

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **THE BRIDGE SCHOOL**

Stirchley, Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123635

Headteacher: Mrs U Van den Berg

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson  
16500

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 November 2002

Inspection number: 249406

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special: severe and complex learning difficulties

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 2 - 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Grange Avenue  
Stirchley  
Telford

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Lucas

Date of previous inspection: July 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16500	Mr T Richardson	Registered inspector	Integration	What sort of school is it; how high are standards; how well are pupils taught; how well is the school led and managed; what should the school do to improve further?
13762	Mr N Shelley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well does the school care for its pupils; how well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1224	Mr G Todd	Team inspector	Science, physical education, special educational needs	
18206	Ms E Mildner	Team inspector	Mathematics, music	
17260	Ms J Taylor	Team inspector	Foundation stage, information and communication technology	
21899	Ms G Lawson	Team inspector	Design and technology, history	
20622	Ms A Sydney	Team inspector	English, educational inclusion	
23300	Ms L Evans	Team inspector	Geography, modern languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1358	Mr G Essex	Team inspector	English as an additional language, art and design, religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Bridge School is a large community special school for boys and girls with severe learning difficulties aged two to 19. There are 136 full time equivalent pupils in the school with three pupils also on the register of other schools; and 24 children attending the nursery part time. The school has twice as many boys as girls and most pupils are white European, with very few from other ethnic backgrounds. Six pupils have English as an additional language, and all are at an early stage of language acquisition. Sixty pupils (a high proportion) are eligible for free school meals. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, or are in the process of formal assessment. A high proportion of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and a significant minority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The school is on two sites. The Brookside site is for children in the foundation stage and some pupils in Years 1 and 2. The Stirchley site is for pupils and students in Years 1 to 14. The school is a member of the Telford and Wrekin Educational Action Zone (EAZ) and the local education authority is currently considering a plan to rebuild the school.

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

This is a very good school. Outstanding leadership has enabled exceptional improvement to take place in a very short time. The quality of teaching is now very good and pupils are showing improvements in their learning, with good achievement already evident in most subjects. There is a very strong vision and commitment for further development and the school provides very good value for money.

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

- Has outstanding leadership that sets a very clear vision for the school. The school makes sure that all its actions are reviewed and evaluated very well and this leads to a high quality of teamwork among staff for improving the school
- Has a very good quality of teaching. Teachers and support teams use their skills very well so that pupils learn very well and this is already leading to higher levels of achievement for the pupils
- Pupils' attainments are assessed very well. This information is used very well to plan lessons and activities that build on what pupils already know. Very good targets are set in pupils' individual education plans that lead to the individual needs of the pupils being met.
- There is very good performance management and professional development for all staff. As a result, staff feel valued, morale is high and there is a very strong shared commitment to improvement
- The school maintains a very good partnership with parents and this teamwork has a very positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Information and communication technology, signs, symbols, pictures and other communication aids are used very well to help pupils with their communication needs. This leads to pupils being included well in lessons, particularly pupils with PMLD and ASD.

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

- Pupils in Years 1 to 9 are not yet learning enough about how to use computers for purposes other than communication.
- Students in Years 12 to 14 have limited opportunities to follow courses outside of school and develop independent living skills
- The school buildings and split site are inadequate for the needs of the pupils and restrict their learning opportunities.

*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 July 2000. Since then, it has made excellent improvement and moved from underachieving to being a very good school. The quality of leadership and management has improved significantly. As a result, the key issues have all been very successfully addressed and the school has done much more than expected to improve. The quality of teaching and learning has improved; the curriculum is now good; procedures for planning lessons and assessing pupils have

improved dramatically; staff have improved their skills in communication, and standards are rising as a result. The quality of this work is likely to lead to even higher standards over time.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school sets challenging targets for individual pupils and for whole school achievement. These targets are usually met. Standards have risen and are likely to improve further. Pupils with PMLD and those with ASD show good achievement as a result of being fully included in lessons with the others. All pupils achieve very well in developing their communication skills, speaking and listening, and reading. Throughout the school, there is good achievement in personal development, improving challenging behaviour and in feeding and eating routines. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and good achievement is also evident in the pupils who take part in the school's inclusion projects with mainstream schools. Children in the foundation stage achieve very well in their areas of learning. In Years 1 to 9, pupils show very good achievement in English and good achievement in all other subjects; with satisfactory achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and French. Students in Years 10 to 14 show good achievement in their course work and gain a good range of nationally recognised certificates. However: students in Years 12 to 14 lack opportunities to attend courses outside of school and for gaining independent living skills; pupils in Years 1 to 9 could achieve more in ICT; and the school buildings limit the pupils' development of independence and initiative.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen, eager and happy to meet their friends
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Incidents of challenging behaviour are reducing and pupils generally behave well at all times
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships encourage pupils to achieve more. Good achievement in personal development but pupils could do more for themselves
Attendance	Satisfactory and broadly in line with similar schools

## TEACHING AND LEARNING



Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. School leaders and teachers have worked successfully to share good practice and to raise the skills of adults in communication and meeting the specialised needs of the pupils. Teachers are supported by high quality support teams with an exceptional quality of teamwork. As a result, pupils with PMLD and ASD are included in lessons and the individual needs of all pupils are met in full. Communication is taught very well and pupils gain increasing fluency in their understanding and use of signs, symbols, speech, communication devices and picture exchange communication systems. English and literacy are taught very well. In other subjects, including mathematics, numeracy, and personal, social and health education, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently at least good and this, along with the rising standards for pupils, leads inspectors to judge teaching and learning as very good overall. In ICT, teaching is satisfactory and the school has already identified this as an area for further improvement. A particular strength is the very good planning and assessment that teachers and support teams carry out. As a result, lessons are focussed directly on the needs of each individual and pupils are continually building on what they already know. Lessons are presented in interesting ways and this keeps pupils motivated and keen to find out more.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The foundation stage curriculum is very good. All pupils have equality of opportunity and the school has very good links with the EAZ, and productive links with mainstream schools.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils benefit from the school's emphasis on communication and show good achievement.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision overall. Good spiritual development helps pupils feel self-worth. Moral development is good and staff provide good role models. Social and cultural development are good, pupils learn to get on with each other and to respect cultural differences
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral care is very good and the school has very good procedures for assessing and monitoring personal and academic development

Parents hold the school in high regard and there is a very good partnership between parents and the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and deputy have a passion for providing the very best for the pupils. Assisted by other key staff, this outstanding leadership is raising the quality of teaching and learning and already showing higher achievement for the pupils.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed, fully aware of the vision and direction of the school, and support its improvement very well
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates the impact of its actions very rigorously. All personnel share a very strong commitment to improvement and are continually seeking ways of doing things better for the pupils
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Resources are targeted exceedingly well so that developments bring about the maximum improvement for the pupils. The principles of best value are applied very well

The school is very well staffed with experienced and skilled teachers and assistants. There are good resources for learning. However, the accommodation is unsatisfactory and opportunities for pupils are restricted by the design and size of the buildings, split site and vehicle access.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children like school and are expected to work hard and achieve their best</li> <li>children are well taught and make good progress</li> <li>the school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about how their children are doing</li> <li>the school is improving and has a clear focus on meeting individual needs</li> <li>parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions and concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the split site and current buildings are unsuited to the needs of the children</li> <li>some parents are uncertain about the amount of work their children do at home</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by parents. Inspection confirms that the buildings are unsuited to the pupils' needs and that the school should clarify with parents the amount and nature of the work that pupils could do at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards overall have risen over the two years since the last inspection. The outstanding leadership from the headteacher and key staff is exceptionally effective, and has raised the quality of teaching and learning to be very good. This is already having a direct impact on the pupils who now demonstrate good achievement in most areas of their development. The most significant improvements have taken place in the development of the pupils' communication skills and also in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) are now included in lessons with the others and their assessments, individual education plans (IEP's) and annual reviews show that they are now achieving well. The school has a large number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). These pupils are included in class activities very well and the specialist teaching and support they receive leads to their good achievement in social, communication and academic development. Pupils with sensory impairment additional to their severe learning difficulties are achieving well, as are those pupils who have English as an additional language.
2. There has been a significant improvement in the teaching of communication skills. Adults in school are now skilled in their use of signs and symbols. They use the picture exchange communication system (PECS) very well and make very good use of objects of reference, as well as being very careful about the vocabulary they use. The result is that all pupils are much clearer about what is going on and know what they are expected to learn. This, in turn, leads to pupils becoming increasingly skilled in their own communication skills and most pupils are now achieving very well in making their needs and feelings known to others. For example, pupils with PMLD use eye pointing or small gestures to indicate their choice of activity in a lesson; pupils with ASD are clear about the work they are doing and know the activity that is planned to follow; pupils who have difficulty in speaking, control electronic devices (such as a Big Mack switch) to play pre-recorded sentences at appropriate times in the conversation. This strong emphasis on communication also helps the pupils who have English as an additional language as they quickly respond to the visual clues given in class and contribute on equal terms with others in the group.
3. Pupils show good achievement against the targets set in their IEP's. These targets are chosen well and are based on detailed and accurate assessment of what the pupil can already do. Teachers and support teams then ensure that these targets are addressed during lessons, and at other times during the school day. As a result of consistent work in the school, behaviour has improved and the pupils with known behavioural difficulties are making good progress in controlling their outbursts. The improved communication and focused work on helping pupils improve their behaviour has also led to a reduction in the incidents of challenging behaviour and this, in turn, means that lessons are largely uninterrupted and pupils can concentrate better on their learning. Good achievement is evident at lunch times. Pupils learn effectively to eat by themselves, be more sociable and accepting of others and to enjoy a wider variety of food. Lunch time staff understand the pupils' needs well and challenge them effectively to improve, for example, by expecting a pupil with co-ordination difficulties to carry a plate unaided, and by rewarding with praise for success. Pupils who attend local primary schools, as part of the school's inclusion projects, achieve well and gain confidence and self-esteem, to the extent that one pupil has now joined a community Brownie Pack. There are also examples of individual pupils showing very good and excellent achievement in certain areas. Some pupils with ASD have improved their communication skills dramatically in a very short time, and other pupils have achieved sufficiently well to be considered for transfer to schools for moderate learning difficulties.
4. Inspection findings show that the majority of pupils achieve very well in their communication, speaking and listening skills, and reading. The quality of teaching of English and literacy has improved and pupils are clearly doing better as a result. They also achieve well in developing their writing skills. Standards in the foundation stage are very high and children achieve very well against all the areas of learning. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in mathematics,

numeracy and science. They also show good achievement in art and design, religious education, design and technology, physical education, geography, music, and history. French has only been included in the curriculum since September 2002 and, so far, pupils are showing satisfactory achievement. In ICT, while pupils use a variety of devices very well to aid their communication, they show satisfactory achievement overall in their use of computers for other purposes (such as writing, manipulating data, controlling, storing and retrieving information and so on). Students in Years 10 to 14 do well and show good achievement in their courses. These are accredited with nationally recognised certificates and most students gain awards and certificates for the successful completion of their units of study. In addition, a number of students each year transfer at the end of Year 11 into provision at a local college and are enabled to continue successfully in their education. During the inspection, students benefited from an ex-pupil returning to explain to them about life and work at college and this clearly motivated them to strive for personal success.

