

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWFIELD SCHOOL

Blackburn

LEA area: Blackburn with Darwen

Unique reference number: 132051

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Barrie

Reporting inspector: Katharine Halifax
25439

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th February 2003

Inspection number: 249438

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Roman Road Blackburn
Postcode:	BB1 2LA
Telephone number:	01254 588600
Fax number:	01254 588601
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. J. Peet
Date of previous inspection:	The school is two years old and has not been inspected previously

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25439	Katharine Halifax	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages Physical education Foundation stage	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Key issues for action
9511	Ann Longfield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education Personal, social and health education	
8810	Sue Aldridge	Team inspector	Science Citizenship Special educational needs English as an additional language	
16198	Carol Etherington	Team inspector	English	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
27960	Jane Reed	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design	Leadership and management
10676	Martin Sutton	Team inspector	Design and technology Educational inclusion	
21061	Mike Whitehead	Team inspector	Geography History Music	

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Newfield School opened in September 2000 with 141 pupils following the closure of two special schools that shared one site. Numbers have increased rapidly with 162 now on roll. The school caters for pupils aged 2 to 19 years and has more boys than girls. Whilst most pupils are from Blackburn and Darwen, 27 pupils come from the Lancashire authority and 6 from Bolton authority. A small number of pupils join the school for post sixteen education in the Bridge Unit. Almost all pupils have statements of special educational need. These are mostly associated with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Thirty-seven pupils have physical difficulties. Most of these are over the age of 11. Sixty-four pupils are Asian or Asian British and speak Urdu, Gujurati or Punjabi as their main language. Of this group, 58 are at the early stages of learning English. Just over one third of pupils receive free school meals. A small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority. Eighteen pupils joined the school and five left other than at the usual time. Attainment on entry to the school is variable. The attainment of the majority of pupils is well below average because of severe or profound learning needs. Of the pupils with physical difficulties, many have spent long periods out of school because of illness and their attainment is below that expected of children of their age. On leaving the school, most students move on to further education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school which is improving rapidly because of the vision and hard work of the very strong headteacher and senior staff. Much has been achieved in a very short time. The school has many very good features. Teaching is good. This is reflected in pupils' learning and achievement. Although the cost of educating each pupil is high, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The enthusiasm, commitment and very strong leadership of the headteacher, senior management team and governors have resulted in an effective learning environment being created.
- Teaching is good, with a high percentage of very good teaching. Staff use new technology, communication, music, art and drama particularly effectively to help pupils learn.
- Very good work in the early years department helps children settle quickly, and gives parents confidence in the school.
- Almost every pupil spends some time each week learning alongside pupils from mainstream schools. This makes a significant contribution to learning and to personal development.
- Students in Years 12 to 14, the Bridge Unit, achieve very well and gain a wide range of nationally recognised awards through the imaginative and highly relevant opportunities available to them.
- Excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has resulted in pupils and students being very enthusiastic about school, very well behaved and in their increased confidence.
- Staff provide very high quality support and care for their pupils. This, alongside the very effective links forged with parents, contributes significantly to pupils' well being and learning.

What could be improved

- Pupils in the secondary department do not achieve as well in science and French as they do in other subjects.
- Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory.
- The monitoring of classroom practice does not happen sufficiently regularly in some subjects, so some subject managers do not have a clear overview of what is happening in all age groups.

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

This is the first inspection of this school.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The achievement of young children in the early years department is very good in all areas of learning. Taking account of previous attainment and special educational needs, achievement is very good in communication, mathematics, religious education, personal, social and health education, art and design and swimming in all age groups. Pupils' achievements are good in English, history and geography in all age groups. Achievement in science is good in Years 1 to 6, the primary department, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 11, the secondary department. Achievement in French is satisfactory. In design and technology, pupils achieve well in the primary department and very well in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils with more profound needs do not achieve as well as higher attaining pupils. Students in the Bridge Unit, achieve exceptionally well in design and technology through work undertaken in 'mini-enterprise'. Achievement in information and communication technology and physical education is good in the primary department and very good in the secondary department and the Bridge Unit. Achievement overall in Bridge Unit is very good. Individual and statutory whole school targets are challenging for all pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and are proud of their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good at all times. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons, at break times and when visiting other schools.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Relationships between pupils and with adults contribute significantly to pupils' confidence and progress.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Some absences are attributable to illness and pupils visits to families who live abroad. However, some pupils are absent when

