

INSPECTION REPORT

ROCKLANDS SCHOOL

Wissage Road

Lichfield

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124517

Headteacher: Mr A J Dooley

Reporting inspector: Alan Lemon
20165

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th July 2003

Inspection number: 249412

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wissage Road Lichfield Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS13 6SW
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Gwyneth Hodge
Date of previous inspection:	16 June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Registered inspector	Art Citizenship	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) the school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) 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?
13101	Michael Kell	Team inspector	Science Music	How well is the school led and managed?
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English as an additional language Mathematics History	
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Information and communication technology Modern foreign language	
22178	Kate Robertson	Team inspector	Design and technology Geography Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rocklands School is a community special school with day provision for up to 87 boys and girls in the age range of two to 19. There are 85 pupils on roll including four children under the age of five and eight students over the age of 16. There has been a significant decrease in the number of under-fives since the last inspection. Most children are now placed on the roll of the Gateway Nursery, which is inspected separately. There is an agreement whereby the cost of a teacher and nursery assistant for Gateway is funded by Rocklands. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs primarily for severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, although half also have autism and one has a hearing impairment. Almost all pupils are white; one is black and another is Chinese. No pupils have English as an additional language. Seventeen pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they first enter the school is very low because of the severity of their learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Rocklands School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school has significant strengths in meeting its pupils' special educational needs and promoting their personal development. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are excellent. However, there are weaknesses in the curriculum that have not been tackled fully since the last inspection because of unsatisfactory leadership and management. As a result, pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning, while containing much that is good, are only satisfactory, overall. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is meeting the special educational needs of pupils effectively, in particular, pupils' autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The provision made for children in their Nursery and Reception Years is good.
- The strategy for promoting pupils' competence in literacy, especially the way they are taught to communicate is very good.
- The school is expert in managing pupils' behaviour and very consistent in encouraging pupils' good behaviour.
- Pupils are given good targets towards which to progress and these are very well assessed from lesson to lesson.
- Pupils' personal development, especially their moral and social development, is promoted very well, which leads to excellent attitudes towards school.

What could be improved

- The effectiveness of leadership and management in setting a clear direction and the expectations to achieve high standards over all of the school's provision.
- The monitoring carried out by governors and all staff with leadership roles needs to be more robust in evaluating all of the work of the school.
- The lack of sufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum in Years 7 to 11.
- The lack of opportunities for appropriate work experience and wider options to gain accreditation for students in Years 12 and 13.
- The statutory requirements in relation to the provision for sex education for all pupils in Years 7 to 11.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made unsatisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in 1997. There is insufficient progress in making the roles of the leadership group, including the governors, more effective, especially in how they monitor the work of the school and initiate action to address weaknesses. As a result, the breadth, balance of the curriculum remain unsatisfactory and while most statutory requirements are now met, that relating to sex education is not. While the proportion of very good and better teaching has more than doubled, a number of subjects suffer persistent weaknesses because monitoring of teaching and learning in them is not rigorous. Provision in English, French and physical education has improved well as has the curriculum for children in their Nursery and Reception Years. However, improvement is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, art, history and geography. Good progress has been made in how individual education plans are used to guide teaching and in assessing what pupils have learnt, although the good information this provides on pupils' progress is not used to decide what is taught in a number of subjects. Learning resources have been improved, particularly in information and communication technology, the library and sensory room. Much has been done and continues to be done to improve the fabric of the building. Students over the age of 16 now have a reasonable area for themselves. There is good improvement in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development.

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

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

Overall, achievement is satisfactory and would be better were it not for the adverse effect of unsatisfactory progress in science, art, history and, in Years 7 to 9, in design and technology and geography. The analysis of results in relation to pupils' annual performance targets in 2003 indicates they have made satisfactory progress. Pupils make good progress in relation to their autism as a result of the staff's good expertise. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and hearing impairments are provided for well and make good progress. Children in their Nursery and Reception Years achieve well over their areas of learning and students, over the age of 16, often make good progress although their overall achievement is

only satisfactory because of their limited opportunities to gain accreditation and experience of the world of work. There is good progress throughout the school in English and all pupils and students achieve very well in communicating as a result of very effective teaching of signing, using symbols and, when appropriate, language skills. This is part of a very good literacy strategy out of which all make good progress in reading and writing. This benefits them in French and they make good progress in using and understanding the language. Pupils progress satisfactorily in recognising numerals, counting and performing calculations. They carry out simple measurements, name basic shapes and apply their number skills to using money to buy goods. Pupils make good progress in physical education by improving basic physical skills through gymnastic, dance and swimming as well as in playing games and participating competitively. Where pupils' progress is unsatisfactory it is mainly in subjects taught for part of the year and this approach is not planned or managed sufficiently to ensure the majority of pupils build systematically on what they learnt previously. It is also due to too little time being given to teaching science and the narrow scope in what is taught in art, design and technology, history and geography.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are very happy at school and eager to learn. They work hard and take a pride in their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils understand the high expectations for good behaviour and meet these in lessons and around the school. They are always helpful and treat each other with great respect.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils form very good relationships with each other and staff. They make significant gains in self-confidence and self-esteem and exercise much personal responsibility in caring for themselves and supporting the school.
Attendance	Good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory despite much being good or very good during the inspection. Shortcomings in the planning of what is taught and ineffective co-ordination in several subjects takes away from a more positive picture. In addition, while science teaching is satisfactory, the short time given to the subject and some lack of expertise reduces the quality of pupils' learning. The needs of pupils are met well, especially those with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils' needs are well understood and there is the expertise to treat them effectively. In particular, pupils' behaviour is very well managed. The best teaching throughout the school makes effective use of pupils' individual targets and their progress towards targets is assessed very closely. English is taught well largely because, in

general, the strategy for literacy is a very good one and, in particular, the provision for pupils to learn to communicate is very good. As a result, throughout the school pupils take large strides in learning to use signs and symbols to communicate directly and in writing. Mathematics is taught satisfactorily. The generally sound numeracy strategy ensures pupils learn to recognise numbers count and calculate although one group are taught number with excellent expertise. Teaching in personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in history because it lacks variety and challenge and is not planned well enough to be taught for only parts of the year and sustain the quality of learning. The teaching of design and technology and geography, in Years 7 to 9, is made unsatisfactory and unchallenging for pupils by too narrow a range of learning opportunities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The breadth and balance of learning opportunities are unsatisfactory because there is insufficient time given to teaching science and several subjects, taught only in parts of the year, are not planned and co-ordinated effectively. There are too few opportunities for students to gain accreditation and for work experience. The provision for sex education does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted very well and their spiritual and cultural development, satisfactorily. The school promotes a strong set of values that are very well reflected in its work, achieving excellent behaviour and very good relationships. There is not enough attention paid to pupils' awareness of living in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are looked after well in every respect and are well supported through very good assessment of their personal development. This ensures that many of their individual needs are well targeted.

The partnership with parents is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory. The direction of the school and the expectations for achieving high standards are not clear enough. The leadership roles of the headteacher and others in the leadership group are often ineffective in developing and improving the school's work. Those areas of work that are well led and managed result in provision of high quality.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are committed to the school meeting the needs of its pupils and they contribute to the school's positive ethos. Their scrutiny of the work of the school is not close enough to discover strengths and weakness. The governor's statutory responsibility for sex education is not being met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation is unsatisfactory. Self-review is not co-ordinated effectively or focused as closely as it needs to be on assessing the effectiveness of the school's work. As a result, some important aspects requiring improvement are overlooked.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily. Finances are planned effectively and additional grants used well to achieve the priorities set by the school. However, subject co-ordinators are not used effectively to plan developments and, consequently, areas of priority are being overlooked.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The progress their children are making in terms of self-reliance and sociability. The commitment they see demonstrated by teachers and support staff towards their children and their expertise in meeting their needs. The improvement taking place in their children's behaviour. The openness, concern and friendliness of the school towards parents. The improvements brought about by the headteacher to the fabric of the building and the resources for pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a little concern from a few parents that the work given to pupils to do at home is not sufficient. A few parents would like to see more information written on what progress their children have made.

Inspectors are of the view that parents have an acutely good view of the strengths of the school and how these are benefiting their children. Inspectors agree with parents that the good points they have identified are strengths. Inspectors believe that while much is done in collaboration between home and school to reinforce learning, higher attaining pupils would benefit from the demands of doing work independently at home. Inspectors found the information to parents on their children's progress to be very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Shortcomings in a number of the National Curriculum subjects give rise to pupils, overall, achieving only satisfactorily despite the more positive picture presented by the good progress they make in English, citizenship, French and physical education. Had it not been for the shortcomings mentioned, a better picture than satisfactory achievement might have been supported by the good progress made by different groups of pupils throughout the school, namely, pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties, who both achieve well in relation to their needs. In addition, the achievement of the few children in their Nursery or Reception Years is good because of well planned and taught activities, which are securely linked to the curriculum for the foundation stage.

2. Generally, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. While the proportion of very good and better teaching has more than doubled this is having only a partial effect on pupils' progress. While achievement, overall, is unchanged since the last inspection, the position is now better in relation to pupils overcoming the worst effects of their autism. It is also better for the children in their Nursery and Reception Years and achievement, overall, in English. The picture of achievement in mathematics is unchanged but, more crucially, so is that of science, which remains unsatisfactory. Progress in acquiring basic skills in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Other subjects have seen a drop in standards. Pupils' progress is now unsatisfactory overall in art and history. It is also unsatisfactory in design and technology and geography, in Years 7 to 9. The shortcomings in these subjects are explained by the lack of sufficient progress on developing the whole of the curriculum, which was a key issue for action identified in the last inspection report. Equally, the assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education, is not used effectively and this hinders the effective planning of what pupils are taught over time and therefore the progress they make.

3. Where pupils' progress is assessed sufficiently, the school uses its information to set annual performance targets for individual pupils. The target is based on a pupil's attainment as measured with a scale specially designed for use with those with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Like most special schools, targeting is relatively new. The school is refining the accuracy with which it is measuring pupils' attainments and has not yet generated information over enough years to gain a useful perspective on trends and whether the targets are sufficiently challenging. The information collected on each pupil's progress towards their target is professionally analysed and this results in data which shows what value was added to pupils' progress over a year. The most recent figures, while not giving a complete picture, indicate that, overall, pupils' make at least satisfactory progress.

4. The standards achieved across the school in literacy are good and this is because of the successful training undertaken by staff and a very good literacy strategy. Pupils make very good progress in communicating as a result of the high priority this has in the school. By accomplishing this priority, the school has effectively opened a world of knowledge and understanding previously unavailable to many pupils. Staff are very well trained in the use of sign language and the Picture Exchange Communication System, which enables the many pupils unable to speak, read and write to use a symbol or combinations of them, possibly including the printed word, to communicate. As communication is well led and managed, this ensures great consistency and effectiveness across the school in how it is promoted. Many parents have been drawn into signing and the use of symbols through workshops provided by

the school. Many support their children's communication at home and are deeply impressed with the progress their children make. Children in their Nursery and Reception Years and the youngest pupils make great strides in personal and social development using signs and symbols to greet each other and to make choices. They progress to understanding daily routines and go on to play a part organising these. Higher attaining pupils extend their spoken vocabulary and together with the language of signs and symbols this provides the basis to read and write; it also gives all pupils access to subjects. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils join in useful discussions that help inform and analyse much of their work. Overall, reading and writing are positively encouraged. Some pupils follow the storyline in books like Dahl's *'The Twits'* and while a few write independently, most reach a stage of arranging a combination of symbol and word cards to make short simple sentences, which they read. Where there is higher attainment in writing, this is not consistently encouraged with suitably challenging work in English and other subjects.