5. Since the last inspection, achievement has risen and the school's procedures and commitment to further improvement are now very secure. It is likely that, with the continuation of this work, standards will rise further. There are, however, some areas where improvements can still be made. Students who remain at school in Years 12 to 14 are usually those with the most severe and complex difficulties. Currently, they are unable to access any courses in the area, other than those provided by the school. This limits their opportunities for gaining benefit from going to a college and also in developing independent living skills more suited to their age. In Years 1 to 9, the school has already identified that pupils could be achieving more in developing their ICT skills. Appropriate work is planned to improve this, but it has yet to have an impact on raising pupils' standards with computers. Children, pupils and students of all ages are restricted in their achievement by the current school buildings. The split site limits the opportunities for whole school gatherings, performances and events. Also, the layout and lack of space within school restricts independent movement by the pupils. As a result, pupils have to be supervised more often than in similar schools and are unable to develop their independence or initiative to the full.

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

6. Pupils' attitudes to school and their relationships are very good. Their behaviour is good and their personal development and attendance are satisfactory. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. Parents are very pleased with the standards achieved.
7. Pupils' enjoyment of school is very apparent by the expressions of pleasure on their faces when they arrive in the morning and the way they greet their teachers and helpers. They are undoubtedly very happy during their lessons and participate well in the various activities, usually adopting a positive attitude. Pupils mostly try as hard as they can with their work and tasks and many clearly demonstrate pride in their efforts and are gratified when they please their teacher or helper and are praised.
8. Behaviour is almost always good and pupils frequently offer polite greetings and replies. For the most part they are pleased to try to meet the expectations of their teachers. They happily comply with school routines and exercise patience when waiting their turn for attention or when they are in a queue. Conduct is mostly orderly and pupils are very tolerant of each other. They often listen to and watch with interest the contributions of their peers. Some pupils support and help others. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils with SLD and PMLD co-operated well in shared activities. The very good relationships throughout the school contribute very much to the quality of life and learning and to the fact that there are no recorded incidents of oppressive behaviour. There were no exclusions of any kind last year, and this is a typical pattern for the school.
9. Pupils' personal development shows some good features. Pupils value their social experiences in school and in the community, and many understand and put into practice appropriate social courtesies. Through their personal and social education lessons they come to an understanding of relevant social and moral issues and principles. Through lessons such as history, geography and French, and visits out of school, pupils develop a degree of cultural awareness. Through art, music, drama and opportunities for worship, pupils develop awareness of spiritual experiences. One parent, for example, recorded in the home/school diary that her child frequently says prayers

in the bath. Pupils make good progress for example in their eating routines at table and with regard to personal hygiene. Many undertake responsible tasks in a pleased and sensible manner. They respond very well to opportunities to exercise choices. However, more can be done to help pupils make progress in using their initiative and becoming independent. Some pupils carry out responsible tasks such as taking the register to the office and manage this successfully by themselves. The split site, small rooms and restricted corridor space make this, and other tasks difficult for other pupils to do without supervision. The school is aware that more can be done to promote independence but their actions are, currently, restricted by the limitations of the accommodation.

10. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with similar schools. Illness and reaction to medication are the main reasons for absence. Very little absence is owing to family holidays taken during term time. Unauthorised absence is very low. Pupils almost always arrive promptly for the start of the school day because transport is arranged for them. They do not all get to their classrooms on time, however, because of the delay caused by the restrictive reception facilities, owing to inadequate accommodation. The school does the best it can to ensure safe arrival and departure but the limited space means that vehicles have to queue up and wait their turn to discharge their passengers one at a time.

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

11. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all areas of the school. Excellent leadership from the headteacher, deputy and other key staff is highly successful in making good improvement to the quality of teaching in the two years since the last inspection. In particular, teachers now include all pupils well in their lessons and provide a good equality of opportunity to pupils with PMLD and ASD, as well as to those with severe learning difficulties. They are also more skilled in meeting pupils' communication needs and in addressing the targets set for pupils in their IEP's. As a result, there are improvements in the quality of pupils' learning and these are already leading to pupils showing good achievement in most subjects and very good achievement in English and communication. Teachers are assisted by qualified teaching assistants and special support assistants. The qualified teaching assistants hold qualifications as a nursery nurse or have an equivalent national vocational qualification, whilst special support assistants are generally unqualified. During the inspection, assistants expressed a preference to be referred to in the report as support teams. The quality of teamwork between teachers and their support teams is excellent. Everyone is fully briefed and knows the needs of the pupils very well. During lessons, staff exchange roles very flexibly and the outcome is that all pupils receive a high quality of individual and small group attention that leads directly to increased motivation and effort from the pupils in their learning.
12. Teachers and support teams have a very good knowledge and understanding of the pupils' special needs, communication requirements and of the ways they learn best. Teaching teams also show a very good knowledge of how to present a subject to pupils so that they are interested and give full concentration. For example, one history lesson was brought to life by an assistant dressed as Florence Nightingale coming into the class to find her lamp and this prompted pupils to examine with new understanding the differences between Victorian and modern artefacts. The basic skills of reading, writing, numeracy and ICT are taught well. In particular, communication skills are taught very well. The school's very good provision for professional development has led directly to teachers and support teams increasing their skills in signing, using symbols and helping pupils to express their needs and preferences through exchanging pictures. As a result, all groups of pupils (for example, those with PMLD, ASD, or pupils with English as an additional language) are learning to communicate at a faster rate and are now fully included in all learning opportunities in class.
13. Teachers have high expectations and use assessment very well to determine what pupils should learn next and to set them challenging, yet realistic, targets to achieve. The information from this assessment is also used very well, in combination with the very good advice provided by subject co-ordinators, to plan lessons. This is done very thoroughly and takes into account the wide and varied range of special needs found within each class. The quality of planning is reflected in the

practice of teaching teams and leads directly to all pupils being challenged with rigour to meet their targets. Lesson plans also include consideration of the teaching methods to be used and most lessons contain a wide range of activities that interest pupils and help them to understand what they are learning. For example, a science lesson for younger pupils on light and dark included: songs about light; locating and identifying class mates when blindfolded; finding lights in a dark tunnel; visually tracking fluorescent objects in ultra-violet light; and using switches to control light sources in the white room. As a result, all pupils concentrated and gave effort to understanding the vocabulary and contrast of light and dark as well as learning to control lights for themselves. Teachers and support teams also use very good and consistent strategies for managing behaviour and this results in the majority of pupils behaving well, lessons having very few disruptions and pupils being able to concentrate more on their learning. Satisfactory use is made of homework overall. There is existing good practice in parents and teachers working together, for example on improving pupils' communication and toileting skills. However, there is some confusion among parents and some inconsistency between teachers, about the expectations, regularity and nature of work that comes home from school.

14. The quality of teaching in the foundation stage is very good and children achieve very well as a result. In English and literacy, pupils show very good achievement in response to the very good teaching provided. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching and learning to be good in mathematics, science, art and design, history, music and physical education. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory overall with not enough emphasis on teaching pupils how to use computers for purposes other than communication. Too few lessons were observed in design and technology, geography, French and religious education for judgements to be made on the quality of teaching. However, the achievement of pupils in these subjects suggest that teaching and learning is of a similar quality to most other subjects. The consistent level of good lessons observed in all subjects and in all classes, along with the rising standards for pupils, leads inspectors to the overall judgement that teaching is very good. In the lessons that were judged to be excellent, the following features were noted:
- Adults pay detailed attention to children in the reception class, modelling, reflecting and extending their play experiences. As a result, children quickly develop their communication and social skills. In a lesson at the end of the day, children were still busy and interested and knew exactly what they were doing through the way staff used symbols, communication boards and vocabulary in their interactions. As a result, higher attaining children used clear spoken phrases, asked questions and used the vocabulary modelled by staff. This also led to one child correctly selecting the pictures for 'want bus' at home time.
  - The quality of work from members of the support team is very high. For example, in a one to one session observed with a pupil with autism, the assistant was very well prepared and used extreme skill to divert the pupil from a chosen obsession into doing the work required. As a result, the pupil completed the activity successfully and was able to face the rest of the day in the right frame of mind for learning.
  - Teachers use resources exceptionally well that lead pupils to make sudden gains in their knowledge. For example, in a science lesson the teacher had made a model of the moon and used this for pupils to appreciate the dry and dusty nature of the surface. The teacher then threw rocks and marbles onto this model and pupils could see immediately how the moon's craters were formed as a result of similar impact.
15. Analysis of lesson observations shows that there are no common areas for improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school has very good procedures for self evaluation, sharing good practice and for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. These procedures are identifying appropriate areas for individual teachers to seek to improve and have already improved the quality of teaching. For example, the school has already identified that ICT is an area to develop the expertise of teachers and to make sure that pupils are learning all they should. Continuation of this work is likely to further improve the quality of teaching from teachers and their support teams.

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

16. The school provides a good quality and range of learning opportunities through its curriculum. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection. A lot of work has taken place in each subject to define what pupils should be learning and to give teachers guidance that helps them to plan their lessons. This work is now complete in most subjects and the outcomes are clearly seen in the much improved lesson plans that teachers devise and in the way lessons are targeted to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Assessment of pupils' and students' needs is now central to the planning and delivery of all subjects, and teachers use this assessment very well to make sure that pupils are continually building on what they already know. Good work is taking place on making sure that teachers assess pupils accurately and judge their attainment against National Curriculum P Levels to monitor the progress pupils make and to set targets that are relevant and challenging for the pupils. The last inspection was particularly critical that schemes of work, including the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy had not been implemented, and the National Curriculum foundation subjects had no clear attainment outcomes. All these have now been effectively addressed. There are now good policies and schemes of work in all subjects except for information and communication technology (ICT) and French, which are still being developed. The oldest pupils in the school now successfully gain accreditation through the Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) Scheme and the National Skills Profile (NSP). Drugs and sex education is addressed effectively through a very good personal and social development programme and in science.
17. All statutory requirements are in place. The pupils experience the full range of the National Curriculum, plus religious education, personal and social education, drugs and sex education. Circle time for younger pupils, where they take turns to speak and listen to one another, is new and developing alongside personal social and health education, addressing social situations such as birthday parties and Christmas time. The curriculum has been carefully planned to ensure that the pupils' special educational needs are well met. The curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) is now planned very effectively, with a very good focus on communication using signing, and aids such as PECS and Big Macks. Pupils with ASD are engaged very well in activities that are relevant to the lessons being taught to the rest of the group. The biggest change since the last inspection is that these pupils are now fully included in class activities and that lessons are planned and organised so that, for example, support teams may work with one group of pupils, while the teacher works with pupils with PMLD, and another assistant works with pupils with ASD.
18. The curriculum for the children in the nursery is very good. It covers in full the six areas of learning recommended for children under the age of five, with an appropriate emphasis on personal, social, and communication development. This is planned very well and ensures that the children do not repeat work unnecessarily. There are good opportunities for higher attaining children from the nursery to participate in activities at other local nurseries which provide them with a wider range of worthwhile experiences, develop their social skills in a different settings, and allow them to learn to mix with other children.
19. Teachers across the school have received training in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The literacy strategy is being implemented very well as a result of the school's emphasis on promoting communication. Slightly less emphasis has been given to implementing the numeracy strategy, and this is being introduced well. The deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators manage curriculum development in their departments effectively and subject co-ordinators work with very good commitment to improve the provision in their subjects. They monitor teachers' plans well and ensure they comply with National Curriculum requirements. The planning for ICT is the main weakness in the curriculum. As there is still no overall scheme of work, there is an imbalance in the strands of learning and pupils are offered a limited range of experiences. ICT is used very well to promote communication but other skills are often planned just as extension activities in lessons in most subjects.
20. The aim of the curriculum for students in Years 10 to 14 is to build on individual needs, accredit where possible, and also include experiences that are not part of an accredited syllabus. It is a good quality curriculum that is broad and balanced, and every student follows the whole curriculum. It focuses well on students achieving their full potential and is enriched by a

programme of cultural studies and a 5-year ICT plan. The courses for accredited modular courses are successful in helping pupils to develop such things as their personal and home management skills, communication and number skills, science and ICT.