	they are well enough to come to school.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3-6	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11	Years 12 to 14
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Notable strengths in teaching are planning for different levels of attainment, pupil management and the different teaching styles used to gain pupils' attention. The teaching of mathematics, citizenship, art and design, religious education and personal, social and health education is very good; teaching is also very good in information and communication technology and music in Years 7 to 11, and in design and technology in the Bridge Unit. Teaching of English is good in all age groups. The teaching of science is good in the primary department and satisfactory in the secondary department, where the teacher has just been appointed. In all subjects, teachers provide very well for the development of pupils' literacy skills, and there are good opportunities for reinforcing numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Staff are particularly skilled at encouraging communication skills; they use signs and symbols, and the spoken word, consistently well. Information communication technology is used well to support learning in all age groups. In the small number of lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory, a few staff are finding difficulty in adjusting to the needs of some pupils, and they provide work that is not sufficiently challenging. Staff make really good use of targets in individual education plans in most lessons, thus enabling pupils of all levels of attainment to make very good progress in these areas. However, some teachers do not tell pupils the subject specific knowledge and skills they will acquire each lesson.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Learning opportunities for students in the Bridge Unit and opportunities to work alongside pupils in mainstream schools are strengths. Though staff try to include all pupils in all activities, some pupils miss the same subject each week for various reasons. Some aspects of science in Years 7 to 11 and French need improvement.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Funds are used well to assess pupils' needs and provide support when it is needed. The bilingual assistant speaks 7 languages and supports pupils and parents very well. Whilst achievement is analysed by ethnic groups, it is not analysed by mother tongue to check that all pupils achieve equally well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Pupils of all races and levels of attainment are valued. Achievement is celebrated. Every opportunity is taken to extend pupils' personal development. The rich cultural mix of the school is celebrated at all times.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Staff are committed to the well being of those in their care. Teachers, support staff, parents and health professionals work closely together for the benefit of all pupils. Links with parents are very good and

	contribute significantly to pupils' learning.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher and senior staff are very effective. Subject and departmental management is variable. All managers have worked hard to produce policies and plans, but a few do not have a clear picture of what is happening in their subject across the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very effective. Governors are a skilled and supportive group who carry out their responsibilities very effectively under the strong leadership of the chair.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior managers and governors know what the school does well and what needs to be improved. Managers check well that they are providing the best value; for example, by consulting with those who have an interest in the school, and through the challenge to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The generous staffing has been used very effectively to provide extensive opportunities for pupils to be included in education in mainstream schools and to give additional support to those who have profound and complex needs.

Staffing, the accommodation and learning resources are very good. Staff are well-qualified. The building offers extensive specialist facilities that are most helpful in meeting pupils' needs, although it has underlying problems. Resources in most subjects are very good. These factors make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy, want to go to school and are making good progress. • The headteacher has made the effort to get to know all the pupils and parents in a short time. She 'walks the walk'. • Parents receive very good support from all professionals working at the school. • Pupils' dignity is maintained when their personal needs are being attended to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework their children receive. • The range of opportunities available to pupils outside lessons. • Parents expressed concern at the wide range of abilities and needs in each class.

The inspection team agrees with the strengths identified by the parents. In response to their concerns, the school recognises the provision of homework is inconsistent and has plans to remedy this. The school provides a satisfactory range of interesting activities outside lessons. The wide range of abilities and needs in each class is challenging for teachers, but the challenge is met well by organisation of pupils into ability groups in some lessons, and the careful matching of tasks to pupils' different abilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In all age groups, there is a mix of abilities of pupils who have profound and multiple needs, those with complex and behavioural needs, and those with severe or moderate needs. Progress for many pupils is in very small steps, building on previous learning, reinforcing and slowly developing new skills. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment achieve well because of skilled teaching, good learning opportunities and very good relationships which allow pupils to feel secure and good about themselves. All make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.

2. The achievement of children in the foundation stage is very good in all areas of learning because of very good teaching, because they enjoy school and because of the very close links established with parents and carers. Detailed assessment when children first arrive at the school is used very effectively to plan individual programmes tailored to specific needs. This means children are challenged.

3. In English, achievement in communication is very good in all age groups. Pupils and students make very good progress because of the high priority given to this by all staff and the use of 'total communication'. Staff expect all pupils, regardless of level of need, to make a response either by eye contact, signing, using symbols, speech synthesisers or the spoken word. As a result pupils are able to indicate their likes and dislikes, make choices and, in most cases, make their basic needs understood. Achievement in reading and writing is good in the primary and secondary departments. Pupils make very good progress in reading where staff are more knowledgeable in teaching the basic skills. Students in the Bridge Unit make very good progress because of the numerous opportunities they have to improve their literacy in a wide range of real-life situations.