5. The standards achieved in numeracy are satisfactory, overall. The strategies used across the school for teaching number are not as well developed as those for literacy, although a major emphasis is on pupils, up to the end of Year 9, making progress on recognising numbers, counting and performing simple calculations. As a result, most pupils become fluent in rote counting and over time the limit to which they count increases, for example, from 20 to 100. Higher attaining pupils work more rapidly by counting in steps of two and all but the highest attaining pupils need help when adding on or taking away a number. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils will, on paper, add or subtract 32 and 21 but not deal with figures needing carry over or borrowing operations. By this stage pupils, and students over the age of 16, concentrate on the practical use of number. They know the value of the different coins and students deal with the exchange of money in shopping, for example, totalling what they are spending and paying over a sufficient amount of money while not being sure what change there might be. Pupils and students make sound progress in the other areas of mathematics such as in recognising shapes and using a range of measures.

6. Achievement in French is good as a result of the very effective strategies for pupils to learn to communicate together with the expertise and experience of well qualified teachers. Good progress in physical education begins with the youngest pupils responding to instructions and completing simple movements through an obstacle course or bouncing a ball while walking. By the end of Year 6, pupils move with speed, balance and direction in gymnastics and by using symbols, they find their way over an orienteering course. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have become confident in water, some learn to swim and go on to achieve awards for personal survival, life saving and distance swimming by the end of Year 11. Pupils and students make good progress in citizenship because the school is effective in promoting their personal development through very good provision, for example, in communication and for their moral and social development. Pupils progress well in taking charge of their self and in fulfilling responsibilities they are given to carry out in school. They increase their scope for independence and, through the excellent relationships they form, give considerate support to others and have a regard for their needs.

7. Where achievement is less than it should be, it is frequently in subjects that are planned to be taught for only part of the year. The salient features of these are that the planning of what is taught lacks sufficient detail. In addition, any assessment of pupils' progress that takes place is not used to guide and inform planning, resulting in the fragmentation of pupils' learning. The unsatisfactory progress made in science arises from having too little teaching time devoted to the subject; about half of what is typical in similar schools. Some science teaching is also unsatisfactory. However, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, because of good teaching and provision, make good progress in science by exploring materials and the sensory garden. They are aware of the sensations of hot and cold and recognise familiar sounds such as drinks being made. Otherwise, pupils

learn from a broad curriculum about different materials, organisms and forces. They do simple investigative work such as how electrical circuits operate, name parts of plants and the human body. Progress in art is unsatisfactory because activities largely lack the range of challenges to match the different attainments of pupils and the amount of work produced is very little. This is not the case for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and children under five who appropriately explore art materials and processes, which contributes well to them building essential basic skills. In history overall and in design and technology and geography in Years 7 to 9, as in art, there is too little work done and what is completed lacks variety and challenge. There is very little evidence of pupils working at an appropriate level with resistant materials, designing or evaluating products in design and technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their work are excellent and make a significant contribution to where they make good progress. Parents say that their children like school and are often upset if they are unable to attend. Observation and discussion with pupils confirms that they happily identify with the established routines, speak positively about their experiences and keenly participate in a range of lunchtime activities. Arrival at the school in the morning is a happy and exciting time for pupils. They greet friends and staff in a cheery manner and are clearly enthusiastic about the coming day. Some older pupils take personal responsibility for ensuring that younger pupils get to their classrooms safely. In the vast majority of lessons pupils are eager to learn, maintain concentration well and often become engrossed in what they are doing. They try very hard, show considerable pride in their achievements, feel comfortable and are clearly happy at the school.

9. Behaviour at the school is excellent, no unsatisfactory or oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection and it is an orderly environment which encourages learning and development. Pupils respect the behaviour code and respond very positively to the individual care and support they receive. There are isolated examples of pupils becoming frustrated with their own difficulties which can lead to moments of less good behaviour but these are soon corrected. Pupils interact in a polite manner with staff and visitors and show increasing levels of personal and social skill. They show very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and very good respect for the feelings and views of peers. There are numerous examples of pupils sharing equipment, taking turns amicably, and being helpful and supportive to each other. During the sports days pupils were all trying really hard and supporting their team mates sportingly. Similarly, on an outing to the riding stables pupils were genuinely delighted to share their own and others achievements. Around the school at breaks and lunchtimes behaviour is excellent. Pupils are confident and enter conversations or communicate with adults and peers in an uninhibited and genuinely interested manner. There have been no exclusions in the last year.

10. Relationships with staff and between pupils are very good and make a strong contribution towards pupils' good personal development. Pupils trust staff and have no inhibitions in turning to them with their problems or concerns. Pupils benefit from the consistent approach of staff, the ways in which they value pupils' achievements, and from the very good opportunities provided to take responsibility for aspects of day-to-day school life. Most pupils make significant gains in self-esteem and self-confidence as they mature and start to take more direct responsibility for their own learning and development.

11. Attendance at the school is good and unauthorised absence is very low. The disruption to learning through absence is effectively minimised by the school monitoring

individual attendance closely. Punctuality to school is traffic dependent but is reported to be generally good and was good during the inspection. Punctuality during the day is good with the majority of lessons starting on time and pupils being quickly involved in their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. A great deal of the teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good or very good and only a small proportion was less than satisfactory. This is a good improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. However, overall, the quality of teaching and learning is reduced to a satisfactory level only as a result of several subjects not being co-ordinated effectively. In particular, shortcomings in the planning of what pupils are taught and the absence of a rigorous assessment in these subjects takes away from what is otherwise a positive picture of teaching and learning. This is a consequence of the school not making sufficient progress on addressing weaknesses in curriculum and assessment identified through the last inspection. It makes it very difficult for the school's preferred approach of teaching to succeed where a number of subjects are taught in blocks of time of a half term or one term's length. This requires these subjects to be tightly co-ordinated and planned in detail to ensure pupils continue to learn and make progress, which is often not the case. In science too little time for teaching contributes to a narrow curriculum which restricts what pupils learn and ultimately the progress they make. Teaching and learning in history is made unsatisfactory because co-ordination and planning are ineffective. The unsatisfactory aspects of teaching religious education are linked to similar weaknesses in planning.

13. While the picture of teaching and learning is a mixed one, there is much strength to celebrate and this is spread widely between subjects, teachers and their classroom assistants. Many teachers and classroom assistants have a clear understanding of the needs of pupil and combine this effectively with good knowledge of what they are teaching. As a result, pupils' severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and their other special educational needs, particularly autism, are addressed well. Parents recognise this strength and are rightly full of praise for the way the school meets their children's needs. Pupils' behaviour is managed very effectively and this is done consistently throughout the school. Teachers and classroom assistants know the types of strategies that work for each pupil and apply these very well. As a result, pupils make good efforts and concentrate well on the business of the lesson.

14. Pupils' literacy is promoted very well. The teaching of communication is very good and the provision for this is led and managed very effectively to the extent of achieving a high level of consistency among teachers and their assistants in finding many opportunities to promote communication, using words, sign language and symbols. In the best teaching very good signing is used. In a successful literacy lesson for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 the teacher read a story very expressively, reinforcing her words with signs and, consequently, getting very good responses back from pupils who went on in a highly motivated way to improve their writing.

15. Very good expertise has been developed in the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System and signing and this has been shared effectively among all staff through training. Underpinning excellent teaching and learning in an information and communication technology lesson for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 was the very good use of a communications book containing the symbols pupils need to set out a 'sentence' by linking a series of symbols to say, for example, *"I want the toy"*. Pupils, even though they may have been only recently admitted, are quick to learn the meaning of symbols and how to put these together to make sense. This is a significant feature in a great many of the good lessons observed. More generally, in relation to teaching information and communication technology,

the difficulties experienced with using equipment and some lack of expertise with the subject means many pupils are not as challenged as they could be.

16. In the best lessons, teachers plan well using their knowledge of pupils, combined sometimes with a good knowledge of the subject. In these lessons, more often than not, effective planning arises from the good use made of the learning targets set for each pupil in their individual education plan. These often take the place of the learning objectives specific to subjects and even compensate for the absence of clear learning objectives in some lessons. The good teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 in citizenship owes success to the close and skilled adherence to pupils' learning communication skills. The close attention to pupils' individual targets is greatly complemented by the very effective assessments taking place as lessons proceed. Often, a good strategy is in place whereby the teacher and classroom assistants share continuous recording of each pupil's performance against their targets. This ensures the staff focus closely on what pupils are learning and it often determines positively the support and types of resources brought into play in the course of teaching. An example of very good teaching happened with a student struggling to combine words, colours and symbols into a short sentence. The teacher was immediately alert to his difficulty and persevered through the student's many attempts at re-reading and making adjustments until he achieved the correct sentence order. Many lessons end with time well spent on rounding off with a discussion of what pupils have learnt and them often making a self-evaluation of their progress. This works well as a check for teachers on progress and provides the opportunity for pupils' to be praised and gain a sense of achievement from their efforts.

17. While the promotion of pupils' numeracy is satisfactory, overall, one teacher, with a background in mainstream teaching, showed an excellent grasp of the National Numeracy Strategy, an expertise that was shared fully with the classroom assistant. Together they produced a brisk, enjoyable series of very challenging mathematical activities that closely matched each pupil's level of knowledge, skills and maturity. As a result, higher attaining pupils worked independently and consolidated addition and subtraction skills while others, with close support, move closer to an understanding of adding on and taking away.

18. Quite often the planning of what should be taught in relation to subjects lacks the expression of clear learning objectives. In some mathematics lessons this gave rise to unsatisfactory teaching and learning and in art to some unchallenging work. In one science lesson lower attaining pupils were given magnifying glasses to look at insects in the sensory garden. They found it too hard to find the insects or hold and focus the magnifying glass. In a history lesson, it led to a very limited approach to ways for pupils to learn and little support for them in learning to write.

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

19. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils is satisfactory, overall. They are good for children in their Nursery and Reception Years and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. What these children are taught is firmly based on and expertly adapted from the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This is providing them with a very good breadth and balance of learning opportunities as well as relevance to their special educational needs. Otherwise the breadth and balance of what pupils are taught are, overall, unsatisfactory because of the shortcomings in what is provided for pupils in Years 7 to 11. While all subjects of the National Curriculum are provided, many are timetabled to be taught for only part of the year. The planning of what is taught at different times is not set out in sufficient detail and the subjects affected, art, design and technology, history and geography, are not well enough co-ordinated to ensure pupils build on the knowledge, skills and

understanding they acquire from time to time in these subjects. The amount of time allocated to teach science is too short to ensure pupils have access to an appropriate breadth of opportunities. A number of key issues for action identified in the last inspection relating to the breadth and balance of the curriculum have not been remedied successfully.

20. Statutory requirements are not met in relation to sex education although there is a programme for what pupils should learn. However, this programme is only being taught by the co-ordinator for personal, social and health education to students in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11, who are entitled to sex education, are not taught this programme. While the provision for pupils' personal and social development is, in many respects, very broad and effective, the quality of this provision, overall, is undermined and made unsatisfactory by the absence of sex education.

21. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and students in Years 12 and 13 have the opportunity of obtaining accreditation through Transition Challenge and Towards Independence respectively, which are appropriate vocational courses used effectively to promote pupils' and students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills as well as their personal and social development. However, no further opportunities to obtain recognised qualifications are offered in school despite the fact higher attaining pupils and students could match the demands of certain other courses. Pupils joining science lessons at a neighbouring special school are working towards the Entry Level Certificate. Students attend local colleges where they are provided good courses in horticulture, agriculture and creative arts. While pupils and students have careers lessons, there is, at present, no sufficient opportunity for them to have work experience, which places a limit on their personal and social development and their capacity to make informed choices about their futures.

22. The provision for meeting pupils' special educational needs is good. The provision for all pupils with autism is based on the effective adaptation of recognised approaches in which all staff have been successfully trained. There is particularly good provision for developing communication using signing and Picture Communication Exchange System and for developing social skills through specially organised programmes, especially for those in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have a broad range of good and appropriate learning opportunities. While they are taught separately from other pupils, a few join with other classes for some subjects. The school would like greater integration for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties but are hindered by limitations in the size and layout of classrooms. The integration of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder was seen to be well planned and successful. Social inclusion for pupils is very good, and the sports days are an excellent example of successful integration. Pupils integrate with their peers in mainstream and other special schools. One child, attending a mainstream nursery for part of the time, benefits there from the good modelling of language and behaviour. Two other pupils are involved in drama lessons at a mainstream school and they are responding well to the higher expectations.

23. The school's provision for promoting pupils' competence in literacy is very good. The National Literacy Strategy for pupils of primary school age is well implemented. In Years 7 to 9, the literacy strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been developed effectively. Literacy strategies are being well adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Staff are encouraged to promote the development of communication, language and literacy across the curriculum, which leads to pupils being provided with many opportunities. For example, pupils use signing and symbols in most of their lessons. A strong visual link is made between signs, symbols and their related written vocabulary. Pupils are often involved in discussions and given opportunities to read aloud. While pupils and students make visual and written records of their work the opportunities to write, where this is appropriate, are not promoted enough. The promotion of pupils' competence in numeracy is satisfactory.

24. The school provides good opportunities to enrich the curriculum. A range of visits gives support to pupils' learning in different areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils have visited and seen the history of Tamworth and Stafford Castles, the science interest at the Birmingham Think Tank, a local church, Lichfield Cathedral, museums, the theatre and local farms. One group of pupils are taking part in the Lichfield Festival and are preparing to perform a dance at Garrick Theatre. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 take part in an annual residential visit to an outdoor activity centre. All of these experiences positively support learning and the personal and social development of pupils.

25. The school has good links with the community. Many of visits pupils go on are within the local area and police officers, paramedics, health workers and a local minister come to school to talk to pupils. In addition, a number of local organisations have been involved in fund raising for the school, providing resources which increase pupils' learning opportunities. For example, members of the ambulance service created the sensory garden, local businesses bought physical education equipment for the school and a local music group raised funds which were used to increase the range of recorded music.

26. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. However, pupils' development is better in some aspects than others. This is mainly because there are clear aims, supported by good planning, for pupils' social and moral development in lessons and all of school life. However, this is largely not the case for pupils' spiritual and cultural development, which is promoted satisfactorily.

27. Pupils are very often encouraged to take in pride in themselves and in their work. There are celebrations of success in classes and in weekly assemblies. Pupils have opportunities to understand each other's points of view and their feelings, whether happy and proud, or sad and fearful. Only rarely is the teaching sparkling enough to give pupils a sense of awe and wonder at the nature of things around them, whether in science, religious education, history or English, for instance. The collective worship that should take place in classes each day contributes very little to a sense of wonderment among the children. They gain little idea that there is more to life than the immediate and the obvious.

28. In their moral development, pupils develop very well because of the very well planned opportunities throughout the school. Classes have rules of behaviour and teachers are generally very good at following these consistently with pupils so that they know what is expected of them, and why. Pupils receive merits and awards for good behaviour and effort. They are told clearly when they are not behaving as they should do, and staff are good at explaining matters with pupils, often very frequently to make sure they remember. In classes there are separate lessons, often a 'circle time', when pupils sit together and the teacher leads a discussion about a particular issue. These are very good occasions for getting pupils to think about important personal matters, especially when they are combined with the targets that each pupil has for their own personal development. The periods for collective worship contribute very positively to this aspect, rather than to pupils' spiritual development.

29. These personal targets are often concerned with pupils' social development, and pupils develop very well in this area also. They are given many opportunities to work together in lessons, whether in mathematics and English, or in teams in physical education, or at the computers. They are encouraged to play together amicably in free time in lessons, and in the playground. At lunch, they eat together in groups, chatting and being friendly with each other and with the adults nearby. The sports days demonstrated the very good community spirit pervading the school, with pupils doing their best for their team, but applauding the others if they did not win themselves. Teachers create many opportunities for pupils to help and to take responsibility each day, including taking registers to the office, collecting milk, putting

chairs out and away, helping each other with eating and drinking, doing the weather board, changing the timetable, or the pictures of who is in school and who is absent.

30. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactorily encouraged. In lessons, pupils have learned about different countries such as France and Italy, especially the food of these countries, as well as some of the language spoken. They have looked at some art, and sing songs, from different countries. Teachers take pupils on trips to local places of interest where they learn about their own culture. These have recently included farms, the cathedral, parks and a castle, as well as a centre for industrial history and science. There are reading books with characters from ethnic minorities; some pupils have taken part in role play about American slaves in the nineteenth century; and other pupils have visited a mosque and a Chinese restaurant. However, the school does not make sufficiently planned efforts to increase pupils' awareness that they are living in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and support are effective, consistently applied and have a positive impact on pupils' achievement and personal development. All members of staff know pupils very well, have their best interests and well being in mind at all times. Pupils feel able to approach teachers, teaching assistants and specialists, freely with any concerns or worries. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues have improved since the last inspection. These are good and the school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. The support provided by external agencies makes a significant contribution to the good quality care available for all pupils and their families.

32. Health and safety procedures are good and all staff conscientiously ensure that pupils know and adhere to safe practice in lessons and around the school. Good systems are in place to ensure that identified hazards or safety concerns are quickly reported and eliminated. There are regular evacuation practices and records show that electrical and fire prevention equipment is frequently inspected. First aid certificates are up-to-date and there are clear, well followed procedures relating to administering medicines. Risk assessments relating to building use and activities are in place and regularly updated. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and there are good procedures to ensure parents are quickly informed.

33. The procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance are good. School effectively monitors attendance on an individual pupil basis and works closely with homes to minimise absence. No analysis of attendance for groups of pupils is undertaken, however. Flexible and sensitive strategies are used effectively to encourage pupils experiencing difficulties and pupils with medical conditions to attend as much as possible and to develop their interest in school and in their learning programmes.

34. Good procedures are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. There is a strong culture of rewarding good behaviour in the school and staff use praise, rewards and the public celebration of achievement consistently and effectively to encourage pupils. There are clear expectations of pupils' behaviour which are understood and respected by pupils. It is the consistency of approach and commitment of all staff to establishing very good levels of behaviour that ensures the school is a calm and orderly environment conducive to learning and development. A regular review of progress on behaviour targets effectively establishes challenging but achievable development goals for all pupils. Day-to-day observation and discussion amongst staff ensure that any pupils experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and short term, measurable improvement plans are agreed with parents.

35. Pupils' personal and social development targets are effectively reviewed and refined at termly meetings but it is the day-to-day monitoring of individuals and the consistent support and direction provided by staff that secures good progress. Pupils' social development and preparation for life after school is well supported through outings, through interaction with the local community, through mixing with mainstream children, by ensuring a range of interesting and relevant visitors and by giving pupils the opportunity to take responsibility for aspects of day to day school life. Initiatives to further enhance the opportunities for personal development by establishing a work experience programme for all pupils and by forming a school council are planned by the school.

36. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress are satisfactory. Ongoing recording of progress in lessons is very good, through the use of task sheets. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are generated from the planning of what is taught in each subject and are securely linked to pupils' main targets which have been identified and agreed in Annual Review meetings. The information recorded on task sheets, contributes to a half-term review of individual targets. Pupils' progress is recorded well and reported to parents in annual reports and in pupils' personal profiles. Pupils are given a level of attainment as a numerical value and their reports include a description of the level attained, and evidence of how it was achieved. The system is effective for all pupils including those with autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

37. Progress in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education, is continually measured against each pupil's targets and formally assessed during an assessment fortnight in May. In other subjects, assessment is less well developed, is informal and ongoing. However, though the gathering of accurate information is very good, it is often not used sufficiently to influence the planning of the curriculum. This is particularly true of the planning what is taught in those subjects timetabled for parts of the school year. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13 progress well towards gaining accreditation in vocational courses. However, there are pupils and students who are capable of achieving a higher level or wider range of accreditation but do not have the opportunity. A few pupils do achieve higher levels of accreditation by attending courses at other schools.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Parents' and carers' views are very positive and supportive. The relationship between the school and the vast majority of parents contributes favourably to pupils' learning and development. Responses to the questionnaire and comments made at the parents' meeting reveal a high degree of parental satisfaction with the progress their children make and confirming their children enjoy attending school.

39. The quality of information given to parents about the school and on their children's progress is very good. The school uses newsletters, telephone calls and home-school books to ensure an effective flow of information about school, events and the day-to-day efforts and successes of their children. Formal reviews of pupils' progress take place at well attended consultation evenings and at annual reviews. Annual reports have improved since the last inspection and now give very good summaries of what pupils have studied, what they know, understand and can do and what they need to do to improve. Parents also receive termly summaries showing the attainment levels reached. Regular contact is maintained with all homes and for any pupils experiencing difficulties there is very frequent contact.

40. The school has built a very good partnership with the majority of parents. The support and advice made available for parents by the school and its specialist staff are very well used and much appreciated. 'Parents as Partners' meetings are well attended and have started to include workshop sessions led by medical and communication specialists. School events

are extremely well supported and parents respond keenly to requests for help. Some parents act as volunteers with off site activities and in school they help in classrooms. The Parent, Teacher Association is an active group successfully raising significant sums for the school through a wide range of events. The school is constantly looking at ways to develop further the partnership and regularly consults and seeks views on aspects of the provision and organisation.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because there is not a firm enough direction and clear expectations being set by the headteacher and governors to remedy crucial shortcomings in the school's work and provide the impetus to move it forward sufficiently. Important key issues for action, identified in the previous inspection, have not been addressed adequately so the school is still faced with problems in the breadth, balance and relevance of its curriculum, the monitoring and evaluation of the learning opportunities provided by the curriculum and the contribution of the co-ordination of subjects to this. As a result, the statutory requirement to provide a programme of sex education, which was not met at the time of the last inspection, is still not being met. The provision for teaching science, which was unsatisfactory at that time, is still unsatisfactory. A number of subjects have features that are unsatisfactory because the planning of what is taught and the approach to teaching them has not been looked at with a sufficiently critical eye. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement are adversely affected.