21. The school prepares students in Years 10 and 11 well for leaving school. There is a suitable range of careers education and guidance with work experience placements within school. Students have also visited places of work such as a local garden centre, supermarket and the nursery department within school. There are effective relationships with the Telford College of Arts and Technology. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a programme of half-day visits, giving worthwhile experiences and ensuring they are familiar with courses and recreational opportunities on offer prior to their transition to full-time further education when they are sixteen. However, for lower attaining students, and those who remain at school in Years 12 to 14, there are no opportunities for them to experience college life, develop independent living skills, or to continue in their education after Year 14. The school does what it can to prepare these students for social services adult day-centre placements and is working hard to try to establish college placements, but, as yet, without success. The school has a very good personal and social education programme for pupils in Years 1 to 14. Pupils grow in maturity and responsibility and develop confidence and good social skills. Although they have sound opportunities to learn independence skills, this is an area for further development.
22. The extra-curricular and extended curriculum activities are satisfactory. Pupils go swimming each week, and some pupils go horse riding. There are visits to places of worship, and good use is made of the local shops, park and leisure facilities. There is a good range of visitors into school such as the from the fire and police services. Over the last two years there have been very successful Arts Weeks involving performers, artists, musicians and dancers.
23. The school benefits from its very good links with the Telford Education Action Zone (EAZ). The headteacher is successful in making sure that this initiative benefits pupils in special schools as well as in mainstream schools. The EAZ initiative to help schools to review their development needs and take action has been helpful in promoting school improvement and the additional funding provided has helped the school to take risks and implement changes sooner rather than later. For example, the very effective work on improving the provision for communication has been helped by the EAZ providing funding to employ additional staff, train teachers and enable work with parents to take place. In addition, the EAZ has enabled good quality partnership arrangements between the school and mainstream schools to be established. Through this work, pupils regularly attend nearby mainstream schools for lessons each week and the EAZ initiative has ensured that staff are well prepared, the projects are monitored and evaluated well, and the pupils concerned are benefiting from the arrangements. One pupil, for example, has now gained sufficient confidence to join a local Brownie group outside of school. Inspectors observed these arrangements and noted their good quality, and that the pupils involved respond well and show good achievement, especially in their social and personal development.

### **Educational Inclusion**

24. The Bridge is an inclusive school. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum are now fully included in classes. Skilled teaching and teamwork, and the high ratio of staff to pupils has made this successful. The school reports that the achievement of all pupils has improved as a result of this reorganisation and this view is supported by inspectors. One class that recently did not work well together was quickly identified and has been reorganised effectively. Inclusion is good in all subjects. It is very good in English, religious education and in the foundation stage due to the emphasis on good communication between teachers and pupils that helps pupils understand better what is going on.
25. Key stage co-ordinators in the school also have a special needs co-ordinator role. It is their job to ensure that all pupils' individual needs are met through their individual education plans. They each have a specialism, for example one has oversight of pupils with ASD in school. Apart from monitoring teaching, they also train and spread best practice. This system is very effective.



26. Pupils have equal opportunities in the school. There is no difference in the opportunities given to boys and girls, pupils of different race or religion. The headteacher has been able to report to the governors that there have been no racial incidences or incidents of oppressive behaviour. Pupils who are 'looked after' by a local authority are well known to staff, and pupils with long-term illnesses are sensitively cared for. However, although the school meets individual needs very well, there is no formal monitoring of achievement, for example, by gender or race. Appropriate software is now in place for the school to be able to do this from January 2003.

### **English as an additional language**

27. Provision for the six pupils who have English as an additional language is good. The very good teaching of communication skills throughout the school is a major factor in this and the pupils concerned were making good progress when observed in lessons, particularly in their understanding of and response to questions. Good models of spoken and written English are provided and the pupils' confidence is very effectively encouraged. Additional support is provided by a bilingual support assistant and very effective teamwork is a feature of the support offered to individual pupils in class as well as in liaison with home. Some of the pupils' individual plans contain no targets or strategies specifically related to their additional language needs but their six-monthly reviews do include very relevant information about their progress in this respect. The school does not yet have a formal system for monitoring the comparative attainments of this group of pupils.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

28. There has been good improvement in opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development since the school's last inspection, due to the development of a relevant curriculum and a wider range of teaching styles. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development through carefully planned opportunities in lessons, in assemblies and in the daily act of worship. In religious education, pupils explore others' values and beliefs and begin to recognise and respect differences between individuals. In other lessons, particularly in personal and social education, art, English, and history pupils learn about different emotions and feelings and begin to understand the way these affect people's lives.
29. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Staff are effective role models and through the quality of their relationships and their good example encourage the values of fairness, kindness, honesty, and respect for each other. From the examples, they see around them, pupils learn to be kind, and they respect each other's needs. They know right from wrong and follow the moral code of the school. In their daily interactions in the school, pupils feel valued and supported by the staff and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. Good examples of this were seen when pupils arrive and depart from the school. Teachers and their support teams know the pupils very well and greet them individually with great warmth, reminding them of the first activities of the day. Similarly, at the end of the day, as staff escort them to their transport, pupils are reminded of what they have learnt and what lies ahead of them with humour and affection. At lunchtimes through taking turns, and helping each other, pupils have good opportunities to develop their social skills. Family events, the summer barbeque, school performances, Christmas celebrations, the arts week and visits out of school also provide good opportunities for pupils' development. However, because of the unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation, opportunities for the whole school to meet together are limited and this has an impact on pupils' social development.
30. Provision for pupils' cultural development is now good. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and customs in many of their lessons including religious education, English, art, music and history. They celebrate different faiths and festivals in well-planned assemblies and in daily prayers. During the inspection, the theme for the act of worship for younger pupils was Hanukah. Pupils listened to Jewish music, lit special candles and handled Jewish artefacts. They ate potato latkes and heard the story of Hanukah through sensory props. In a similar way, in an assembly, older pupils learnt about the feast of Diwali and aspects of Hinduism. Pupils in years 7 to 9 learn French and about aspects of the French culture. Students, in a highly relevant cultural studies course, learn about several European and Asian cultures.

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

31. Pastoral care is of a high order. The arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are very good. Substantial improvements have been achieved since the previous inspection and particularly with regard to health and safety procedures. Parents are, rightly, very pleased with the quality of care and support that is provided.
32. Pupils and students are very happy and feel valued and secure because of the attitudes of all members of staff towards them and the excellent relationships and atmosphere that pervade the school on both sites. The school tries very hard and succeeds in meeting the personal needs of pupils. Adults provide consistent and positive support and guidance with kindness, sensitivity and genuine concern for the individual, exercising firmness when needed and appropriate strategies in almost every instance. All adults in the school are excellent role models to the pupils and parents. Very careful attention is given to pupils' health and medical needs and the school receives the support of full time nurses and a range of specialists who regularly visit. Numerous special resources are available and used very well to support learning and the welfare of the pupils, for example hoists and a swimming pool.
33. Child protection is thoroughly embedded in all the school's work. All members of staff are very well aware of their responsibilities and procedures are securely in place. The school is very well supported in this and other relevant matters by the specialist agencies that serve the school for example the social services child disability team. The new health and safety procedures are good, a significant improvement on the previous inspection, and are likely to be very effective once they have had sufficient time to be applied, reviewed and evaluated. Some measures and enhancements have been only recently introduced. Impressive features include risk assessments for each pupil. A recent audit commended the procedures and the school has received appropriate recognition for the quality of their work. The school has invested considerable time, money and effort over a comparatively short period and has successfully and very substantially improved its arrangements for health, safety and first aid.
34. Attendance is carefully recorded and monitored. The school has very good arrangements in place with transport providers that ensure the efficient conveyance of pupils to and from school. Escorts are responsible for the pupils whilst in transit and they also provide a useful link between the school and parents. The school always obtains reason for absence or lateness with a view to offering assistance. Vehicle access and car parking at both sites restrict the offloading of pupils to one vehicle at a time and cause lateness to classes in some instances. The procedures and strategies for managing behaviour are very effective. All members of staff receive comprehensive and ongoing training in the management of behaviour and they consistently and effectively apply the policy and practices that are agreed. The high level of staffing means that pupils are very closely supervised at all times and this contributes very considerably to standards of behaviour. The programme for personal, social and health education, assemblies and the role modelling of all adults convey relevant messages to pupils about expectations of good behaviour. Adults help pupils to realise and understand what is unacceptable behaviour and its effects, and positively encourage reflection and improvement. This guidance, together with the high quality of relationships throughout the school serves to minimise instances of deliberate bullying. A personal plan is in place for each pupil including individual characteristics, objectives and strategies to be employed. All adults who are involved with that child are aware of the details of the plan and it is frequently reviewed.
35. Pupils' personal development is very closely monitored on a continuous basis. The home/school diary contributes very much to the monitoring and enables parents and school to be aware of progress, problems, responses and needs overall. All parties co-operate extremely well with this. The school works very closely with parents and all parties regard themselves as members of a team that supports the child. Teachers and their support teams are fully aware of targets for individual pupils for example the next step for pupils to take or try in using utensils at lunchtime or handling a particular item such as turning a radio on or off. Opportunities for responsibility, such as

taking registers to the office, are offered to pupils but, at times, insufficient opportunity is given to pupils to use initiative and be independent. In many instances, this is due to the restrictions of the buildings, the small classrooms and narrow corridors, and the need for supervision of pupils as they move around the school. Advice and information about life after school and experiences in the community and at other schools, for example about possible integration, contribute very much to pupils' personal development.

36. Pupils' academic development is monitored very well. The school has devised and recently introduced a simple and effective system, that is already working very well and likely to be of exceedingly high quality when fully established in every subject. Pupils' attainments are assessed at the end of each unit of study and the accuracy of these assessments is double checked by senior managers and linked clearly to the National Curriculum P Levels (these are national measures in each subject for what pupils know and can do if they are working below Level 1 of the National Curriculum). The recorded assessments are then used directly in the reports to parents so that, over a year, parents and teachers can see clearly what each pupil has learnt in every subject and progress can be tracked from year to year. Teachers also use these same assessments when planning a new unit of study to make sure that each pupil is building on what they already know and that the targets set in IEP's are effectively addressed in lessons. The quality and accuracy of this work is very good and, already, teachers are gathering information about the P levels pupils have attained that clearly demonstrates their achievement over time as well as enabling teachers to set realistic and challenging targets for improvement.

