an interactive reading scheme which can be developed further so that, for example, a program on the “*Princess and the Pea*” enables some pupils to check words from a dictionary whilst others draft their own story. By Year 11, many select fonts, format paragraphs and manage documents, as seen in a pupil’s holiday brochure. Teachers across the school use literacy software that contains a wide range of levels to meet individual needs and aptitudes; this helps the quality of learning and achievement. Provision is similarly very good for numeracy. For example, a good example was seen of a Year 2 pupil concentrating hard on his calculations to prevent the clown on the program from taking his imaginary sweets. In Year 11, a pupil created a database, graphs and spreadsheets to demonstrate how the prices of some selected food items varied between supermarket chains. Information and communication technology makes a good contribution to achievement in science by helping to explain difficult concepts: for example, interactive software is used to illustrate patterns and reactions in chemistry. Good examples were seen of collaborative work and pupils offer each other tips and help as a regular part of their work. Additionally, as a result of pupils being able to visit the web and e-mail a school in New Zealand, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils’ social and cultural development.

92. Teaching and learning are good. This is mainly because lessons are geared accurately to the pupils’ aptitudes, their management is good and there is a very good use of resources and support staff. Teachers’ planning is closely linked to a very good planning of what is to be taught in which the National Curriculum has been linked to P Levels. Assessment and target setting are of a high quality and most pupils correspondingly make good progress, as in a Year 11 lesson based on a multi-media presentation and a Year 2 class using a programmable robotic toy where support staff were used imaginatively. Teachers give careful consideration to those pupils with specific learning needs: this was seen in the skilful management of a young autistic pupil who used a specific program to great effect. As a result of training and the provision of laptops for all staff, information and communication technology is regularly used to enhance both teachers’ lesson planning and the subjects of the curriculum. The school has invested thoughtfully and effectively in both hardware and software and this has enhanced the achievement of the pupils. For example, the introduction of Broadband has allowed both Internet access and the use of e-mail in every classroom.

93. Leadership and management are very good. The subject has addressed the outstanding issues of the last inspection in an excellent fashion and there is a good capacity for even further advance.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

94. French is taught to pupils from Year 7 to 9, and, as at the time of the previous inspection, they make satisfactory progress. Progress is mainly in listening to spoken French, and speaking the language. Pupils learn how to greet each other politely or informally; how to say what things they like and dislike; and to read and repeat the names of different foods and drinks. Higher attaining pupils gain well in self-confidence, make a sound effort to order meals in a mock café, and know how to look for shopping items in a supermarket. They recite the numbers to 15 and know the names of some leisure activities that they enjoy, such as cycling, fishing and computing. Lower attaining pupils start with no knowledge of France and the French language, but they gain a satisfactory awareness of both by the end of Year 9.

95. The teaching is good. It focuses well on practical activities that are interesting, and that meet the learning needs of the pupils well. Pupils' learning is helped by a good range of resources that are well prepared for pupils of different ability levels. These include videos, tapes, games and some cut and paste work, such as recognising members of the family. Opportunities to write in French are quite limited, however. The support assistants are good at supporting individuals with their behavioural difficulties, and at leading groups of pupils. All staff speak French at least well enough to take a leading part in the lessons, and some have a good accent. Lessons run at a good and challenging pace, and pupils respond positively.

96. The subject leader does all of the teaching, and she has a plan for how to improve the subject, although this is at an informal stage of development. She has had some training in French teaching, and has built up the resources well. The lesson planning is better than at the time of the previous inspection, and is now good. Some topics are covered several times in the three years, so that this learning is reinforced well for all pupils, and the incoming pupils learn the basic vocabulary soundly. This subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

MUSIC

97. Pupils' achievement is good in music which is taught up to Year 9. This represents an improvement from the last inspection when, although progress was judged good overall, some groups of pupils were felt to be making only satisfactory progress.

98. Younger pupils respond well to action songs, by trying to copy the actions. They choose un-tuned percussion instruments to accompany music, and some try to sustain a beat. They learn that music can be played at different speeds. By the end of Year 6, pupils recognise that music can tell a story and begin to choose instruments which reflect the themes of stories or songs. They begin to learn to keep the rhythm of music. Pupils in groups for Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 also benefit from an additional session of music each week in which they learn to play hand chimes. These sessions add to their understanding of musical terms as they learn to play the instruments, take turns, play at different speeds and follow numerical notation. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are beginning to understand composition as they choose long and short notes and play these on their instruments. They use colour and signs to record their compositions. Higher attaining pupils look at a painting and then listen to different pieces of music before deciding which best reflects the painting. They identify the signature tunes of various well known television programmes and begin to write a signature tune for a school chant. They know that instruments make high and low sounds and most establish and follow a beat. Students over the age of 16 participate in a module of work on music and the media, which includes putting music over a video they are making to meet the requirements of their ADSAN 'Towards Independence' course.