42. Notwithstanding unsatisfactory leadership and management, there are instances where it is strong and has brought about significant improvements. The development of provision for teaching communication stands out because of the positive impact it is having on standards and the fact it is managed in a well structured manner that works. Parents have pointed this out and also the huge transformation to the fabric of the school, turning it into a more pleasant and better adapted building for the range of pupils. They are also aware that the school is effective in dealing with their children's autism. While progress on addressing all of the key issues from the last inspection is unsatisfactory, there has been good progress on developing pupils' individual education plans and the provision for children in their Nursery and Reception Years. The school has clearly articulated aims and it meets these well in much of its day-to-day work, particularly those relating to aspects of pupils' personal and social development.

43. Procedures for monitoring, evaluating and developing the school's work are unsatisfactory. Effective arrangements for performance management are in place and all teachers are observed by their performance managers. However, in the co-ordination of subjects there is not sufficient opportunity to observe and evaluate teaching and this means there is not a detailed overview of what is being taught or of the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, the best practice is not actively disseminated, for example, the excellent teaching of numeracy taking place when overall there is room for improvement in the teaching of numeracy. Equally, the shortcomings in subjects such as science, art, design and technology, history and geography are not detected and remedied.

44. When the leadership and management responsibilities delegated to staff are clearly defined they are carried out well; behaviour management, home/school liaison, the management of staff development and the communication group all fall into this category. The detail attached to other responsibilities is either much less explicit, so that staff have significantly less understanding of their role, or it is of such limited value that staff make little impact. The role of head of department suffers from both these inadequacies in management. There are four heads of department, who are all members of the senior

management team; each manages a group of classes that is equivalent to a key stage, but the school has never produced guidelines to show what this responsibility entails. This affects in particular the two heads of department for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 13 who have had to evolve their own understanding of their roles and responsibilities and they are not empowered to make significant decisions. For example, between them a clear understanding did not exist of the provision of sex education for their pupils. Subject co-ordinators constitute a leadership group that makes an insignificant impact on the school's work. They are responsible for ordering auditing and managing resources but have no meaningful role in leading their subject.

45. The school's system for self-evaluation – 'moderated self-review'- is unsatisfactory. It is not carried out in a sufficiently robust and systematic way enabling the school to know fully how well it is doing. Not all staff are consulted as part of evaluation and it is not properly moderated. Persons from outside of the school are not involved in helping by providing a moderating external influence that will help the school achieve objectivity. Consequently, it does not have all the information for planning and taking action to bring about necessary improvements. These shortcomings are evident in the school development plan. The format and content are satisfactory in identifying some areas for development but they fail to acknowledge the most important issues the school needs to address immediately and planning does not have any considered strategic dimension. Therefore, although staff are committed to improving the school's performance, at the present time it does not have a clear perception of all that needs to be done or how to do it.

46. The governing body carries out its work satisfactorily. A number of very enthusiastic and committed governors, especially parent governors, spend a great deal of time in school but these are relatively short and unplanned visits. Governors are not participating in regular, planned, and focused visits that are reported back formally to the governing body. Consequently they do not develop a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore they have to rely on the outcomes of the school's self-evaluation which is ineffective and means that governors have less scope to help shape the direction of the school. Governors are failing to fulfil their statutory duties. They have not ensured that the school has responded to the key issue from the previous inspection that sex education should be provided for all the older pupils. In addition, they have not yet produced their Accessibility Plan showing how the school intends to respond to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

47. The school's spending is administered well and there are effective and efficient arrangements for the day-to-day management of its finances. The efficiency and effectiveness of the school's overall arrangements were confirmed by the financial audit conducted in September 2001. Specific grants are used well for the purpose for which they are intended and new technology is used soundly by all staff in their day-to-day work. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily in its purchases and use of resources. Procedures for linking spending to the school's priorities are good. However, there are shortcomings in other areas of the school's work in linking spending to priorities. Once again, these relate to ineffective management and the underdeveloped role of subject co-ordinators. They are not expected to produce subject development plans that show how they would like the subject to evolve and nor are they given delegated budgets. Therefore, they are unable to plan subject spending over a period of time which would enable them to implement their ideas over the life of the subject development plan.

48. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of students and the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are a suitable number of teachers, although not all are qualified sufficiently for their areas of responsibility, for example, in developing investigative work in science and resistant materials in design and technology. Where the subject of their initial

qualification is taught the impact on pupils' learning is usually better. It is particularly strong in French, where the co-ordinator is fluent and good in information and communication technology and physical education. Pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties are well supported by specialist staff and there has been a good level of training, particularly for communication. Students are extremely well supported by good quality teaching assistants who contribute to the welfare and achievement of pupils. Therapists complement the specialist skills of full-time staff to successfully teach pupils in the discrete groups for pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

49. The school accommodation is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The building work has resulted in improved learning areas. The site manager and cleaning staff take great pride in their work and the school is clean and usually litter free. The addition of the new library enhances curriculum provision and is an improvement since the last inspection. Despite considerable expenditure on refurbishment there remain parts of the school that are poor. In particular, a temporary building for one of the senior classes: this accommodation has a steep ramp for access and because there is no covered walkway, pupils are exposed to any poor weather when moving between lessons. The food technology room is too small and can only accommodate half groups. There is only one cooker which means that some pupils have to wait for their turn. The art room is also used for horticulture and design and technology. This accommodation is cramped and any variation in teaching methods would require whole-scale movement of furniture in order to create the additional space. Science is taught in form rooms rather than a dedicated science laboratory.

50. Overall, the school has a satisfactory supply of resources for learning. The resources for information and communication technology are good and continue to improve. Co-ordinators have organised these carefully into subject boxes containing sufficient materials and equipment to meet teachers' general needs. The subject boxes are well organised and manageable. There is a wide range of materials to aid the development of pupils' communication such as a talking word processing program and symbols to encourage basic responses, Picture Exchange Communication symbols and books. Resources in art are unsatisfactory however, they consist of basic art materials only and the range is limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. In order that the school is unhindered in achieving effectiveness in all of its work, the headteacher, governors should ensure each of the following key issues are fully addressed and resolved.

- (1) Ensure that, in leadership and management, the headteacher gives a clear direction and sets high expectations regarding the need for high quality in all that is provided by the school towards educating its pupils.

See paragraphs 41 to 46

- (2) Monitor and evaluate all of what the school provides with sufficient robustness to ensure the strengths and weaknesses are made apparent and effective action is taken where required.

See paragraph 43

- (3) Resolve the persistent lack of breadth and balance in the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 by:
 - i. increasing the time for teaching science;
 - ii. improving the planning and co-ordination of those subjects taught in parts of the school year in order that pupils build systematically on what they have learnt and are challenged sufficiently by the work they are given to do;
 - iii. providing a programme of sex education, greater opportunities for relevant work experience, and further appropriate opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation;

See paragraphs 19 and 20

- (4) Extend the opportunities for relevant work experience and accreditation to students in Years 12 and 13.

See paragraph 21

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	20	31	19	3	1	0
Percentage	3	26	41	25	4	1	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	85
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	8.2	School data	0.1

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	81	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	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	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	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: N – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.4
Average class size	7.8

Education support staff: YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	616

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2002/2003
	£
Total income	1,113,170
Total expenditure	1,075,803
Expenditure per pupil	11,953
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,650
Balance carried forward to next year	22,183

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	85
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	86	14	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	18	7	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	36	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	25	17	8	13
The teaching is good.	85	7	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	71	18	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	31	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	36	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	82	11	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	85	12	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	28	8	8	8

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

52. The four children who are under the age of five and in their Nursery and Reception Years are taught mostly in a class alongside Year 1 pupils. One child, because he is autistic is placed in the class designated for the youngest autistic pupils. They all make at least good progress in the areas of learning for the Foundation Stage as a result of their classes being well organised. The teaching is good in all the areas of learning, which are made very relevant to each child's needs. The number of under-fives has decreased significantly since the last inspection because of an arrangement for these children to be placed on the roll of a neighbouring nursery and this arrangement is funded by the school.

Personal, Social and emotional development

53. Children make very good progress. This is because personal development is regarded as an extremely important area and staff focus on it continually throughout each day. Some children arrive with very limited social skills, being unable to concentrate for more than a brief moment, or to sit in a chair, or take turns. They progress very well, controlling themselves instead of demanding or having tantrums; they wait their turn, ask for things and are pleasant to the other children as well as to the adults around them. They help themselves by washing their hands, dressing and undressing and eating and drinking independently. They help each other around the class and give a hand with doing jobs each day.

Communication, language and literacy

54. Children make very good progress because communication is one of the main areas that the staff focus on, not only in individual lessons, but also throughout the day in all lessons. Children listen attentively to staff and make very good efforts to speak. They also use signing well to help make their meaning clearer. They recognise a few words in the books they are familiar with, especially when they have pictures to help them. When writing, children draw on top of large letters on the page and are beginning to copy words such as their own names.

Mathematical Development

55. Good progress is made in mathematical skills. Children recognise some numbers and count with the teacher, sometimes in songs and rhymes. They use jigsaws with five or more pieces and match tokens of the same colour, or the same size. They understand the difference between big and small; inside, underneath and on top.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

56. Through the good progress made in knowledge and understanding of the world, children realise that the day is divided into separate parts for different activities, whether at school or at home. They understand that some places are used for different purposes, such as for different lessons, for example, going somewhere else to swim, eat or play or used by different staff in school, or people in the community. Children use a computer with varying degrees of skill. The higher attaining children manipulate the mouse to draw shapes in an art program; they select the correct item on screen and drag items around the screen.

Physical Development

57. Because of good progress in their physical development, children are mobile; they run, balance along beams, climb and jump. They work in pairs and follow instructions, as long as they are very clear and are repeated from time to time. In the swimming pool, the higher attaining children are developing their water confidence well and move around without close supervision all the time. When using a pencil or crayon, the higher attaining children make marks in straight lines, or circles, although the lines sometimes go astray or are very irregular when made by the less able children.

Creative Development

58. In music, the higher attaining children sing along with the staff in songs such as *'The Music Man'* and play percussions instruments at the right moment in the songs. They choose colours purposefully in painting, and use a brush to make areas of colour on the paper. When making patterns with coloured bubbles, pupils are keen and creative.

59. Overall, teaching and learning are good in each of the areas of learning. Teachers have very positive relationships with children and lessons are run in a pleasant, friendly and enthusiastic manner. The children's behaviour is managed very well. Teachers speak very clearly, using symbols and signing and this is effective in getting them to understand. They are given lots of encouragement and time to communicate which helps them to learn to use signing and symbols. The planning is mainly very clear, with a good focus on exactly what children are expected to learn. The activities are generally well organised to ensure that children are engaged in worthwhile learning tasks. However, there are sometimes too many activities happening at the same time and children are distracted by this from what they are expected to be concentrating on. Or, if the teacher is engaged with one group of children, one or two others may wander for a long time doing nothing in particular. The support assistants are used very effectively as part of the team, whether with individual children or with a group. Staff use praise well to encourage children, and they ask questions very well to get them thinking. Computers are often used effectively to help meet children's needs in lessons, although there are occasions when more could be made of computer resources, for example, getting children with limited spoken language more actively involved in the morning greeting sessions by encouraging them to press a single-touch switch to activate a recorded voice.