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

37. The partnership between school and parents is very good. These high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection with improvement in communications and parents' involvement in their children's learning and personal development.
38. Parents hold the school in high regard and express considerable confidence in it. The views expressed by parents who returned questionnaires, and attended the meeting with inspectors, indicate a higher degree of satisfaction than previously. They are almost unanimous in their approval of the school's provision with extremely few negative comments. They say that they feel valued and part of a team that works for the good of their children. They are right to be very pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. All parents say that their children like school and that that they are encouraged to discuss all and any concerns with the school, and feel comfortable about doing so. They regard teaching as good and that children make good progress although inspectors judge that teaching and learning are very good. Inspectors agree that parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress and about all other matters in school; and that the school very successfully involves parents in their children's learning and personal development. Inspectors also agree with those parents who say that the accommodation is unsuited to the needs of the children. Some parents are uncertain about the school's expectations regarding homework and inspectors agree that these could be explained more helpfully to parents. For example, 'homework' can include parents and teachers working together to help pupils meet the targets in their IEP's, as well as sharing a reading book or continuing the work from class at home. The school makes satisfactory provision for homework such as this, but parents are often unclear about what is expected for their child.
39. Parents are very well informed by the extremely detailed annual reports that include the assessment of pupils' project work as well as their personal development. Two formal discussions each year supplement the reports, and attendance by parents at these meetings is very high. They are also able to consult with education and health specialists at meetings in school. The school and parents make very good use of the home/school diaries. They very effectively serve to sustain an ongoing dialogue on a daily basis. The school provides curricular information and ensures parents are aware of planned events.
40. The school very successfully involves parents in their children's learning and personal development and is currently considering how it can provide even more advice and guidance to support parents with their children at home. An extensive induction programme and guidance pack are provided

when parents first join the school and much training is offered to them then and throughout their relationship with the school. Almost all parents attend the many workshops. The school consults parents in order to obtain their views of the school but particularly to find out how the school might assist them more effectively. A recent questionnaire indicated that some parents would like support and guidance regarding ICT. The school also provides a networking facility to enable parents to support each other.

41. Parents support the school very well. Some accompany pupils on visits and help out when the opportunity is offered, for example by making up story sacks. The school association organises social and fund-raising events that contribute substantially to the school's resources and the quality of learning and experiences for the children.

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

42. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management for the school. She works in close partnership with an outstanding deputy headteacher and both share an exceptional vision for all pupils having the very best deal possible from the education in their school. The quality of their work is having a rapid and dramatic impact on the school's provision. The quality of teaching and learning shows marked improvement and is now very good throughout the school. This, in turn, is having a significant impact on standards and pupils are already showing good achievement in most subjects and very good achievement in English and their communication skills. During the inspection, discussions were held with a wide range of people concerning the leadership and improvement of the school. In almost every case, the drive of the headteacher was described as a 'passion' for doing her utmost for every pupil and this is clearly evident as the motivating factor for all others in the school community. As a result, all personnel are very clear that they are working hard at improving what they do for the benefit of all the pupils in their care, regardless of race, gender, disability or learning needs. In addition, the headteacher and deputy have an exceptional understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards; they have a clear expertise in leadership, and make sure that the actions they take are effective. For example, they realised that the communication needs of pupils were not sufficiently addressed. Training was provided, along with rigorous support and evaluation, with the result that all permanent staff are now skilled in a wide range of communication strategies and all pupils are now more fully included in class and learning better as a result.
43. Leadership is devolved very well to other key staff in the school and they, in turn, are very effective in raising the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Senior members of staff hold responsibility for the quality assurance and performance management of teachers and support teams working in each of the National Curriculum Key Stages. They monitor pupils' work, teachers' plans and the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. In turn, they also contribute information to the headteacher about training needs and areas for inclusion in the school improvement plan. The result of this work is seen in the exceptional teamwork among staff and the quality of consistent whole school procedures such as assessment, meeting the individual needs of pupils and promoting their communication skills. Senior staff also hold responsibility for a specific area of special needs. For example, one person is responsible for the quality of provision for pupils with autism throughout the school, and another is responsible for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the use of communication aids. Each member of the senior management team is gaining valuable specialist expertise and sharing this very well with other staff. As a result, pupils with PMLD and ASD are now included very well in lessons and their needs are being met much better than at the previous inspection. Responsibility for improvement is also delegated very well to every member of the school community. All personnel reflect on what they do and try hard to improve their work. This self-review exists at all levels of management and the school's formal procedures for monitoring, evaluating and taking action for improvement are consistently very good as a result. In addition, these review procedures are leading successfully to reduced amounts of paper-work, and bureaucracy is limited to tasks that are important for the development of the pupils.
44. The school has made excellent improvement since the last inspection and moved from underachieving to being a very good school. This is due to the leadership of the headteacher,

deputy and senior staff and the commitment evident in everyone to do the best for the children. The key issues identified then have all been very successfully addressed and the school has also done much more. For example: the quality of teaching and learning has improved to be very good; the curriculum was satisfactory and is now good; procedures for planning lessons and assessing pupils have improved dramatically; staff are empowered, have improved their skills in communication, and are a highly motivated team striving for improvement; and standards are rising as a result. The quality of this development work is secure and is likely to result in even higher standards over time. This has all taken place within two years and is a significant achievement for the school.

45. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well. Governors are very well informed and fully aware of the vision and direction of the school. They act very well as critical friends to the school and contribute very effectively to the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures. As a result, governors are clear about what the school does well and also about what it should do to improve. The quality of strategic planning is now excellent. Finances and resources are provided to support school improvement and their effectiveness evaluated very well through the impact developments have on pupils. Specific grants are used and administered exceptionally well. For example, initiatives developed between the school and the Educational Action Zone are enabling pupils to successfully attend mainstream schools for some lessons. Funds are being used to provide appropriate support staff and rigorous monitoring is in place to record and evaluate the benefits that result for pupils and adults in both schools. The school's financial control and purchasing systems are excellent and the principles of best value are applied very well in all the school's developments.
46. The school is very well staffed with skilled and experienced teachers and support teams. Their professional development needs are looked after very well, with very good induction and performance management procedures, and, as a result, there are exceptional levels of teamwork and morale is high. Good quality resources for learning are provided and priorities for purchasing clearly linked to what will provide the maximum benefit for the pupils. However, there are significant weaknesses in the accommodation, which is unsatisfactory for the needs of the pupils. As a result:
- Pupils require more supervision and support as they move round the school and this restricts their opportunities to gain independence
  - The split site reduces the opportunities for pupils to feel they are part of a whole school community
  - Vehicle access and parking limits the procedures for arrival and departure and results in lateness for some pupils
  - The library provision is inadequate
  - Specialist resources such as white and dark rooms for sensory use are too small
  - There is a lack of specialist facilities, for example, for design technology and science
  - There is insufficient storage space for large equipment such as pupils' standing frames
  - Corridors and classrooms are small and limit the free movement of pupils
  - Despite fire service approval of the school's best efforts, the arrangements for evacuation of pupils from the upper story still pose a potential risk to safety.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. To further develop and improve the quality of the school, governors, school leaders and staff should now:

- \*Improve the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 1 to 9 (paragraphs 5, 15, 19, 97 – 101) so that:
  - Pupils systematically develop their knowledge and understanding of ICT
  - Pupils learn to use computers for the purposes detailed in the National Curriculum
- \*Improve the opportunities for students in Years 12 to 14 (paragraphs 5, 21) by:
  - Continuing to press for improved access for students to relevant courses outside of school
  - Enabling students to learn to do as much as possible for themselves
- \*Continue to seek the necessary improvements to the school buildings (paragraph 46).

In addition, the school should also consider the following minor areas for further improvement:

- Clarify with parents the expectations and requirements for homework (paragraph 38)
- \*Continue to strive for pupils of all ages to be as independent as possible in their academic and personal development (paragraphs 5, 9, 21, 35)

*\*already identified by the school as an area for improvement*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	84
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	4	30	42	8	0	0	0
Percentage	5	36	50	9	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	136
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	60

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National data for SLD/PMLD schools	8.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National data for SLD/PMLD schools	0.6

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	149	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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: Nursery – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.5
Average class size	7.5

**Education support staff: Nursery – Y14**

Total number of education support staff	56
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1543

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1,646,654
Total expenditure	1,639,838
Expenditure per pupil	11,797
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,797
Balance carried forward to next year	43,613



**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	149
Number of questionnaires returned	54

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	30	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	52	43	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	41	4	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	35	11	4	11
The teaching is good.	76	22	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	24	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	24	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	30	4	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	65	31	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	30	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	43	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	26	6	4	13

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

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

48. Since the last inspection, strong foundation stage provision has been established. A skilled team of early years specialists teach children in two nursery classes and a reception class. Children in the nursery attend part-time in line with the Local Education Authority's policy, and are assessed for Statements of Special Educational Needs prior to admission to full-time education. Most children move up into the Bridge School's reception class, but a significant number go on to mainstream nursery or infant schools, or to schools for children with moderate learning difficulties. An important function of the foundation stage provision is to assess each child's needs and potential. There are six monthly reviews, reflecting the rate of development and changes in younger children. Assessment is very thorough and helpful. Parents are seen as central to their child's learning and are supported through frequent contact, publications and workshops. An inspired use of a picture word processor means that children in the reception class regularly take home a page saying what they have been doing during the day. Staff are continuing to develop a range of ways in which to work in partnership with parents, recognising that families as well as their children, have differing strengths and needs. Nursery provision was judged to be very good at the last inspection, is maintaining this high standard and continues to develop with excellent leadership. Self-evaluation is helping this process with the enthusiastic staff team reflecting well and working hard to improve what they do .
49. Children show very good achievement in all areas of learning because of very good teaching which focuses on each child's specific needs and interests, within a broad curriculum. The programme of work fully reflects the content and philosophy of the published national foundation stage curriculum, whilst integrating relevant therapy into daily routines and play activities. The work that parents do at home, encouraged and supported by school, also makes a major contribution to the children's achievements.

**Personal, social and emotional development**

50. Children enjoy coming to school. Children with autism and histories of unsettled behaviour, were observed to smile as they took their coats off and entered the class in the morning. Others came in eager to explore the new activities. They quickly became involved in activities that they chose themselves. Some very young children still have difficulties separating from their parents, but settle with cuddles and songs while adults take advice on how best to do this from people that know the children well. Children form close relationships with adults, and learn to play alongside others and take turns happily in increasingly formal situations. Some children are beginning to imitate other children's play, for example in the sand tray when filling a bucket. The diversity of children's needs often makes it difficult for them to form strong friendships and to play co-operatively without adult intervention, but there are very good arrangements for some children to attend mainstream schools too. Here they have increased opportunities to learn from other children and to develop good relationships with their peers. During the time in the nursery many children become increasingly independent in dressing, feeding and becoming dry during the day. Adults work on these self-help skills in an individual way. Some children can manage without help, others have adult guidance and prompts throughout the day and some have highly structured programmes to develop these skills. The close relationships and very good staff ratios enable children to work alongside an adult and help whenever possible. They enjoy taking responsibility for moving chairs, putting things away and tidying up. One older child directed the making of "Slurpy" (corn-flour and water), collecting equipment and ingredients and using signing and symbols to tell the adult helper what to do next. Children learn to express their needs and feelings appropriately, supported by adults who interpret accurately and shape children's responses carefully.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

51. Since the last inspection, there has been very well focused staff development on specific teaching methods for particular groups of children, and on developing communication skills. Practice was already very good in the nursery, with good signing as well as helpful photographs, symbols and objects of reference (small items to represent different activities or events, such as an armband for swimming) kept nearby. There are now symbol communication boards kept with every play activity. These are used by adults to focus on the specific vocabulary for the activity and by older children to communicate about what they are doing. Adults are also skilled in helping children by modelling the appropriate language while they play, describing what the child is doing, and interpreting and extending any words, sounds or gestures that the child makes. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is used with children with autism. This is introduced systematically at home and school, whenever possible. The children's skills in combining symbols such as spontaneously using 'want bus' at home time shows the result of adults' high expectations and hard work. By the time that they enter Year 1, a number of children are able to use spoken or signed language to direct and sequence imaginative play in the role play area, ask questions and talk about things that are important to them. At the end of the day one child says "I'm exhausted"! Children are very interested in books. They turn pages carefully and have their favourites. Most recognise pictures of their friends and older children learn to recognise the names of the children in the class. Interactive displays such as the story of the Three Bears, using switches to add sound and interest, extend the children's knowledge of traditional stories and encourage children to explore and experiment independently.