99. Teaching in music is very good overall, an improvement from the last inspection when it was good. The school continues to benefit from having a specialist teacher. Lessons are well planned with clear expectations of what pupils should achieve. Use is made of a variety of instruments and the teacher ensures that all pupils are given the choice of the instrument they would like to play. Lively presentation by the teacher catches pupils' interest and they respond enthusiastically to the different activities. For example, younger pupils' attention was engaged by the idea of sitting in a train and playing and chanting a "train chant". Pupils receive encouragement and praise for their efforts, and respond by trying hard and take great pleasure in success. In all lessons, careful assessment is made of pupils' progress and this enables the teacher to set targets and to ensure that pupils make good progress.

100. Music also plays a part in the wider curriculum. For example, action rhymes are used to help pupils to develop number skills, and many respond to these with enjoyment. Music and singing is used in school assemblies. Pupils also participate in school productions and have sung to the elderly at the local community centre.

101. Planning for the subject is well developed, giving pupils a good range of opportunities in line with National Curriculum requirements. Careful and regular use is made of assessment to ensure that pupils make progress. Resources for music are good with a number of percussion instruments and keyboards. There is a good range of recorded music including music of different periods and cultures. Since the last inspection a room has been set aside for the teaching of music, which means that instruments are readily available and good displays can be used to show that work which pupils are undertaking. There have been visits for different musicians such as a drummer, a steel drummer and a harmony group, which extend pupils' understanding of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

102. Physical education was judged to be strong in the last inspection and the standards seen then have been maintained. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive, broad and balanced curriculum that is well taught through a good variety of activities. Therefore pupils achieve well with very good progress being made in swimming.

103. By the end of Year 2 pupils make good progress in activities such as gymnastics and games. They move around the hall dodging and finding space, joining in chasing games enthusiastically and successfully. The highest attaining pupils have good hand/eye co-ordination and they throw and catch bean bags when working alone and with a partner. As pupils move through Years 7 to 11 and when they are students over the age of 16 they have opportunities to acquire and practise new skills in ball games such as cricket and athletics. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils field a ball moving along the ground and return it accurately to a wicketkeeper, and move their feet to get into position to catch a ball delivered from a cricket bat and a rebound net. Students over the age of 16 display limited physical skills but those who are higher attaining complete two footed long jumps and standing jumps over a cane. These students are also beginning to understand aspects of health and fitness and recognise and describe features of the effects of exercise on the body, with one stating that "the heart beats faster" when given just a minimal prompt.

104. Physical education is taught well. Lessons are very well structured and organised and therefore pupils follow clear instructions and well established routines with a good understanding of what they are expected to do. This means that time is used well and pupils work hard because teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of performance and behaviour. Knowledgeable teachers are skilled at providing group activities that stimulate pupils. They are very adept at giving individual pupils targeted coaching that extends their

learning, improves their performance and enhances their and confidence. In addition, there are very good relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves so that they co-operate very well when working in pairs and small groups.

105. The school's provision for swimming is excellent. Although pupils have to travel to a local swimming pool, the time is very well spent as these lessons are very positive and rewarding experiences for all pupils. A high number of teachers, classroom assistants and parents mean that pupils work in a very well ordered, organised and safe environment. The high staffing ratio allows highly competent teachers and instructors to teach pupils in small ability groups where they are supported in the water by a number of adults. As a result, all pupils make very good progress. Some pupils are still at the very early stages of developing water confidence while the most proficient swimmers are at the point of refining stroke technique and increasing their understanding of water safety.

106. Physical education is co-ordinated by a subject specialist and the overall management of the subject is good. Detailed planning ensures a secure subject curriculum. Effective assessment procedures allow pupils' achievements to be evaluated and recorded. Learning is encouraged well by a range of certificates issued by the school, the local education authority and national schemes for swimming and athletics. The school has good links with other special schools that enable pupils to participate in competitive matches and tournaments, for example, an orienteering festival, that make a good contribution to their personal development. Pupils' social and moral development is promoted particularly well through annual residential trips to places such as Matlock, for youth hostelling, and Anglesey where they camped. More local facilities are exploited equally effectively as pupils use resources such as the climbing wall and dummy potholes at centres like The Mill and a local reservoir for canoeing. The school's learning resources are good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

107. Pupils' achievement is, overall, satisfactory and students over the age of 16 are achieving well. The curriculum for religious education and the quality of teaching have both improved well since the last inspection, as have the achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 9, which were unsatisfactory at that time. There has not yet been time for the improvements in the curriculum and teaching to influence learning sufficiently to make achievement good at all levels.

108. The youngest pupils develop their understanding of the concept of belonging to a family and to the school, which provides a useful way into the idea of belonging to a religious group. They are aware that children become members of the Christian religion through baptism. They are introduced to the world's main religions and they identify which items belong to the Christian religion and which to the Sikh religion. By the end of Year 6, pupils know details of the Christmas story and develop ideas about prayer, some writing their own prayers in relation to their families or the school. They know about basic features of the Sikh religion, and have produced a lively display of their visit to a Sikh temple.