60. The classes containing the few children under the age of five are organised and managed well. Teachers have good expertise and hold a clear view of the children's standards through an on-going system of recording significant things that they do. Staff use this information very well in deciding what to teach in the next lessons and in planning what is taught over a longer term. The overall plan for what is taught is broad, very well balanced and relevant to the learning needs of the children, especially as it is linked so well to their individual targets. New thinking is advanced on developing the use of an adjacent room and making a better outdoor area than the one that is being used. However, final decisions will depend on the numbers of children being admitted in the future. Leadership and management are good and this had resulted in a good improvement since the last inspection, when the planning for what was taught, learning resources and the use of computer equipment were all shortcomings.

ENGLISH

61. The provision for English and the quality of teaching and learning have all improved well since the last inspection. Overall, pupils' achievements in English throughout the school are good.

62. Pupils' achievements in communication including in speaking and listening are very good, developing very well throughout their time at the school. Pupils in Year 2 use signs, symbols and verbal communication to respond to greetings or to questions. They make choices, both in lessons and in social situations. Higher attaining pupils develop their vocabulary, learning new words in different subjects or in general conversation. They carry out simple instructions, for example, in relation to activities in the classroom, or undertake tasks such as taking the class register to the office. By the end of Year 6, pupils have continued to develop these skills. Some non-verbal pupils continue using symbols as the means to communicate their thoughts. Some begin to respond to simple instructions in familiar situations, while higher attaining pupils dictate sentences to adults to describe photographs or pictures and answer questions. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, across a wide age range, learn to communicate by touch and gesture. By the end of Year 9, pupils make use of their skills in a variety of contexts, for example, they discuss writing poetry or share information about different subjects in the curriculum. They further develop their vocabulary, for example, by thinking about descriptions. Lower attaining pupils identify sounds on tape and use signs to explain these. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils answer questions about the stories read to them, while others continue to make choices or respond to questions by the use of signs and symbols. Students in Years 12 and 13 use words and symbols to indicate their needs and choices and, by combining words and symbols, construct short sentences. Others students are confident in speaking in a variety of situations.

63. Many pupils, because of their autism, are very limited in their communication. They make very good progress in learning the skills of speaking and listening. They are provided with a range of ways of supporting their communication mainly using sign language and pictorial symbols. These strategies are also used with many other pupils who have limited speech and the consistency with which they are used enables pupils to make very good progress. The development of communication skills has been very well developed by the school's communication team, including teachers, support assistants and speech and language therapists. The provision for communication is strong in the school. Pupils also have many opportunities to participate in drama sessions, both in timetabled drama and in role-play which is often well used to assist learning.

64. Pupils' achievements in reading are good. By the end of Year 2, many are interested in books, knowing where to start reading and when to turn pages. Higher attaining pupils have the pre-reading skills of looking at picture books, listening to and enjoying stories. They read common, frequently used words such as their own names. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils read simple texts and follow the words in the stories being read. Lower attaining pupils recognise notices and signs around the school such as their symbol timetables. By the end of Year 9, pupils share texts in class and understand what is being read. Lower attaining pupils follow stories on the computer screen and operate the mouse to turn pages at the correct point. Some pupils identify initial sounds and letters, while a few higher attaining pupils read unknown words by breaking these down into constituent sounds as well as getting clues from pictures. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils read Dahl's *'The Twits'*, while others achieve functional reading skills, but have difficulty in understanding entirely what they read. Lower attaining students in Years 12 and 13 use picture clues to help them read and some readily recognise a number of useful words. Higher attaining students recognise many more words and use picture clues and letter sounds effectively.

65. Achievement in writing and of handwriting is good. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand that marks have a meaning and develop the control to write by, for example, colouring pictures. Some pupils learn to form letters while higher attaining pupils write simple

words. By the end of Year 6, pupils whose main communication is through symbols, put together short sentences by correctly sequencing three or four symbols. Others, who are lower attaining, learn letter formation and track patterns across the page, whereas higher attaining pupils progress from copying by tracing over words to independently writing them and, in some cases, short sentences. By the end of Year 9, some pupils write simple sentences using symbols or with a symbol program on the computer. Others form letters, write by copying and some progress to independently writing individual words and sentences, for example, writing their own poetry. Pupils also write personal information for their personal profiles and several have good handwriting. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils write in a variety of forms, for example, news stories and in their diaries. Handwriting is better controlled and some pupils use punctuation. Lower attaining pupils write by copying text although letter formation and spacing is better controlled. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve well in the context of functional literacy. The gap is wide between the highest and lowest attaining students. Some use symbols for recording and for word processing, while others are writing their names using neat and legible script.

66. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are well planned, clearly linking what is taught to the individual needs of pupils, which enables them to progress well towards their literacy targets. The use made of individual targets has improved considerably since the last inspection. In particular, teachers' very good knowledge of pupils leads to the setting of appropriately challenging targets. Signing is very well used by adults to support communication and understanding. Expectations of both learning and behaviour are high and adults follow planned strategies for dealing with more challenging behaviours, making sure that pupils are able to learn. For example, when one pupil was overwhelmed by the activities in a drama lesson, the classroom assistant took him to one side and worked with him effectively until he was able to return to the group situation. Teachers establish good routines with pupils such as turn taking. All pupils are encouraged to participate in lessons and the very good relationships which exist between pupils and adults give them the confidence to attempt work which they find difficult. Lessons are well rounded off by discussion of what has been covered in the lesson, providing a good way of consolidating pupils' knowledge and finding out what they have learnt. Where teaching is less successful, the planning of lessons does not focus on the needs of different pupils and some lessons are too long for pupils to sustain their attention.

67. The co-ordination of English and literacy is good. The strategy for promoting pupils' skills in literacy is very good and based on an effective interpretation of the National Literacy Strategy and the literacy strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. While the monitoring and evaluation of English and literacy are sound they are not extensive enough to detect that a few teachers do not develop the plans sufficiently to recognise the different learning experiences needed by their pupils. Resources for English are good, having been well developed since the last inspection. In addition to increasing the stock of big books and readers, a lot of thought has been put into setting up a good library and into acquiring a range of interesting and age appropriate books for pupils. The organisation of book bags which contain books and supporting materials is very useful for supporting learning.

MATHEMATICS

68. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in mathematics throughout the school. They progress to work out problems in their heads, on paper or with objects and symbols. For most pupils, up to the end of Year 9, the emphasis is on learning to recognise numbers, counting, adding, and taking away. For pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13, there is more appropriate stress on practical situations in which mathematics can be applied. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make sound progress in acquiring very basic mathematics skills such as reaching to objects, realising that objects continue to exist when

they are out of sight, and understanding that objects have characteristics like being big or small or rough and smooth.

69. By the end of Year 2, the highest attaining pupils recognise numbers to 20 and calculate to the extent of adding on in ones or taking one away. They know about size, for example, choosing between big and little items. They know that some shapes have different names, such as a square or a circle. Often, however, these pupils need a lot of help and several attempts before they get things right. Lower attaining pupils need much more help and by staff working hard they increase their skills and understanding. By the end of Year 6, progress has continued satisfactorily and higher attaining pupils count coins and know that they have some value; they are more certain of their counting to 20 and count in steps of two. Pupils sort and match objects of the same colour or size. They say who are the tallest or shortest persons in the class, but have difficulty with ideas such as 'full' and 'empty'. They understand the difference between 'big' and 'small', and know that time is divided into parts of the day, which they know by the different activities they do.

70. By the end of Year 9, most pupils count quite hesitantly, but higher attaining pupils count up to 100 with a little help. Some pupils add up figures in their head using numbers below 20 but they are not confident that they have the correct result. Coins are sorted into groups of the same value, but pupils do not know, for instance, that two ten-pence coins are worth the same as a twenty pence coin. Pupils know the names of more shapes such as triangle and rectangle but find it difficult to describe their principal properties, such as how many sides it has. Lower attaining pupils struggle with their basic counting and the days of the week. By the end of Year 11, pupils' satisfactory progress sees the highest attaining pupils adding on paper numbers with two digits, such as 21 and 32, but not with a number that involves them carrying over from units into the tens. Similarly, they subtract one small number from another, but only if they do not have to borrow from the tens. They recognise several two and three-dimensional shapes, such as a pyramid, a cone and a cube, and higher attaining pupils count the number of angles and edges, with a little help. They name all of the coins to £1, but are easily confused when working out what they are worth.

71. By the time students are ready to leave school at the end of Year 13, they have made particular progress in the practical mathematics skills that they will need in the future. These are especially focused on shopping and using money, although even the highest attaining students only know, for instance, that they will get more change from a £5 note than from a £1 coin, not exactly how much. With help, they weigh ingredients for their cooking; they find the times of their favourite television programmes; and they count the number of items on a page, such as in a catalogue.

72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, but they vary in quality from poor to excellent. Strengths in the better teaching include planning that is set out in clear terms of what teachers want the pupils to learn and these are clearly different for those who are higher and lower attaining. Support assistants are given a clear job to do with individuals or with a small group of pupils. Teachers use a good variety of equipment and different methods to get pupils interested and motivate their learning. They keep up a very good pace, are lively and enthusiastic and they watch their pupils closely to make sure that they understand what they are being told or shown. If they realise that pupils do not understand the point, they go back and do things again in a different way or with a clearer explanation. The lessons are well-structured to provide closely inter-related and varied activities. This reflects a good understanding and use of the National Numeracy Strategy in the best teaching. Lessons have lively introductions that grab pupils' attention and their interest, followed by small group and individual work that is challenging and very well supported by support staff as well as the teacher. Lessons end with a good review and reminder of what has been learned, with praise for having worked well and achieved so much.

73. Where teaching and learning are less than satisfactory, it often comes from planning that is very unclear, not being aimed at the right level for the pupils' learning needs and, in practice, is a series of activities not explicitly linked to what pupils should learn by engaging in them. In one lesson, pupils were learning about 'full' and 'empty' and while the teacher worked with one group with this focus, the other group drew over large numerals, which was not related to the main objective of 'capacity'. As a result, that group lost an opportunity to learn. In another lesson, the activities changed from those planned; pupils instead coloured symbols for each of the days of the week, rather than learning how each day's timetable is structured. The colouring activity had very little purpose and contained no appropriate mathematical challenge. As a result, pupils became bored very quickly and the pace of their work slowed down. By contrast, some teaching sets expectations that are too high. It may assume, for instance, that because something has been demonstrated, such as filling a container full, that pupils understand what 'full' means. In fact, many pupils were guessing whether the container was full or not and showed their uncertainty by changing their minds frequently.

74. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection. There is a programme of what should be taught at various stages throughout the school but no-one checks to see how relevant it is to the current needs of pupils, or how well the plans develop from one part of the school to the next, such as from the primary to the secondary classes. The co-ordinator does not see other teachers teach and so is not able to see at first hand the strengths that could be promulgated or the weaknesses requiring action. While senior managers observe teaching, this is ineffective in identifying the good and poor teaching. While there is satisfactory assessment through using specially designed measures for pupils with severe learning difficulties, teachers are not assured by this that pupils are progressing as well as they should. The co-ordinator is not standing on firm ground in relation to what standards are like through the school in relation to pupils' progress, the planning of what is taught or the actual teaching. The processes of planning to develop the subject other than developing learning resources are unsatisfactory. Pupils follow nationally recognised vocational courses from Year 10 to Year 13, which involve them applying their mathematical skills. However, the opportunity for pupils and students to gain accreditation reflecting the range of their attainment is too limited.