## **Mathematical development**

52. Mathematical skills are developed very well through daily routines – counting hands, feet, spoonfuls of dinner, children for drinks, songs and play activities such as sand and bricks. Almost all the children are learning and using concepts such as, again, more and finished or 'all gone'. Children in the reception class name and match colours and shapes, and younger children already recognise colour and shape words. Younger children join in with number songs through gesture and use some number names, although not always in the right order. A child with English as an additional language has developed the rhythm and discipline of counting and pointed systematically to a row of pictures on the wall saying 'ah, ah, ah..' while the teacher counted and followed this on a number line. An older child counted reliably to twenty and used his computational skills in laying the table in the play house, knowing that he needed 'two more' plates to ensure that everyone had one. Play with a large programmable ladybird helps develop early estimation skills too.

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

53. The focus on following, verbalising and extending children's interests and exploration leads to very good progress in this area. A nursery child was observed finding out that cars roll differently on the carpet and a hard surface, and was encouraged to notice this difference. An older child accurately steered a remote controlled car. When the batteries ran out, he helped to change them. This led to a discussion about needing electricity to work and why batteries need to be the right way round. A child with hearing impairment already signed crocodile and lion and wanted to know giraffe too - her supporter quickly went to find out! Children explore the different properties of materials, with the youngest reacting differently to, for example, Slurpy, paint and sand. Children in the reception class show that they are familiar with some computer programs and are aware that they are creating an effect by touching the touch screen or a switch. All the children show that they are aware of the structure of the nursery session or the school day, showing excitement and anticipation and quick cooperation with changes in activity or grouping.

## **Physical development**

54. The majority of children move safely and skilfully around the classroom and playground showing awareness of space and consideration of others. There are frequent opportunities for plenty of outdoor play in all but the worst of weather and adults encourage energetic games. Children

respond with excitement and lively participation. Physiotherapists work alongside classroom staff and their work is very well integrated into ordinary activities. All members of staff learn from physiotherapists the skilled moving and positioning needed and children with physical disabilities benefit from the consistent high quality of support provided. They develop their fine motor skills too and begin to use tools such as spades in the sand tray, spoons with Slurpy and glue spreaders. Some of the children in the nursery use a mature conventional grasp for paint brushes and crayons, supported and prompted by attentive adults.

### **Creative development**

55. There is a clear emphasis on pretend games, or imaginary play, in many activities. For a number of children this is particularly important in relation to their special needs, for others it also plays a significant role in the development of their communication and understanding of the world. A well-resourced role play area and small world toys such as people, animals and cars are always available. A few children sing nursery songs, but many more show that they are familiar with them, joining in with gestures, props and puppets. Nursery children confidently take their 'one currant bun' from the bakers shop at the right time and reception class children choose the verse for 'I jump out of bed in the morning' with unprompted symbol choice or gesture. There are always conventional painting and sticking activities on offer in the nursery and children watch the marks that they make on paper, learning to put the right brush back in the right paint pot and becoming more accurate and careful with glue.

### **ENGLISH**

56. Pupils' achievements in English and literacy are very good in all Years in the school. They show very good achievement in speaking and listening, and also in reading. Pupils' achievements in writing are good. All of the students in Years 12 to 14 gain some appropriate and relevant external accreditation for their work, and achieve very well. Higher attaining students complete some modules from the Accreditation for Life and Living scheme, while the lower attaining pupils are entered for modules from the National Skills Profile scheme. All students successfully completed a module in Communication last year. Challenging but realistic targets are set for pupils, reflecting their varying abilities, so that some pupils are expected to improve by two P levels in speaking and listening, while others with more profound difficulties are expected to expand the breadth of their experiences without necessarily moving up a whole P level. These targets are usually met.
57. Progress in speaking and listening is very good. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils can follow instructions containing three key words, speak in sentences and use a wide vocabulary. They can recall characters and sequences of events. Lower attaining pupils are beginning to attend to very short stories. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils are using prepositions and pronouns. They can also talk informally to pupils in the mainstream primary school. They enjoy songs, rhymes, stories and confidently put messages on other pupils' communication aids. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils can initiate conversation and maintain eye contact. Lower attaining pupils vocalise, eye point and use facial expression to indicate their preferences. They explore props and can focus on pictures. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils can listen to others, and take turns in speaking. Their contribution is relevant. Pupils with more profound disabilities recognise objects of reference for routine events, and can ask for objects using the PECS picture exchange system. In Years 12 to 14, the higher attaining students ask questions and answer clearly and sensibly but they still struggle to pronounce some of the words in their reading books.
58. Progress in reading is very good. By the end of Year 2, the higher attaining pupils can match symbols to pictures; make simple sentences using these symbols; then read them back with accuracy and understanding. Lower attaining pupils will explore books for a few minutes. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils can turn the pages of a book while telling an embellished version of the story. They can recognise several words. Lower attaining pupils enjoy adding sound effects to stories using their Big Mack communication aids. Visually impaired pupils can sequence a story by tracking along a range of textures. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils can discuss the characters in a story, and relate the story to their own experience. They

can identify letters by sound and name and can recognise some words, working out the meaning of others from the context. By the end of Year 11 higher attaining pupils can use pictures and initial sounds to help read the text of simple stories and can answer questions on what they have read. They have found information on training puppies using the Internet. However, they often have difficulty in following written instructions. Pupils with profound difficulties can use a Big Mack communication aid when prompted to take part in a story, and watch pages being turned. The oldest students are using pictures to help them read simple texts.

59. Progress in writing is good. By the end of Year 2, the highest attaining pupils can use a keyboard to write their names. Some pupils with autism can make dot and line marks in different media. Pupils with more profound difficulties are still developing pre-writing skills. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils can match letters on a worksheet and pick out all the objects beginning with a particular letter sound. They can write over letters and can build up simple sentences using a computer program. Between Years 7 and 9 higher attaining pupils come to write a small number of words independently and consistently. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining pupils can write their full names but have to copy their addresses. Most writing is done by dictating to staff, who scribe and then the pupil copies, for example 'We made some costumes for our drama lesson. They are to make us look like Greek sailors.' Many pupils are unable to write, but opportunities in class to use technology to help pupils record their achievements are not always taken. Pupils with profound difficulties explore the props used in story-telling and their responses are recorded by staff. The highest attaining students in Years 12 to 14 are able to write simple sentences independently using a computer program that has symbols and text. Whilst spacing and punctuation are imperfect, the meaning is clear. Lower attaining students can match pictures of characters to their clothing after a role-play.
60. There has been good improvement in English since the last inspection. At that time English was judged to be good; it is now very good. The school has concentrated on improving communication for all pupils through signing, the use of symbols and the provision and use of communication aids. This has paid dividends across the curriculum, allowing all pupils to participate more fully in lessons. This is a strength of the school. The National Literacy Strategy has brought improved pace and structure to all English and literacy lessons. The quality of English teaching has improved, with an emphasis on multi-sensory approaches, allowing all pupils to be involved in English lessons. Very good resources have been developed to support this way of teaching. Reading schemes and texts have been chosen to be as age appropriate as possible, with pupils above Year 10 moving on to a new reading scheme to acknowledge their seniority in the school. The co-ordination of English is excellent. There is clear guidance to all the teachers which also allows them appropriate choice to develop lessons to match the specific needs of particular pupils. The English curriculum is rich, varied and stimulating. It is particularly impressive for the oldest students, and covers Tolkien, Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot as well as comics and film. Themes are age appropriate and adapted successfully to the pupils' complex needs.
61. There is a very good quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the school and this leads directly to the very good achievement of the pupils. In lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning ranged from an occasional satisfactory lesson to excellent, with the majority of lessons across all years being very good. This is due to outstanding teamwork between teachers and their support teams who move seamlessly between activities and pupils. There is some excellent work by individual support assistants and teachers working with pupils with autism, developing their communication and co-operation. Teachers and their support teams know their pupils very well and observe them very closely for signs of progress. Relationships are excellent. Classrooms are welcoming, sometimes, as in the reception class, using scents and music to set the tone when the children arrive.
62. The focus for staff training has been on communication and this has made a tremendous positive difference to the quality of lessons. The school is now a "Communication Aids Project" contact, which enables a multi-disciplinary team of staff to assess pupils in and beyond the school for communication aids. All pupils now have a means of 'speaking' as well as listening, whether this is through using communication books with symbols, eye pointing with their support assistant, simple or sophisticated communication aids. Symbols and text together are also used

successfully to motivate pupils. Staff have added symbols to ordinary books so that pupils have increased access to them. They have also produced home-made big books which pupils spend considerable time looking at. Some staff have made their own talking books on the computer, and this has helped overcome the lack of age appropriate texts for older pupils. This good practice is steadily being spread around the school.

63. Lesson planning is generally very good and often excellent, and is closely matched to individual pupils' needs. Lessons include all pupils and this is achieved through very good use of multi-sensory resources, for example in a lesson for Year 8 on Aesop's fable 'The Sun and the Wind' PMLD pupils used a switch to operate a fan and lamp to simulate the sun and wind. In another lesson for Year 6, the teacher used large hoops, streamers, quoits, and paint to get interaction and eye contact with ASD pupils following through work on the letter 'O'. There is very good use of specific teaching techniques aimed at pupils with autism using picture exchange and rewarding co-operation. Lessons all have a tight structure of a whole class introduction and link with a previous lesson, group work at different levels, and a plenary session to share what has been learned. There are often songs and rhymes signifying 'tidy up time' towards the end. Recording of pupils' achievements is done simply and effectively, and this information is used very well to plan future lessons. The National Literacy Strategy is being implemented and taught very well. Drama is used well in all lessons to introduce the literacy hour and to capture pupils' attention successfully. Separate drama lessons for Years 10 and above are lively, enjoyable and an effective contribution to pupils' personal development as well as to their speaking and listening. English lessons concentrate on fiction, poetry and plays as well as literacy. The school has a deliberate policy of leaving factual books to be used in different subjects, and this works well. For example, the science teacher uses big books to introduce a topic, developing the same sort of skills as in the literacy lessons, such as using an index, and using a range of cues to work out the meaning of text.
64. Pupils enjoy English lessons and as a result they learn very well. Their concentration and ability to participate improves. The improvement is marked for pupils with ASD who benefit from the intensive one to one attention that they get. Pupils develop a love of books and listening to stories through the way that staff adapt their teaching styles to suit pupils' varied needs. The use of multi-sensory approaches means that the pupils have good recall of previous lessons. English makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. They have many opportunities for social interaction, while the choice of texts provides opportunities for learning about other cultures as well as tackling moral issues.
65. There are some areas for development in English. Where lessons are not of such a high standard, not all the pupils with additional special needs are so fully involved in the lesson, nor are lessons quite so carefully planned. Also, supply staff do not always have the same level of expertise in communication as permanent staff, and this can sometimes disadvantage the pupils. The school has, rightly, identified the need for more involvement with parents to support pupils' reading and writing. Currently, not all pupils get reading books to take home and this decision is left to each teacher. Also, reading records are not always completed in sufficient detail with guidance that will help to develop pupils' reading strategies. While some teachers use computers well, they are not yet fully exploited by everyone. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory for English and restricts the learning opportunities for the pupils. The successful and inclusive multi-sensory approach demands the use of many resources, and storage space is inadequate. There is a library on one site but this is part of a corridor. It does not accommodate some classes. Similarly, sensory rooms for the younger children are too small and can not accommodate more than two pupils in wheelchairs.