109. By the end of Year 9, most pupils know that the Koran is the holy book of Islam, and are aware of the care with which it is handled. They know about the belief in Allah, and have investigated the hundred names of God. They know that, in the Hindu religion, god is worshipped in many forms. They are aware that the Bible contains many books which form a library of different kinds of literature. Lower attaining pupils know that there are special rules for Islam, including prayer and pilgrimage. They have heard stories about the birth and early life of Jesus. By the end of Year 11, most pupils know the symbols of the main religions, and are aware of some of the keys features of those religions. For example, they know that the cross is the symbol of Christianity and understand why this is the case. Higher attaining

pupils talk about the Jewish feasts of the Passover, and identify artefacts such as prayer shawls and seven branched candlesticks. They know about the Ten Commandments and that the Sabbath is a holy day. These pupils have a concept of justice, which they use to consider class rules and the life of Martin Luther King. Students over the age of 16 discuss how the world was created, showing awareness of the biblical account and theories such as evolution.

110. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are well planned to give pupils opportunities to learn new information and to consolidate previous lessons. They identify what pupils of different abilities should learn. Lively introductions focus pupils' attention effectively. Resources are very well used, particularly artefacts, which give pupils "hands on" experience of items of importance in different religions. Pupils learn to handle these carefully and treat them with great respect. Pupils and students over the age of 16 are encouraged to share their views which reinforce their understanding of the subject and provide good support for their speaking and listening skills. Good summing up at the end of lessons enables teachers to check pupils' understanding of what they have done. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were asked to sort artefacts into two groups to show if they belonged to Christians or to Sikhs, which enabled the teacher to see how much they understood. There is good support for the development of literacy skills, as key words are identified and explained during lessons. There is also some support for numeracy skills as, for example, when lower attaining pupils counted the Five Pillars of Islam. However, some opportunities are missed.

111. Where lessons are less successful, the work is not planned for individual pupils so that they are not always suitably challenged. The teaching of pupils with additional special educational needs such as autism does not always provide the necessary structures to help them to learn. There are no specialist teachers in the school and, on some occasions, teachers' subject knowledge does not allow them to develop topics in detail or to answer pupils' questions.

112. Much has been done to develop the curriculum. Planning is based on national guidelines and reflects the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and meets statutory requirements. Planning has improved well from the time of the last inspection, and there is now an agreed format for planning what is taught, although there is still some variation in the way in which this is used. Procedures for assessment opportunities have been successfully developed, but the use of assessment information to plan further learning experiences are inconsistent. Resources for the subject are good, which enhance pupils' learning. Pupils have had opportunities to participate in a number of visits, all of which have helped their understanding. Good links have been formed with a local church, which have given pupils opportunities for visits. There have also been visits to Southwell Minster, to a synagogue, to the nearby Holocaust Centre and to a Sikh temple. Speakers have visited the school to talk about Christianity and Sikhism. The range of experiences in the subject provides good support for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

CITIZENSHIP

113. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is good. Its development has been helped by the school's strengths in care provision and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Additionally, it is supported through the good arrangements for personal, social and health education. As a result, the provision for pupils' participation and responsibility is particularly good. The school is keen to develop the subject and it enjoys favourable curricular provision and good resources. All strands of the curriculum are covered well to conform to national requirements and pupils' achievements are good.

114. Provision for pupils' participation and responsibility is good. For example, the school's very good extra-curricular base gives many opportunities for those with a range of talents to contribute; the school council is active and pupils from all years play their part in helping to develop the school's sense of community. All have opportunities to help others through charity work and links with the community are very good: for example, the police, fire brigade and other local organisations do a lot to enhance both pupils' learning and their confidence.

115. Most pupils have an appreciation of citizenship consistent with their age and levels of understanding and this is helped by departments such as geography, religious education, music and history which lay good foundations in areas such as global citizenship, economic sustainability and rights and responsibilities. For example, pupils plant trees in Bestwood Park and learn about other cultures through the global language of music. Older pupils are prepared well for work experience and produce some imaginative work in connection with their assignments.

116. No citizenship lessons were seen during the inspection but evidence was gained from studying teachers' planning, analysing pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good. Planning of lessons and of the curriculum is good and, together with the good quality resources, enhance the quality of learning for most pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gave some interesting views about, for example, headlines in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. They also follow the ASDAN whole-school key steps programme and, in collaboration with the local Personal Finance Education group, take decisions as part of the module on personal finance education. They make good progress in organising both stock control and day to day management of the tuck shop.

117. The headteacher and staff are deeply committed to the subject's success. The subject leader manages citizenship well and currently an audit of the school's provision is taking place. Overall, the subject has a good capacity for improvement.