SCIENCE

75. All of the shortcomings in science provision identified by the previous inspection are still manifest. There is still insufficient time devoted to the teaching of science, at times the quality of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory and the co-ordination of the subject is still underdeveloped and ineffective. Consequently, although pupils may learn satisfactorily in lessons, their achievement, overall, is unsatisfactory. This is a result of the fact that pupils throughout the school are not allocated sufficient time to enable them to develop knowledge, understanding and skills and to consolidate what they have learnt previously.

76. The youngest pupils follow a curriculum that is sufficiently broad but the time constraint means that it lacks depth. However, by the end of Year 2 the highest attaining pupils describe different materials using language such as 'hard' and 'crunchy' and they know that materials can change, such as when mixing ingredients to make Easter biscuits. They use push/pull levers and switches to make things work, such as toys, and know the names of external parts of the body. Higher attaining pupils, at the end of Year 6, group materials according to simple criteria like 'rough' or 'smooth' and identify some everyday objects made from a particular material such as wood. They carry out simple investigative work, like making an electric circuit and match text to diagrams to show they know the names of different parts of the body. Pupils profound and multiple learning difficulties make good

progress, particularly in using their senses to explore their surroundings. They do this through activities like showing responses to different plants in the sensory garden, demonstrate awareness of the differences between 'extremes' such as ice and warm water, and recognise and respond to sounds such as a drink being made out of sight in the kitchen.

77. In Years 7 to 11 the detrimental effects of too little teaching time is particularly evident. Pupils begin to acquire new skills as they carry out some interesting investigative work but they are not given sufficient time to effectively reinforce and extend previously learned work. By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils name the main parts of a flowering plant and know that magnetic fields can be shown using a bar magnet and iron filings. They have investigated the distances travelled by different cars as they travel down a ramp and know that the inks in felt tip pens are made by combining inks of a number of different colours. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13 study practical applications of scientific knowledge as part of the modules of study for their vocational courses. The highest attaining pupils at the end of Year 11 know the differences between themselves and others by measuring and recording height and weight, hair and eye colour, and measurements of clothes like shoe size. They display this information as simple block graphs. Students complete a horticulture module at the end of which they know how to use garden tools safely and how to look after growing seeds and plants.

78. Teaching is satisfactory overall although it ranges in quality from very good to unsatisfactory. The little time given to teaching science has often a significant bearing on reducing the quality of pupils' learning. To some extent this is offset in the best lessons where teachers have sufficient subject knowledge to provide pupils with activities that challenge them, particularly the higher attaining pupils. High expectations and very good pupil management mean that pupils are able to develop an early understanding of a range of scientific ideas through a variety of appropriate activities. On these occasions other basic skills are also promoted well, such as in a lesson when a group of pupils counted out pipe cleaners to use as legs on model ladybirds they were making. Pupils also used new technology well. A microscope attached to the computer, for example, enabled them to examine living ladybirds projected onto the monitor. Lessons where the teaching is unsatisfactory, and those that have significant unsatisfactory features, are characterised by activities and resources that are not appropriate to the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties. Therefore, they do not make any gains in understanding and knowledge. At other times, higher attaining pupils fail to make sufficient progress in developing a scientific approach to problem solving. This is because teachers do not have the necessary subject knowledge that enables them to plan investigations in a systematic way.

79. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The co-ordination of science is too limited in leading development and ensuring high standards. The opportunities to observe science being taught are too restricted. Teachers' planning is not analysed sufficiently and, consequently, pupils are not assured of a curriculum that is sufficiently broad and progressively challenging. There are some missed opportunities in the use of local facilities for activities such as pond dipping and comparing different habitats. However, other opportunities to enrich pupils' learning are used well. Visits to Broomey Croft Farm and the donkey sanctuary provide opportunities for younger pupils to handle animals while students learn about looking after animals and health and safety issues associated with working on the land when they visit Rodbaston College. Year 10 and 11 pupils reinforced their understanding of how materials can be changed through a visit to the Black Country Museum when they watched a blacksmith working with molten metal and a confectioner making sweets in the traditional way.

ART AND DESIGN

80. It was only possible to observe two lessons in art and no judgment could be made on the quality of teaching and learning. Also, there is very little evidence of pupils' undertaking sufficient work and, as a result, the progress of the majority is unsatisfactory. However, children under the age of five, pupils in Year 1, the group with profound and multiple learning difficulties and students taking art courses at college all make good progress.

81. Recent work carried out by pupils compares unfavourably in terms of standards with examples of work done by pupils with similar needs two or three years ago when they were using a wider range of techniques and creating well designed collages and drawing from observation. The amount of pupils' art available or on display in classrooms and around the school is very minimal. This work does not build systematically upon what pupils have learnt, and what teachers' report of their progress is uninformative. Pupils' work is very narrow in scope and largely involves them experimenting with materials, mainly in too unstructured a way. This is appropriate for some, particularly the youngest pupils but it is not challenging older and higher attaining pupils. However, the work of students attending art courses at Burton on Trent College is a contrast. They have explored, among other things, how varying colour tone creates the illusion of space in landscape paintings.

82. The group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties gain good benefits from experiencing and exploring art materials and processes, for example, seeing colours, feeling paints and spreading it with their fingers. This brings them enjoyment, awareness and an involvement with objects and materials that improves their skills of perception and manipulation. Their art activities are chosen well to meet their needs, for example, being given sponges saturated with paint to press down over a stencil to make a print. Children under the age of five, together with pupils in Year 1, have good opportunities for creative development. In a well planned lesson, this group learned to blow bubbles using coloured liquids. This stretched their physical skills well, particularly one pupil who found blowing bubbles very difficult. Children and pupils observed the behaviour of the bubbles and were fascinated by the splashes of colour created as they settled and burst on a sheet of paper. The highest attaining pupils learned to control where bubbles fell and began building a colour effect on his paper. This was visually exciting and it promoted much conversation that involved pupils learning the names of new colours and some seeing that the imprint made by a bubble was a circle. At another time, these children and pupils explored colour and line using a computer paint program, choosing colours and experimenting with different qualities of line. A lesson for another group of primary age pupils was not planned effectively. What pupils were meant to learn was not sufficiently clear in them discussing and making a habitat for a pet. The activity was badly organised and unchallenging and this led to some poor behaviour.

83. The leadership and management of art are unsatisfactory. There is too little effective control on the quality of provision and the standards achieved. What is expected by the school in relation to co-ordination is not explicitly clear and, in effect, teachers are left largely to their own devices. Despite the fact that work has been done on harmonising each teacher's plans for what pupils are taught, the overall provision is still fragmented. This makes the approach of teaching art to some groups of pupils in short blocks of time through the school year ineffective, often creating for them an incoherent learning experience. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement in planning what is taught since then and there has been a drop in the standards achieved by some groups of pupils.

CITIZENSHIP

84. Overall, all pupils achieve well. They are achieving very well in terms of self-awareness and in valuing themselves and others. These personal qualities are comprehensively and very effectively promoted throughout the school in the very good provision for pupils' moral and social development and in the pervasive excellent relationships. Many strands of pupils' personal development are well attended to in the course of every day and these are clearly targeted in pupils' individual education plans.

85. From the outset, the very youngest form positive attachments to adults and other children in their class. They benefit from responding well to the high expectations of taking charge of themselves and, as they grow, they eat, go to the toilet and dress with increasing independence. From an early stage, pupils begin taking on small responsibilities in their classrooms and are encouraged to help each other. By the time they reach the point of being senior pupils and students they manage challenging responsibilities such as supporting younger pupils in learning the use of symbols to communicate. By the end of Year 11 and on into Years 13 and 14, personal development is very good; pupils and students develop as mature individuals. They understand their part in learning and continuing their education with the result that they confidently take responsibility for their work and are accepting of the support and guidance given to them by the adults leading them. Their Transition Challenge and Towards Independence courses and college courses are effectively geared for, and develop pupils' and students' initiative, self-esteem and involvement with the community. However, there are significant gaps in the opportunities for learning in relation to sex and relationship education and in how well pupils and students are taught to understand and appreciate differences in people, especially racial differences.

86. It was possible only to observe two discrete lessons in citizenship for mixed groups made up of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. These pupils are taught well and made good progress in lessons dealing with aspects of law and order. The teacher confidently communicated with autistic pupils and managed their behaviour effectively. Pupils learned who the key figures are in a court by playing a court-room scene in the classroom and acting in the roles of defendant, lawyers, witnesses, jury and judge. The whole activity was well-planned; at the start pupils learned the key vocabulary by being shown words and symbols and were taught to understand, for example, the place of the defendant, policeman and lawyer in a trial. Literacy was well promoted with an exercise in sentence writing using word and symbols cards. While good pictorial information was lacking there was good use made of objects such as a jewellery box to explain theft, its wrongness and the need of a trial and decisions on punishment in those circumstances. This helped greatly to set a clear context for pupils. The activities were nicely varied and this helped pupils sustain their interest for the entire lesson. The lessons were rounded off well with a review of what pupils had learnt and they confidently paired their word card with the same one on the court-room plan.

87. While the leadership and management of pupils' personal development is good, the co-ordination of what is taught in personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. Although this includes citizenship there is insufficient evidence to judge how effectively citizenship, overall, is led and managed. The planning for what is taught is a loose compilation of several teachers' plans. They are not well harmonised as a whole scheme and they do not ensure pupils learn steadily, building on their knowledge, skills and understanding, over their years in school. In particular the school's sex education programme is taught only by the co-ordinator to students over the age of 16 and not as statutorily required to pupils in Years 7 to 11.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Only a limited amount of teaching was seen and this involved a group of pupils in Years 4, 5, 6 and the group of students over the age of 16. Together, these lessons, the analysis of pupils' work and records, discussions with staff and the scrutiny of the plans of what is taught show that progress is satisfactory overall. The improvement in design and technology since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The planning of what is taught is better, particularly for pupils in Years 1 to 6. For pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, however the range of activities planned is limited, for instance there is very little evidence of work with resistant materials and learning in design and evaluation remains poor. As a result, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make unsatisfactory progress and achieve less than others. For pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13, planning is drawn from the programmes of their vocational courses. Although their progress is satisfactory, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have limited experience in learning about resistant materials. However, their opportunities for learning in food technology are a stronger element and contribute very well to pupils' and students' personal and social development.

89. By the end of Year 2, pupils use modelling materials to make insects as part of a range of focussed practical tasks, such as assembling train tracks and making a home for a pet. They play with construction toys and make models of fruit and vegetables using clay. Pupils with autism make collage pictures pressing down materials such as crumpled tissue paper and pasta onto a glued surface. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are given 'hand-on-hand' support in these activities.

90. By the end of Year 6 pupils work together to construct model buildings from junk materials as part of a topic on settlements, broadening their understanding of the kinds of buildings and transport commonly found in cities. Whilst studying rivers, pupils research and discuss boats, they draw their ideas on simple design sheets and consider the properties of the materials they will use. Pupils make their boats using materials such as card and plastic bottles, decorating them with brightly coloured paint and glitter. Pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are supported in their tasks by both staff and pupils. For instance, one pupil showed an autistic pupil what he had to do as the next step in decorating his boat.