## **MATHEMATICS**

66. Achievement of pupils in mathematics is good in all Year groups throughout the school. The National Numeracy Strategy is now securely used in all classes, and the new developments in the school's curriculum are likely to ensure that teachers develop the full breadth of pupils' mathematical skills and understanding.

67. The younger pupils up to Year 2 are learning to recognise, count and order numbers by a good variety of counting games and songs. Pupils in one class enjoyed 'fishing' to practise counting to three. A few higher attaining pupils in the group could count higher, up to 10 and beyond, with support. Some pupils can overwrite numbers and others can match and sort objects such as teddy bears by colour and number. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils have experienced a wide range of numeracy activities. They can recognise and name common two dimensional shapes. They can count together up to 10 and are beginning to explore the idea of comparing weight by balancing articles in each hand. In one group, pupils were also using the computer to generate patterns.
68. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are confident to use a number line to add and subtract. They can name coins up to one pound and have used string and metre sticks to measure and compare distances. Some pupils with PMLD understand how touching a switch can activate a toy. They also explore shapes and are beginning to recognise large numbers that are painted on cards. Higher attaining pupils in the same class sort boxes in size order and are starting to estimate and then check their estimation. Development of the data handling element of the numeracy strategy is not yet well developed but in one class, there was a simple example of a birthday chart made by the pupils. In Years 10 to 14, students are sensibly put into numeracy groups. This gives the opportunity for higher attaining students to work together and begin to share their understanding. For example, in a group looking at number bonds to ten, a student noticed a pattern and shared that with the group. In the same group, students used their communication aids to join in the practical activity - sharing 10 biscuits between two plates – and this led to an interesting, collaborative discussion. Students work towards the Accreditation for Learning and Life awards. In 2002, all students achieved at least one module in the Communications/ Numeracy element. Three students achieved two modules and one student achieved three.
69. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers are more confident to deliver the numeracy strategy to the pupils' wide range of learning needs. Resources have improved and are better used. There is now a secure role for the co-ordinator with time to monitor and develop the subject. The assessment system, closely related to the planning system, is good. The co-ordinator also has an appropriate range of developments planned within the school improvement plan. Effective work has begun on helping teachers to make accurate assessments by moderating 'P' levels. Consideration of how computers can be used more effectively; and lesson observations to identify and share good practice; are all on the co-ordinator's agenda for improvement. She also intends to run parent workshops to help parents develop the numeracy skills of their children at home.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection some very good teaching was observed and no lessons were less than satisfactory. Teachers are secure in using the numeracy strategy lesson format which means pupils understand the routine and settle quickly and purposefully to the lesson. Planning is detailed with clear objectives and assessment criteria so that each member of the teaching team can support the pupils, who then focus on their tasks. Teachers are skilled at the organisation of small groups to meet the range of learning needs in each class. The full range of communication support devices is well used by the whole teaching team to ensure that all pupils understand and are fully involved in lessons. In the very good lessons seen, the pace and challenge level was very high. Teachers used resources imaginatively to engage each and every pupil in the group, so that each exceeded their own expectations of what they could do. In these lessons, teachers also showed skilled and sensitive work with ASD pupils in, for instance, gently attracting a pupil to join in with toys whilst singing a counting song to consolidate the work which was the number focus of that lesson. All lessons included a plenary section. This is appropriately used to celebrate and share the work done in small groups but there are times when the session is too short for all the pupils to share and learn from what others have done. Teachers consolidate numeracy skills well in a number of other lessons such as in science when a group counted down to 'blast off' their rocket, counting steps in PE and considering the roundness of the letter 'o'. In music pupils could beat time getting faster and slower. Pupil's attitude to their lessons is invariably good. They enjoy mathematics and are happy to join in activities in the whole group and in the smaller groups. Occasional lapses in concentration or



behaviour are managed well and pupils quickly return to the task without disturbing others. Pupils work diligently to complete their tasks.

71. In the lessons judged to be satisfactory there was not always sufficient clarity about what pupils were expected to learn and do. Also, there is a lack of simple formats for pupils to record their work that would help them explain to others what they have learnt, as well as helping them become more aware of what they have achieved and how well they have done. In addition, the full potential of computers to support learning in numeracy was not evident in the lessons observed.
72. The co-ordinator works well with a clear focus on whole school development and improvement. The school's scheme of work is now securely established, and the assessment and recording system ensures that teachers can plan lessons that are challenging and assess pupils' achievements with precision. Support for teachers is good in all Year groups and this ensures that a consistent whole school approach to improvement is maintained.

## SCIENCE

73. There has been good improvement in science since the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well in all Year groups throughout the school, and they make good progress with their learning.
74. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils correctly identify a range of animals by name and observe how plants grow, transferring their seedlings to larger pots when necessary. Lower attaining pupils share activities such as watering plants and planting seeds and enjoy the wide range of investigations they make with materials of differing properties. By the end of Year 6, some pupils classify foodstuffs by taste and smell and note accurately the changes that occur when some materials are dry or wet. Higher attaining pupils know how to care for animals and are aware of which animals are pets and which should live, for example, on a farm. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are aware of the Earth's place within the solar system and can name some of the other planets. They carry out experiments and use their knowledge to predict, for example, the propulsion of a balloon. Pupils with PMLD experience a good range of sensory activities that increase their understanding and awareness of light, dark, texture, smell and taste and indicate preferences for favorite materials. Students in Years 10 to 14 have a good knowledge of the human body and show effective awareness of substances that can be harmful if misused.
75. Analysis of the pupils' work shows the curriculum has improved and is now very carefully structured to meet the wide range of learning needs within each class. For example, teachers' records show how PMLD pupils used switches in the 'white room' to simulate the effects of light and dark when they were learning about the sun, moon and earth. By contrast, the higher attaining pupils made models of Jupiter and Mars and used a balloon to investigate propulsion - illustrating how a rocket is launched. For pupils in Years 10 to 14, the curriculum includes a good range of practical and vocational activities. Last year, as part of their Accreditation for Life and Living course, students successfully achieved introductory and first grade modules. Their studies included work about environmental issues such as recycling.
76. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. There is now a much greater emphasis on developing investigative science. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved greatly and most now have more confidence when teaching science; this is because of the improved curriculum and the professional development provided for staff. Music is effectively used to create atmosphere; for example, in Year 2 the pupils sang 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' when studying light and dark. The 'Space Odyssey' was played in Year 3 when pupils were learning about the planets. In the majority of lessons, teachers sign well and they use pictures effectively to communicate with the ASD pupils; for example showing pictures of the sun, moon and stars each time they use the same words.
77. Good sensory experiences are provided for the PMLD pupils; for instance, in an excellent Year 3 lesson, fine sand, representing moon dust, was provided for the pupils to feel. In Year 6, boxes containing hot and cold materials were taken around the group. This enabled the pupils to compare the temperatures and then learn that the moon is cold at night. The support teams work

very effectively with the teachers; they liaise closely about how they will support individual and small groups of pupils. For example, using PECS to record the results of investigations in a graphical yet meaningful way. Teachers' assessment has improved significantly and it is now used very effectively to track pupils' progress and to inform the next stage of teaching and learning. The very good assessments feed into the annual reports to parents, and explain in detail what pupils have achieved.

78. The management of science is very good. The co-ordinator has worked hard and has been well supported by school leaders and staff to develop the subject. Time has been allocated for her to monitor teaching and develop modules of work. This has resulted in the criticisms in the last report such as insecure planning, weak assessment, repeating work and misinformation for parents being eliminated. The use of ICT is developing satisfactorily; for example, the use of a symbol vocabulary to record the results of investigations, and the development of school CD-ROMs for some aspects of science. Areas for improvement are further training for some staff in the use of ICT, to enable pupils to have better access to the curriculum, and continued development of the modules of work. Currently, there are no specialist facilities, such as laboratories, for science.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

79. There is good achievement in art throughout the school. Consistently good teaching and very good planning in all year groups, provides pupils with a very interesting range of activities. As a result, pupils of all levels of attainment show high levels of enjoyment and commitment in their art lessons and make good progress in their work in a wide variety of materials, techniques and media. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for art since the last inspection. The strengthening of the co-ordinator's role and the development of very good planning have been key factors in the raising of standards and, in particular, of the level of challenge for the higher-attaining pupils, which was criticised in the last inspection.
80. The quality of pupils' work is clearly shown in the displays of artwork at both of the school sites. The contribution of the younger primary pupils to the large, colourful displays at the Brookside site, for example, shows good progress in their ability to cut and stick, in sponge-printing, colouring-in outline shapes and applying paint in a variety of imaginative ways. In a lesson observed, Year 2 pupils were enjoying a range of activities, from manipulating "slurpy" materials to helping to create card and paper birds and, in the latter task, the higher attaining pupils showed good gains in the control and dexterity with which they worked. A feature of this, and of the other art lessons observed, was the very good response of pupils with autism to the subject. Their individual targets, such as to remain engaged in activities and to follow a task through to completion, were clearly being met in most cases because of their enjoyment of the creative process.
81. The older primary pupils at the Stirchley site are producing some interesting collage work, using materials such as wool, feathers and sequins. In these, as in other year groups, disruptive behaviour by some pupils can at times interfere with progress but, in general, teachers and their support teams control lessons and resources well and any occasional hazards are managed effectively. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 respond positively to some increasingly challenging tasks. Their knowledge of the work of famous artists develops well and their work, both 2-D and 3-D, in the style of Picasso, for example, is particularly impressive. The strong subject expertise and high expectations of teachers are clearly important factors here.
82. Students make good progress in art in Years 10 to 14, particularly in their work in printing and graphics. They persevere in this work despite the difficulties many of them have in manipulating tools and materials and in following the several stages of the processes involved. Effective teaching of the required skills and consistent praise and encouragement from adults helps the pupils to produce a good quantity of finished work which shows good progress in their understanding of the use of colour, line and shape. Previous work by these groups on display shows good application of found objects, for example in collage, as part of their "Collections from the natural world" unit. Planning includes a unit on desktop publishing but, as in other year groups, there is little or no evidence of the effective use of computers to enhance such opportunities in the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in subject planning and assessment, and in the quality of teaching. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and progress including those pupils who speak English as an additional language. It was only possible to see two lessons in design technology during the inspection. However, from reviewing pupils' work and records and talking to pupils and teachers, it is clear that most pupils show good achievement throughout the school. Pupils and students make good progress throughout the time they are in school because lessons are interesting and carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. Pupils and students with PMLD and those with autism also make good progress through the sensitive and skilled support they receive.
84. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have explored and used an appropriate range of materials to make models, for example, of houses and buildings. Pupils decorate ginger bread houses, and make biscuits to their own designs using icing, sweets and chocolate. Pupils with PMLD decorate biscuits with the features of a house making deliberate selections and choices for the windows and doors. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to use tools to peel, slice and chop fruit and they improve their fine motor skills. Pupils with PMLD select and sample a variety of food. They enjoy participating and make good progress in a growing awareness of the activities around them. Pupils in Year 6 design and make, for example, wind-up toys. With support, they choose from a variety of materials, and decorate their toys with plain and fluorescent paints. Pupils with PMLD enjoy tracking their moving toys under ultra violet light in the darkroom. Pupils listen to the musical and sensory story of Joseph's coat and then design a coat from a variety of multi coloured and textured materials.
85. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils mix and cut material and use simple joining techniques confidently. They begin to follow the design and make process and, with support, evaluate their work in a simple way and handle and choose tools and materials correctly for specific purposes. Students in Years 10 to 14 focus on using and managing materials in practical activities. For example, in their work on wood, students explore the qualities of wood, its flexibility weight and size. With support, they make besom brooms, selecting the correct wood, choosing similar lengths and using tools to cut and join with good attention to safety. In a very good lesson, students with PMLD in Year 14, as part of their Home Management Course looked at the qualities of fresh food. They handled, smelled, squeezed and tasted a variety of fresh fruit and, with support, prepared it for a salad. They chose a flavoured milk dessert, showing with enormous effort their preferences by eye pointing, gesture and vocalisation.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers and their support teams are skilful at bringing pupils with challenging behaviour back on task and they use individual behaviour plans with consistency and sensitivity. Pupils and students in turn are aware of behaviour that is acceptable in the classroom and try hard to follow classroom routines. There is good attention to the management and needs of pupils with autism and this enables these pupils to function co-operatively in the classroom. The teachers work particularly well with their support teams, who are well briefed and competent and manage pupils' learning and behaviour well. At all ages, pupils learn to listen to instructions and follow them carefully. Attitudes and behaviour are good because teaching is enthusiastic and motivating, and teachers use very precise and clear explanations so that pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to be successful. Although communication aids are used well, not enough use is made of ICT in the design process to support teaching and learning. There is an expectation that pupils will do their best and, pupils develop their concentration and improve their cutting, joining and folding skills. For older students, the very good relationships between the teacher, the support team and the students provide an adult atmosphere in which the students make very good progress towards their individual targets.
87. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has worked hard to produce detailed and thorough guidance which helps teachers to plan their lessons. Assessment is good and teachers use the information well to plan future lessons. The co-ordinator has a good overall view of her subject and has clear and appropriate plans for the future. However, the specialist accommodation is