91. By the end of Year 9, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties explore, with help, the sensory properties of modelling dough and Plasticine. They use basic tools with hand-on-hand prompts when working with clay and use glittering shapes and decorations when making Christmas ornaments. As part of food technology, they learn about dairies and investigate the origins of dairy food such as cream and cheese. They list dairy products, recording their work in pictures and captions, some pupils using symbols. In practical sessions, pupils make butter and cheese and discuss packaging. There is very little evidence of design and evaluation and this area remains a weakness. The approach to teaching design and technology for the groups of Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils, by providing it in only parts of the year, means the opportunities for reinforcing and developing knowledge and skills are ineffective. This is as a result of the planning for what is taught to these groups, and the co-ordination of the blocks of time when teaching takes place, being not sufficiently robust.

92. By the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress in the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Transition Challenge course. As much as possible, pupils are led through the 'plan,' do' and 'review' cycle of working and their recording follows this good structure. They have had some experience of using tools and working with resistant materials, but this is a weaker element in what they are taught and there are few opportunities for pupils to practice and build on their skills. Very little use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' designs.

93. Students over the age of 16, in part fulfilment of their 'Towards Independence' course follow a recipe, prepare and cook Chicken Chasseur. This is part of a topic on cookery from different parts of the world and they know that it is a French dish. They discuss the ingredients they are using, carefully mixing and adding ingredients as they follow the symbols and illustrations in the recipe book. They follow the instructions very well and work with a good degree of independence. The students have a very clear idea of what the lesson objectives are and understand basic hygiene procedures, such as washing hands, wearing aprons and using the appropriate chopping boards for preparing meat and vegetables. Under close supervision, all students manage to chop meat and slice vegetables safely using sharp knives, showing a high degree of concentration and perseverance. Work is well differentiated for students' needs, for instance, higher attaining students make a clear written record of their work, copying words into their record books independently whilst lower attaining students cut and paste symbols as captions for their digital photographs. This provides a very clear step-by-step record of their achievements.

94. Students grow vegetables in the school garden as part of their course. These are used in cookery and, as a '*mini enterprise*', vegetables were harvested, washed and displayed for sale by students. Three students made a compost bin for use in the schools' gardens. They assembled the components, marked and cut out notches using a tenon saw and carefully chiselled out the pieces enabling the wood to be slotted together without the use of screws. Teaching was confident and supported students well. Students were motivated and encouraged so that they persevered with the task. They helped each other and were delighted to show the finished piece. The teacher provided good opportunities for students to develop their speaking and listening skills, for instance when they described the processes they had used to complete the compost bin.

95. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. For pupils in Years 1 to 6 it is good, for pupils in Years 7 to 9 it is unsatisfactory and for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in Years 12 and 13 it is satisfactory. Food technology is taught well for all secondary aged pupils. In the best lessons planning clearly identifies learning objectives and time is effectively divided between a series of well related activities. Teachers and support assistants are very patient with pupils and students, ensuring that all are involved in the lessons at the appropriate level and make good progress. The very good relationships in classes motivate pupils and students and they work hard to carry out the planned lesson objectives. These relationships also make the lessons relaxed and enjoyable for all.

96. The subject is co-ordinated satisfactorily. While the subject policy and the planning of what is taught has been recently updated, the plans for teaching remains unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 because of the limited opportunities to use resistant materials and practice using simple tools. The opportunities for pupils and students to gain qualifications are too narrow as they are limited to two vocational courses. Visits to places such local supermarkets and farms are used well to support learning. Although all pupils have the opportunity to use a programmable robot and digital photography is used to record achievements, information and communication technology is used insufficiently to support pupils' and students' learning. A room is shared with art and the space is underdeveloped and very cramped.

GEOGRAPHY

97. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve satisfactorily. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is unsatisfactory. It was only possible to observe two lesson of geography during the inspection. These were both with groups of pupils up to the end of Year 6. There were no geography lessons taught to pupils in Years 7 to 11 during the inspection. However, the analysis of all

pupils' previous work, plans for what they are taught and discussions with teachers show that pupils' in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress and that in Years 7 to 9, progress is unsatisfactory. The approach of teaching geography for only parts of the year to pupils in Years 7 to 11 means that they have insufficient opportunities to consolidate what they have learnt. This is the result of the co-ordination of the subject and the detail in planning what is taught not being tight enough to support this approach to teaching geography. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13 use geographical knowledge and skills to help fulfil the requirements of their vocational courses and, in doing so, they all make satisfactory progress.

98. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand the difference between hot and cold countries and learning through the topic '*People who help us*', they know about farmers and the work they do. They have also visited the town centre when studying the local environment. They develop their skills by the end of Year 6, so that they understand what settlements are and through practical activities, such as making a large model of a city, they understand the kinds of buildings and transport commonly found in cities. Pupils use a CD ROM to view video excerpts of wild life and plants living around, in and on the river. Higher attaining pupils name five items of riverside life using pictures as prompts and recognise the importance of this habitat to wildlife. They copy words by overwriting, and some copy independently. Lower attaining pupils cut out pictures and symbols to record their work. Pupils' with autism make a collage of a swan and frog and some glue and stick on coloured tissue with a minimum of adult help.

99. By the end of Year 9, geography is not taught effectively and, as a consequence, progress is limited. The emphasis in teaching is on personal and social development rather than learning geographical skills. Maps are used in orienteering activities in physical education lessons and pupils explore local shops. They have watched a variety of videos to contrast settlements such as Bombay in India and Nairobi in Kenya. Whilst investigating rainforests they have located rainforests on a map of the world and experienced the taste of tropical fruits. Pupils have designed and written holiday postcards using a computer symbol program, commenting on the weather in various locations. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties visit local nature parklands such as Cannock Chase to explore natural habitats and experience woodland and pond environments. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13, explore current affairs through incidental topics such as the conflict in Iraq, noting where the country is on a world map.

100. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In the best teaching, expectations for all pupils are high. Support staff are used well to support groups of pupils and the activities planned successfully reinforce learning. Information and communication technology was used very well to support a lesson about rivers. Pupils listened well and volunteered what they knew about water and its uses, for instance, in mixing cement and washing cars. They displayed high levels of interest and concentrated well on the work they were given to do. The lesson was rounded off very well and, as a result, the teacher was able to check what pupils had learnt, reinforce that learning by recapitulating the key facts and finally celebrate pupils' achievement.

101. The co-ordination of geography is unsatisfactory. The planning of what is taught is in place but this is not monitored sufficiently to ensure there is good quality of provision throughout the school. Assessment of the progress pupils' make is unsatisfactory. Examples of pupils' work are annotated but this does not indicate their level of attainment and does not provide the information to help guide plans for what to teach pupils. The range of resources to support learning is satisfactory. However, the use of information and communication technology to support the teaching and learning of the subject is

underdeveloped. The geography curriculum is enriched by a good number and range of trips to local areas of geographical interest; for example, local farms, shops and supermarkets.

HISTORY

102. The provision for history is unsatisfactory. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress throughout the school. There is very little evidence to show how well pupils are achieving. Records and plans are incomplete and are not at all clear about what knowledge and skill pupils have learned. Pupils very often take part in dressing up and role play about different periods in history, or different people. From this, they gain experience and knowledge of events and changes over time. They do not, however, develop a clear enough knowledge of when or where things were different, such as in Africa or America before 1900, or in Britain in Tudor times, Victorian times, or in the twentieth century. For many pupils their attainment extends only to a sense that they have been doing something different and this lacks challenge for many. Occasionally, the demands made of pupils are greater. They have organised photographs or pictures into “old” and “new” groups, or tried to decide which inventions, toys or games came first. The higher attaining pupils understand that things are changing all the time, and that some things were different in the past. One imaginative approach was for pupils to look at how things would have changed for Sleeping Beauty. Overall, there is little real development of knowledge and skills going on throughout the school in a structured way. Learning happens through a series of unrelated topics, despite the efforts made to link some topics together. When pupils are making a ‘historical’ object, for instance, they do not see it as recreating something very old, only as something to be making.

103. The teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. This is for several reasons. There is too little teaching of history; it is only taught in alternate half-terms, or for one term in a whole year, and so pupils go for long periods without any learning. Secondly, a large amount of the learning is role play: this is a good approach in small amounts, but it is very limiting when it is at the expense of all the other ways in which history can be taught. There is very little support for written work, for instance, and pupils are often not expected to produce anything during lessons. Also, teachers do not always adhere to the agreed plans of what should be taught and do not make a good effort to plan challenging lessons in a structured series. Only one lesson was taught during the inspection and it was satisfactory. It involved pupils discussing a very good selection of artefacts from ninety years ago and comparing them with modern versions. Pupils dressed up and played out working in the ‘kitchen’ and around the ‘home’. There was very good support from the classroom assistant, although the use of a television from a home ninety years ago was clearly dubious. The teacher’s expectations were too high: pupils needed to be prompted all the time to give the right answer, but mainly could only say that some things were different.

104. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The co-ordination of history is carried out by a capable teacher who has made a good effort to develop the planning of what is taught across the whole school. Learning resources have been built up and a subject policy written. However, monitoring and evaluation are unsatisfactory. There is no expectation that co-ordination should involve the first-hand observation of other teachers by the co-ordinator to check on the standard of teaching and learning in history. The senior management team have observed some lessons, with advice on what to look for from the co-ordinator. Some more direct monitoring takes place through looking at teacher’s plans of lesson activities for each term. Despite this, there is insufficient effort made to check that these match expectations of what pupils should be taught. While pupils in Years 10 and 11 study history, the planning for what they are taught is not monitored by the co-ordinator; this planning is not matched by what takes place in lessons, which is mainly role play or general knowledge questioning.

105. Many teachers make good use of visits outside the school to places such as a war museum, a toy museum, and a history centre where they can see re-creations of Victorian and Tudor homes. There has not been a satisfactory improvement in this subject since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

106. Pupils make sound progress in information and communication technology throughout the school. Though the planning of what is taught is good, problems with unreliable hardware have slowed pupils' progress. Basic computing skills with touch screen, switches, mouse and keyboard are taught well and all pupils are provided with the appropriate equipment to enable them to access relevant programmes. The breadth of the curriculum is good to the extent that pupils have made progress in recognising and using technology in everyday life. Their knowledge and skills in information and communication technology helps them to make progress in some other subjects they study.

107. Most pupils, by the end of Year 2, have good mouse skills, while those with profound and multiple learning difficulties show an understanding of cause and effect and use switches to aid communication. Pupils, by the end of Year 6, operate equipment independently, controlling volume and changing programmes or channels. Higher attaining pupils have good keyboard skills and use these, for example, to demonstrate and improve letter recognition and spelling. With the appropriate support, they follow a worksheet to create a circuit that lights a bulb or works a buzzer, then, using cut and paste, produce a circuit diagram. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches to indicate choices or to say "yes" or "no".

108. By the end of Year 9, most pupils create a table, collect information from the Internet and enter it into the table. The majority need support to do this, but show good understanding of the process. Information and communication technology forms part of the vocational courses followed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13. By the end of Year 11, pupils use word processing to draft and redraft work, access the Internet and make some use of graphics. They develop independent use of a range of equipment such as a video recorder, microwave, digital camera and a programmable toy. By the end of Year 13, students show good understanding of control technology and programme a route across a floor into the robotic toy, estimating distances and directions well.

109. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in most parts of the school. They are good for students in Years 12 and 13. Though pupils and students work steadily through the basic skills, use of technology to enhance teaching and learning is often unimaginative and limited in scope. Teachers have completed a training programme and are competent in the use of computers, but lack a sufficiently broad knowledge of the exciting contribution which information and communication technology can make to their teaching and to pupils' learning. Teachers use technology well to create symbol cards which form the basis of communication for many pupils in the school. The improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in relation to developing resources and extending the use of information and communication technology. The use of computers and other technology to support pupils learning in other subjects is satisfactory. Good use was made in science when a microscope was linked to a computer monitor for pupils to closely observe live ladybirds.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

110. Overall, achievement in French is good as a result of good planning and teaching by well qualified and experienced teachers. Though it was not possible to observe any French lessons during the inspection, analysis of work, records of achievement, and discussions with staff, provide evidence of good teaching and learning.

111. Pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9, are taught French in ten week blocks of time in parts of the school year. They know a range of vocabulary covering colours, numbers, body parts, clothes, food and weather. They greet the teacher and give single word answers to questions in French, but understand phrases of three or four words when accompanied by signing. They recognise French written words accompanied by symbols, in the same way as they recognise written English. Pupils are taught in ability groups and the highest attaining group have good recall of vocabulary from one period of teaching to the next. For all pupils this retention of the spoken word is encouraged by use of French in the times when they are not being taught, for example during registration, recording the weather, counting, and lunch time conversations.

112. By the end of Year 11, pupils build on their earlier language skills. Though there is no formal passing on of information, teachers informally discuss pupils' levels of attainment and what they have taught in their lessons. The French taught to these pupils in part fulfils the requirements of the vocational course they follow, but most pupils achieve at a higher level than is required to gain the accreditation. They consolidate the vocabulary learned earlier and become less reliant on signing, and symbols. They begin to recognise familiar words and phrases spoken in an unfamiliar voice, sufficiently well to follow a simple video story. Written words in French, such as colours, are recognised and matched to the English word, rather than a symbol.

113. French lessons throughout, include elements of French culture and tradition, often learned through preparation and tasting of food from the various regions of France, for example, students in Years 12 and 13 prepared a Chicken Chasseur. French is taught by three French speaking teachers, one of whom is a language specialist and lessons are conducted in French. All three are enthusiastic teachers of the subject, and firm believers in the benefits of teaching French to pupils with learning difficulties, as a way of raising self-esteem, giving some equality with their peers, raising the level of communication, as well as being exciting and enjoyable. Role play is used to encourage speech as well as to introduce culture, for example in shopping or café scenarios. Recording of progress is good in Years 7, 8, and 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11 where an element of self-assessment is included. As a result of the effective provision in place, there has been a good improvement since the last inspection.

MUSIC

114. Pupils' achievements, overall, are satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory provision for music. Pupils learn well in lessons but the lack of specialist accommodation means that resources are not easily accessible and time is lost as equipment has to be moved around. In addition, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught music with an approach that means there is a twelve month gap between one period of teaching and the next. Consequently, pupils' capacity to achieve more is hampered. Students in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 and 13 do not study music. There has been satisfactory improvement in music provision since the previous inspection.

115. Younger pupils follow a curriculum that focuses on listening to music and simple performances. By the end of Year 2, pupils make choices about which un-tuned instrument they wish to play. Higher attaining pupils name instruments such as triangle, drum and shaker and beat out a simple rhythm on a drum and play quieter and louder, beginning and stopping on request. By the end of Year 6, classes sing action songs together, joining in the actions and pupils play instruments on cue without prompts. The most competent pupils play together collaboratively, listening carefully for their turn. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties strike drums, move their hands and feet on different surfaces to make sounds, and participate in action songs with physical prompts from adults. Pupils, at the end of Year 9, demonstrate elements of group composition and careful listening to music. They use pictures and notation to produce a simple musical score, such as the characters in 'Sleeping Beauty', playing the appropriate instrument at the right time with the correct dynamics of loudly or quietly.

116. Overall, music is taught well in Years 1 to 6 where it was observed. Music was not being taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9 at this time, so no judgement is possible. In Years 1 to 6, teachers are very enthusiastic and this is evident in their lively approach that gets pupils' attention and interest. All pupils are included extremely well and, as a result, they are keen to participate and enjoy lessons. Teachers maintain a good pace in the activities and provide a varied range of work that matches pupils' needs and develops their listening skills as well as their musical knowledge. For example, as a result of very effective teaching a group of Years 5 and 6 pupils made very good progress as they listened carefully to instructions so that they learned to start and stop on cue, and respond to changes in beat and rhythm in shaking their tambourines. As pupils are very well managed and classrooms are well organised, time is used very efficiently. The quality of classroom management and organisation means that pupils follow well-established routines. Consequently, they handle instruments carefully, put them away independently and hold instruments quietly when the teacher makes a signal.

117. The co-ordination of music is satisfactory. A keen co-ordinator has improved the quality and range of resources since the previous inspection but she does not have any opportunity to observe the work of colleagues. Links with the community and visitors into school are limited, although there is a good annual event involving all pupils, when professional musicians come into school and make and play a range of instruments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. The achievement of all pupils is good. Since the last inspection, the subject has maintained its good standards. The planning of what pupils are taught now appropriately supports good progress throughout the school. Pupils gain a range of basic skills and improve their performance over time. The annual reports relating to individual pupils indicate that targets within individual education plans are well met.

119. By the end of Year 2, pupils practice managing a moving ball and higher attaining pupils show good ball control as they bounce it across a floor. Pupils with autism happily participate in practice for school sports activities and enjoy the 'dressing-up' race. They sit or stand on command and react to simple instructions to the beat of a tambourine. In one lesson, pupils with autism showed a good level of concentration when completing an obstacle course. Pupils co-operate with one another reasonably well and they clearly enjoy the activities presented. They listen to instructions and higher attaining pupils carry them out with little adult support.

120. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils use speed, balance and direction in gymnastics and create their own sequences. They jump with two feet together and join in running races. They practise games such as football and hockey and follow simple symbol

instructions around an orienteering course to find landmarks, for instance, in Sutton Park or around the school, to locate 'treasure'. Other pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience sensory activities and in their individual programmes participate in physiotherapy. Pupils move on cue and take turns in dance lessons taught by a choreographer and this good progress is built upon by some who go on to have the opportunity to dance on stage at the Garrick Theatre.

121. By the end of Years 9 and Year 11, pupils continue to make good progress. All pupils are taught water skills, and many of the current older secondary pupils have recently gained a personal survival award. All pupils are included in physical education activities whatever their level of special educational needs. All pupils are confident in the water and improve their swimming skills. Higher attaining pupils work towards swimming achievement awards for distance swimming and lifesaving. They glide with their faces in the water, pushing off from the side of the pool. Older pupils perform the front crawl and breaststroke. In swimming lessons pupils' attitudes, enthusiasm and behaviour are good and they led to good working relationships and a high level of sustained effort.

122. Pupils of all ages make very good progress in their understanding of competition, which they demonstrated in participating in the various activities of the schools' sports days. Many pupils have good throwing skills, for instance, older pupils demonstrated good technique in throwing the javelin. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties take part given close support.

123. Teaching is good overall. Teachers prepare relevant activities that are matched to pupils' levels of attainment and physical needs. Subject knowledge is at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' participation, involvement and good behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and there is usually a spirit of shared enthusiasm and enjoyment in the activities. Classroom assistants and teachers work together very well to support all pupils. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on giving clear instructions and demonstrations to pupils of what they have to do. There is good use of signing where necessary. Learning is good and all pupils work hard at the activities participating with enthusiasm. They know what they have to do to succeed and make an effort to improve their skills. They co-operate fully with staff and behave well, showing patience when waiting their turn and helping others less able than themselves.

124. Instructors for swimming and other activities such as horse riding have good expertise and qualifications in their respective areas, which support pupils' progress. The pupils' achievements in horse riding and swimming are good and many gain awards. Teaching gives very good support to pupils developing their speaking and listening skills as well as to their personal and social development. There is good liaison between teachers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, which results in a significant contribution to pupils' progress. Pupils have good additional opportunities to participate in a full range of physical activities including outdoor pursuits such as canoeing, climbing, caving and archery.

125. The co-ordination of physical education is good. The physical education policy is now supported by the planning of what should be taught and all ensures that the needs of all pupils are being met well. There is a good assessment and recording system. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

126. Pupils' achievements are, overall, satisfactory, which is similar to the picture at the time of the last inspection. While students in Years 12 and 13 study religious education, there was insufficient evidence collected to secure a judgement about progress.

127. By Year 2, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism respond to a range of sensory stimuli, enjoying a calm atmosphere. They experience stories of Lent, Good Friday, Palm Sunday and Easter. Higher attaining pupils sequence pictures to show they know the main events baptism and they know the main facts of the Easter story. By the end of Year 6, lower attaining pupils have experienced stories of the life of Jesus from birth to adulthood through role play and sensory exploration. Higher attaining pupils name items in a photograph of a baptism and show awareness of Bible stories such as 'Noah's Ark' and 'Jonah and the Whale'. They know of festivals and holy days in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism and some facts about Muslim worship, for example, they sequence pictures to show the events of Sukkoth. They participate in role play and in art activities. For example, following a visit to Lichfield cathedral they created their own stained glass window using coloured paper. By Year 9, pupils know about the special days of different faiths, such as Christmas, Ramadan and Eid. They know stories related to Jesus such as the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' and 'The Parable of the Lost Sheep'. Higher attaining pupils know about the symbols and the founding of Sikhism. Pupils, by the end of Year 11, know some of the key facts about Christianity, Judaism and Islam and consider how the customs and rituals affect the daily lives of believers. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of these facts and of key words related to the religions.

128. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. The best lessons are well planned, particularly by setting out clearly what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn. Lessons start well with a review of what has been learnt so far, checking what pupils' have remembered and their understanding, both of vocabulary and lesson objectives. Questions are well targeted, so that all pupils have an opportunity of responding. Good use is made of a variety of resources to engage pupils' attention and to aid understanding. Links are made between everyday life and religious ideas. For example, in a very good lesson on Sikhism, pupils were led to understand the idea of "belonging" to a faith by talking about belonging to a family, to a school or to a profession such as the police or nursing. They looked at how these were identified, by family names, school logos and uniforms. All this led to learning why people who belong to religions have symbols by which they are identified. Lessons are very well rounded off, giving pupils the opportunity to consider what they have done in the lesson and to assess their contributions. Where lessons are less successful, pupils are not reminded of what they had talked about in previous lessons, so that they have difficulty in understanding new information. Planning does not reflect the different learning needs of pupils, so that they are often engaged in the same activities, even when this is not appropriate. In some lessons, there is insufficient planning to include the religious aspects of the lesson so that opportunities to focus on these are missed.

129. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The planning of what to teach in religious education is drawn mainly from a commercial curriculum for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. The topics selected generally reflect the Locally Agreed Syllabus and meet statutory requirements. However, teacher's planning of what they will teach varies in quality and some unsatisfactory plans do not reflect the overall intentions about what pupils will be taught. The co-ordinator scrutinises teacher's written planning but does monitor and evaluate how well teachers put these into practice. Resources for the subject have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory, with a useful supply of artefacts having been collected, together with photographs and books. Pupils have the opportunity to visit a local church, the cathedral and a mosque.