unsatisfactory particularly for older pupils and students. It is cramped and does not have enough room for wheelchairs and large power machinery. This limits the activities that can take place as well as reducing the opportunities for pupils' achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

88. During the inspection, it was possible to see only one lesson in Year 9. Evidence gathered from reports to parents, teachers' moderation files, assessment records, and the lesson observed, suggest that all pupils' achievement over time is good. Pupils in all year groups routinely meet the targets set for them in the subject. There is, however, insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching.
89. By the end of Year 2, pupils experience how to find their way around school. Some need to use cue cards for guidance, whilst others understand arrows and learn to follow them independently. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils answer simple questions about people and places such as where they go riding, or the route to the Wyke. A few pupils are proud to take registers independently to the office. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils understand sketch maps of an Indian village and add features such as trees and houses to appropriate places on the map. In Years 10 to 14, cultural studies embraces a good range of European and world locations, so that students experience aspects of other cultures such as African and Spanish music, dance and art.
90. In the one lesson observed in Year 9, the quality of teaching was good and pupils' enjoyment of the lesson was very clear. PMLD pupils were fully included by very good use of communication aids such as Makaton signing and natural gesture, PECS, Big Macks and the Dynamo. The teacher's detailed planning, good knowledge and understanding of pupils, along with good teamwork ensured worthwhile learning experiences for every pupil. Pupils enthusiastically selected, and matched animals and pictures to the colourful 3-dimensional mural of the rain forest in Brazil. The teaching of mapping skills challenged higher attaining pupils who recognised outline maps of Britain and South America. They had fun tasting and sorting fruits from hot and cool countries. Everyone recorded likes and dislikes on a tally chart. Pupils with ASD achieve well, tolerating working within the group increasingly as they move through the school. In earlier years, they are fully involved in the same work as the rest of the class although, often, in their workstations.
91. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in provision for the subject. The co-ordinator gives very good leadership, has worked hard to adapt and implement the scheme of work from a commercial source. It is well structured, with assessment of pupils central to planning. From outline plans, detailed medium term plans are drawn up according to the skills and needs of individuals and the span of P-levels within the group. Using individual targets, the content of the subject is skilfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils. There is a very good focus on multi-sensory experiences and opportunities for cross-curricular work. The use of computer programmes is satisfactory. Learning resources are now good in quality and quantity to support the learning of all groups of pupils. Big books are well chosen to enhance learning across topics such as The Rain Forest. Learning targets are precise. They are set and evaluated individually at the end of each unit. Teachers are now collecting evidence of achievement at each P-level, for moderation purposes. Geography and Cultural Studies also make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and students.

## HISTORY

92. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the subject. Subject planning and assessment are now detailed and thorough. Teaching is skilled and well matched to pupils' individual needs. This has had a strong impact on pupils' achievement and progress throughout the school including those pupils with English as an additional language. Achievement and progress in all Year groups are now good.
93. By the end of Year 2, many pupils show an awareness of past and present and higher attaining pupils begin to use everyday terms about the passing of time. Pupils can identify old and new toys from a range presented to them. Teachers use resources well, particularly those to aid communication and so pupils with PMLD communicate consistent responses and preferences. They explore all the artefacts, sustaining concentration for longer periods and choosing objects purposefully. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 listen to and experience the stories of famous people. Teachers enable them to re-enact the story of Dick Whittington by means of music, costume and sensory props. They were delighted to wear the mayor's chain, pick up Dick Whittington's bundle and with a large fur cat, pretend to make their way to London. Pupils also recognise themselves and others from pictures of the recent past
94. By the end of Year 6, all pupils have listened and taken part in the story of Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale. They remember simple aspects of these people's lives and link them to photographs of the school nurse. Higher attaining pupils recognise that Florence Nightingale lived a long time ago and begin to gather information on her life from different sources. In one very good lesson, the teachers' high quality planning and very effective attention to detail made sure that work was matched to each individual's needs and so all pupils made very good progress. Pupils played a drama game in which 'Florence Nightingale' appeared, (one of the support team in full Victorian costume) looking for her lamp. Whilst helping her look for her lamp, pupils unwrapped several parcels containing Victorian artefacts, handling and describing them and discovering their purpose. Higher attaining pupils were able to point to some of the modern day equivalent articles. Pupils then took part in a role-play of nurses and patients with the classroom divided into a Victorian and a modern 'hospital'. Pupils with PMLD explored the smells of old soaps and carbolic and handled medical 'instruments', using pre recorded sound effects and cries for help. Higher attaining pupils recognised the problems Florence Nightingale faced in terms of dirt and disease and knew what happens today if someone has an accident. This lively and practical approach is a feature of many lessons and helps the pupils to learn effectively about the past. This was also seen to be effective in helping pupils in Year 5 to understand about life in Tudor England.
95. By the end of Year 9, a few pupils understand how the past can affect the future. In a lesson on 'Living in 1960' pupils handled artefacts from the era and recognised that the '60s were in the past when some of their teachers were children. Pupils also learn about living in the Second World War by simulating air raids, learning about evacuation, entertainment and taking part in a V.E. Day street party. Teachers and the support teams bring history to life for pupils by well-planned and stimulating activities and knowledgeable, skilful teaching, which helps pupils to make good progress. Students in Years 10 to 14 build on their historical understanding through a course in cultural studies and through the study of myths and legends in English and music. They learn about both European and Asian cultures and traditions. The effective use of first hand experiences through visits to museums, local historical sites and buildings promotes all students' access to and achievement in history. The subject also makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
96. Teaching is good. In the lessons seen, it was generally good, occasionally very good and never less than satisfactory. Adults in the classroom work very closely to provide a seamless range of support, which meets all individual learning needs. Pupils respond with enthusiasm, they behave well and are eager to join in the experiences provided. The support teams are skilled and experienced. Teachers plan their lessons very well and they make regular checks on pupils' progress and use this to plan further work. In the best lessons, highly imaginative, exciting teaching motivates all the pupils and they try their hardest and make very good progress. Pupils use ICT appropriately to research the lives and times of historical figures and this contributes

satisfactorily to their learning. The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator has worked hard to produce detailed and thorough medium term planning, providing a useful framework for teachers to plan their lessons. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are good and the information is used well. The co-ordinator has a good overall view of her subject and has clear and appropriate plans for future developments.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

97. Throughout the school, pupils show satisfactory achievement overall in ICT (information and communications technology). Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 1 to 9. However, this represents a balance of very good achievement in using ICT for communication and access to lessons, but not enough emphasis on learning to use computers for other purposes, such as, collecting and analysing data, and desk-top publishing etc. The school has worked hard to improve pupils and teachers' communication skills and the success of this work is seen in the way pupils use ICT to help communication. For example, they operate switches for Big Mack devices to make spoken requests for them. Other pupils use sophisticated communication aids and select appropriate phrases, requests and commands that they want the device to 'say' for them. This work is supported well by a specialist teacher and helpful in-service training continues to be provided. As a result, teachers and support teams are becoming increasingly skilled in this work and pupils are becoming included more and more in lessons and school activities. However, not as much attention has been given to teaching pupils to learn how to make best use of computers for other purposes and to support their learning in all subjects. There is currently a lack of long term planning for ICT that shows teachers what pupils should experience and be taught at what age, and most teachers do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the content or purpose of the ICT element of the National Curriculum. In Years 10 to 14, students follow a secure programme of work in their courses, taught well by a specialist teacher, and consequently make good progress in developing all areas of their ICT development.
98. By the end of Year 2, pupils are familiar with a several computer programs to build pictures and to create word-processed text with symbols. They are learning to use the touch screen to make choices, and are familiar with Big Mack switches to deliver messages and, for example, answer the register. By the end of Year 6, some pupils load their own favourite programs that they use to help develop literacy and numeracy skills and are using the keyboard to type some work. They begin to work with digital cameras with help from an adult and have helped to create some big books for the class library. By Year 9, pupils have experienced the Internet, and some have helped to make a graph. However, while they continue to develop their access and communication skills, the majority of their work is still similar to that done in younger classes. By the end of Year 14, the highest attaining students have good mouse and keyboard skills in relation to their abilities. They use a paint program to draw recognisable pictures on the screen, aware of a good range of functions such as flood fills and shape tools. They understand how to click on links in a web page to find new information. They use their reading and skills to follow on-screen instructions with a little support and understand that you can 'search' for information. They use this skill to find sweet recipes for their mini-enterprise. Lower attaining pupils enjoy high quality age-appropriate sensory stories developed by their teacher, participating enthusiastically through switches and communication aids.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is generally satisfactory with a very good lesson seen for the older pupils. Lessons are well planned so that all staff and pupils know what is expected. Skilled support staff use very effective physical prompts when appropriate, for example to develop the use of the touch screen or keyboard. They help some lower attaining pupils make good progress in some lessons. Sometimes, however, ICT is used as an extension activity rather than an integral part of a lesson, and there is little direct teaching input. In some lessons, teachers' lack of confidence and knowledge leads to wasted time and activities having to be abandoned.
100. The curriculum for all pupils has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the area of communication and use of switches. The new co-ordinator has also worked hard to ensure that teachers use ICT across the curriculum through providing them with appropriate pictures, web sites and files for their illustrated wordprocessor. The provision for pupils in relation to a sufficiently

broad programme of work, however, is insecure. Pupils have some good quality experiences and appropriate access to new technology, but provision varies from class to class and work does not always build sufficiently on what has gone before. There is appropriate individual planning and assessment from a recently adopted checklist of skills, but this does not ensure that pupils have the full rich programme that is evident in other subjects of the curriculum.

101. Teachers are using computers well for administrative purposes. They also make, or commission, some very attractive and useful resources incorporating symbols. A skilled senior manager oversees aided and adaptive communication. The school is benefiting from becoming a regional centre for assessment and provision of communication technology. This brings with it good training and access to equipment. There has been significant investment in new computers in all areas of the school, as well as the employment of several support staff who can help teachers with hardware and software issues. ICT also has a new enthusiastic co-ordinator, who is working hard to develop the subject. She has, rightly, already recognised the need for:
- long and medium term plans to show how a broad and progressive program of work will be provided; and
  - more training for staff in curriculum areas such as control, modelling and data handling, and to develop teachers' confidence with a wider range of software.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

102. As French is a new subject on the curriculum this term, there is insufficient evidence to judge standards over long periods of time. However, already this term, pupils from Years 7,8 and 9 show satisfactory achievement. They enjoy their experiences in lessons and gain confidence in their own conversational skills. At the last inspection, pupils were disapplied from learning a modern language. The addition of French broadens and enriches their curriculum. As it was possible to see only one French lesson, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the overall quality of teaching.
103. Pupils listen attentively and in the higher attaining group most pupils join in with the song 'Frere Jacques' at the start of each lesson. They all respond to greetings such as 'Salut!', 'Comment t'appelle tu?' but most echo back 'tu' instead of 'Je' Only one pupil with ASD understood and responded correctly. Another pupil had the confidence to approach the inspector after the lesson to ask her name in French. A mother recorded in the home-school diary of a pupil that he had said 'Hello' in French after his lesson. Pupils have fun learning the names of drinks and food for breakfast, as well as sandwich fillings such as 'fromage' and 'pate'. In a 'Bingo' style game such as 'Fast Finger', some pupils were very quick with responses, including pupils with ASD and a pupil using a dynamo communicator.
104. In the one lesson observed, the quality of teaching was good. The whole group introduction was very successful and pupils clearly understood the cues for French from the music and the beret. The teacher worked hard to communicate in French as much as possible, supported by sign, gesture and communication aids so that pupils had little difficulty following what she was saying. The lesson planning was detailed and closely linked to pupils' communication skills in English. This enabled pupils to develop their listening and communication skills appropriately for their needs. The subject makes a good contribution to spiritual, social and cultural development. The organisation of groups was appropriate for learning the names of fillings for 'le sandwich' and then eating the food! Pupils with ASD enjoyed the choosing and eating part of the sandwich. Because of their learning difficulties however, they were unable to sustain interest in speaking practice, and may have benefited from a more structured group session. In the plenary session, pupils were eager to match the key words in the fast finger game, which was a good way of revisiting and consolidating their learning.
105. Outline planning is from a commercially produced programme of study and has an appropriate range of topics, which are planned to link to other subjects such as the use of ICT, history, geography, literacy. Medium term planning is in the same format as the rest of the school and the

content very well adapted to the personal communication needs and Individual Education plan targets of the pupils.

## **MUSIC**

106. Achievement in music is good in all Year groups. This shows a good level of improvement since the previous inspection, which is largely due to teachers making good use of an exciting scheme of work to plan interesting lessons. This has been established by an experienced, specialist music teacher. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 are taught by this specialist. In Years 10 to 14, music is taught to students in the senior school by teachers from that department with close liaison between them and the co-ordinator.
107. The youngest pupils in Years 1 and 2 are becoming confident in both joining in singing and in playing untuned instruments. Some pupils know the names of the instruments, others can make a choice using photos and symbols. By the end of Year 2, pupils are aware of the sound each instrument will make and they can play together starting and stopping appropriately. Pupils with PMLD also enjoy the resonance boards where they can feel sound through their bodies and begin to participate in this sound making. This approach is also being used very effectively in the nursery and reception classes where pupils are beginning to learn patterns of sound and to recognise those they have instigated. By the end of Year 6, pupils are able to discriminate between loud and soft sounds as well as high and low notes. The scheme of work is used well by teachers to ensure that the pupils are experiencing a wide range of music, including that from other countries and cultures. One class is discovering the story of Rama and Sita through their music. They know the main characters in the story and can associate them with specific instrument sounds. They are able to accompany the songs, telling the story with disciplined rhythm and volume. Pupils also enjoy music in their other class activities such as counting, chanting rhymes and just having fun.
108. By the end of Year 9, pupils have progressed to developing their music around a group story. One class, imagining an uphill walk, thought of sounds they could make both with instruments and their voice which would give the feel of trudging up the mountain. Older pupils in Years 10 to 14 develop these skills further in, for example, composing a piece of music around the story of King Arthur going to battle. The students chose suitable instruments to replicate the sound of horses, swords clashing and arrows flying and this, linked to background CD, made a very effective composition. They had already listened to parts of the 1812 overture to get ideas and were then ready and confident to rehearse and perform. The resulting recording was appreciated by all.
109. The quality of teaching is good with examples of very good teaching and very good features in other lessons. Lessons are well planned from the scheme of work so that pupils are now gaining a consistent developmental experience of a range of music, plus learning new skills. One of the very good features is the skilled and sensitive involvement of those pupils with special problems by teachers and their support teams. The use of communication aids, photographs, plus close observation of the pupils' responses enables each child to find their own way of using the music. Teachers are keen to develop new ideas and to develop their own expertise. Good practice is shared with other staff so that in all lessons there is very good, seamless teamwork. Resources are used well to help pupils express their ideas and the new sound beams are being used by all pupils with enjoyment and skill. The pupils' attitudes to their lessons is invariably good. They are keen to participate. They listen to each other, take turns and, by stopping and starting together, all enjoy their learning and practical music making.
110. The co-ordinator has worked very effectively to improve the subject in such a short time since the previous inspection. The scheme of work is secure, extra funding has been well used to purchase relevant equipment, ICT is used appropriately to support learning, and the co-ordinator has been given the opportunity to train other staff in new methods. A range of musicians visit the school and the Arts Week was an exciting forum with good quality performances enjoyed by all. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to continue with improving the potential for creativity in pupils and to find ways to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress over time.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**



111. In all year groups, pupils' achievement is good and the majority make good progress with their learning. Since the last inspection, progress has been particularly good in ensuring that pupils with PMLD and ASD are taught with other pupils and not excluded from lessons. The teaching time for physical education is now more effectively used; for example, time is not wasted after lunch.
112. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and some very good teaching was observed during the inspection. The teachers assess pupils very well. They use the information from assessment to plan work that is well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. Teachers give good demonstrations of what they require the pupils to do. However, in some lessons, higher attaining pupils could be used more to show others what to do. The pupils enjoy physical education and most are helped by their teachers and support teams to change quickly for their lessons.
113. In a good lesson observed for Year 1, very close staff supervision ensured that pupils participating in gymnastic activities worked safely. The ASD pupils were encouraged to participate purposefully in the lesson and were quickly brought back on task when their attention wandered. Lower attaining pupils, who had problems with mobility, received very good one-to-one support from members of the support team when balancing on benches and the physiotherapy ball. The higher attaining pupils in this class were more independent; and showed increased mobility and better co-ordination when jumping from the small box and crawling through the tunnel.
114. Teachers make very effective use of music. For example, in a Year 6 dance lesson, the pupils mirrored the actions of the teacher playing follow-my-leader, making sea creature shapes using high, low and swirling movements. The higher attaining pupils showed real pride when asked to take over from the teacher and lead the class. Indian dance music was used successfully with a Year 9 group; this also reinforced the school's commitment to developing pupils' multicultural awareness. The majority of pupils responded well to the musical stimuli. The non-ambulant PMLD pupils were helped to participate successfully in the lesson, by working co-actively with members of the support team to move in and out of the circle. All pupils enjoyed dressing in the Saris at the end of the lesson and performing individual dances. The teacher had planned effectively for an ASD pupil with challenging behaviour. Her teaching strategies made reference to using individual targets, clear signing and the use of the pupils' communication folder.
115. PMLD students in Years 10 to 14 follow an accredited course, which comprised elements of country-dancing. In one lesson, the teacher used the communication book to signify to one student that the lesson was dance; he responded with a smile. In the main part of the lesson observed, those pupils who were able, clapped with the teacher to the beat of the music. Others were helped by the support team to ring bells and wave ribbons and scarves as they danced. The teacher also used a 'Big Mack' to communicate successfully with one pupil.
116. The management of physical education is very good. The co-ordinator has been given real responsibility for developing the subject and has worked closely with staff to write modules of work. Development is ongoing and the curriculum is being carefully planned to ensure that it is suitable and well resourced for PMLD and ASD pupils. The co-ordinator's monitoring of teaching has identified areas for improvement and they are already being addressed. Digital photography is used effectively by teachers to record pupils' achievements, however, the school is aware that the use of ICT is an area that requires further development.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

117. Pupils' achievements are good in religious education in all Year groups. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the major religious faiths develop well. They experience various aspects of these religions through a curriculum focused predominantly on Christianity with very good opportunities for them to learn about other faiths such as Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. Younger and lower-attaining pupils become familiar with a variety of artefacts associated with different religions and a particular strength is the very effective use teachers make of a good stock of resources to enhance the children's interest and understanding. Pupils in Year 2, for example, after looking at a "Big Book" about the mosque and the practices of Islam, very much enjoyed the chance to see and touch a copy of the Qu'ran and a prayer mat and to dress up in Islamic clothes. Higher-attaining pupils in this and other primary classes are beginning to understand that different practices and objects have particular importance in the different faiths. Teachers link these very effectively with other aspects of the daily life of the cultures concerned, by including appropriate food, music and dance in lesson activities. Role-play is also used to good effect to develop pupils' understanding of the stories they hear.
118. In addition to raising pupils' awareness of other cultures in this way, the subject also makes a real contribution to pupils' moral development. The assessment record of one Year 4 pupil, for example, reports that when puppets were used to illustrate the meaning of the parable of The Good Samaritan, she was able to state very clearly what were good and bad actions.
119. Not enough lessons were seen to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. Teachers' plans for the pupils in Years 7 to 9 provide a greater challenge to pupils in the ideas presented in their religious education lessons. Themes, including helping others and third-world poverty, are brought in but it was not possible, however, to observe these during the inspection week or from pupils' written work. At the same time, the activities set out in the plans, such as tasting a bowl of "very plain rice" when thinking about poverty and "being very still" to give the children some idea of the meaning of meditation in the unit on Buddhism, are typical of the imaginative way in which more difficult ideas are presented. The curriculum and planning of the subject for pupils from Year 1 to Year 9 is excellent. It includes suggestions for lesson activities which are explicitly linked to the learning objectives and to the learning resources available and as such, it provides very helpful guidance to class teachers.
120. Religious education for Years 10 to 14 is included in their "Cultural Studies" work. It was not observed during the inspection week and the planning and assessment records seen lack sufficient detail for judgements to be made about the extent of pupils' learning in the subject. Teachers' plans do, however, include a set of very interesting topics in which the religious aspects of life, such as festivals, in other countries are included as are, again, some very relevant "hands-on" experiences for the students.
121. Achievement in religious education has risen since the last inspection from satisfactory to good. High-quality planning has had a major impact on the quality of teaching and the leadership of the subject is now good. Monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator is still an area for development but appropriate plans are already in hand to enable this to happen.