4. Achievement in mathematics is very good in all age groups. This is the result of the successful introduction of the National Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies. Pupils are set by ability, and work is targeted to individual needs so pupils learn at a very good rate. They improve their rate of progress because teachers provide opportunities for them to use number and mathematical knowledge in other lessons. Older, higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the Bridge Unit gain accreditation through the National Skills Profile.

5. Pupils in the primary department achieve well in science because of a broad range of suitable learning experiences and good teaching. Achievement in the secondary department is satisfactory. Teaching for this age group is satisfactory. Whilst pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and their properties and physical processes, higher attaining pupils have not been offered sufficient opportunities to develop investigative skills. A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working towards the nationally recognised Certificate of Achievement. Though they have a satisfactory understanding of most of their work, they do not have sufficient understanding of whether their tests or investigations are fair because insufficient emphasis is placed on this aspect.

6. Pupils in the primary department achieve well in design and technology because teachers plan and prepare tasks with a clear understanding of their pupils' needs and abilities. Achievement is variable in the secondary department. It is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Higher attainers in Years 7 to 9 and pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well because they are taught the necessary skills to design and make a item and to decide whether or not it could be improved. The achievement of those with more profound needs is satisfactory. This is because the teacher has difficulty relating to some of the pupils and, on occasions, plans work that is too difficult. The attainment of students in the Bridge Unit is very good. Students use skills gained previously to make high quality products in 'mini-enterprise' that are sold commercially. Higher attaining pupils in this age group show good awareness of food hygiene and their work is accredited through the Achievements in Food Skills Silver Award.

7. Achievement in French is satisfactory. Good progress is made in listening. However, progress in speaking is limited because the subject is taught only once each week and many pupils have difficulties remembering vocabulary from the previous week. Nevertheless, pupils slowly increase their vocabulary and pronunciation through repetition. However, limited use of French by some teachers when giving instructions restricts pupils' progress.

8. Pupils' achievements in all age groups are very good in art and design, religious education and personal and social education, and in citizenship in Years 7 to 11. This is attributable to very good teaching and highly appropriate learning experiences. Teachers plan for and draw on the rich cultural mix of the school's population as a basis for learning in all these subjects. As a result, learning is relevant to pupils and prepares them well for life in a multi-racial society.

9. In information communication technology, pupils benefit from increased teacher confidence as a result of very good training and appropriate resources. The school's own system, Newfield Equal Opportunities Curriculum Access System (NEOCAS), has enabled pupils of all levels of attainment to use new technology in all subjects and is the main reason for early independence in the use of computers. The system is having a significant impact on achievement in reading and writing. Teaching is good in the primary department resulting in good progress. Very good teaching, very good resources and very challenging and exciting opportunities have led to very good achievement in the secondary department and in the Bridge Unit. Older pupils and students are working through a short course culminating in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

10. Pupils in all age groups achieve well in humanities because of good teaching and interesting lessons. Pupils of all levels of achievement use a range of sources such as books, newspapers, video, the Internet and interesting objects to learn more about history and geography. Older pupils and students gain accreditation through the Certificate of Educational Achievement.

11. Achievement in music is good in the primary department and very good in the secondary department. The difference is because most pupils in the secondary department are taught by specialist musicians. Secondary age pupils reach high standards in performance because, in addition to timetabled lessons, most are members of the 'signing choir' and have been taught the skills of projecting their voices, breathing correctly and following a conductor. Similarly, pupils achieve well playing untuned and tuned instruments through teaching by trained musicians. For example, some pupils play a simple tune on the clarinet.

12. In physical education, achievement is good overall in the primary department and very good in the secondary department. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of

learning opportunities and all improve their personal fitness. However, in the primary department, the level of challenge in some gymnastics and dance lessons means pupils do not improve the quality of their movement as much as they could. Very good teaching in the secondary department results in very good achievement. Pupils increase their range of movements at a very good rate because teachers demonstrate skills very well and demand high quality response. Exacting outdoor and adventurous activities enable older secondary age pupils to meet personal challenges. Achievement in hydrotherapy and swimming is very good in all age groups because of the very high expectations set by teachers and therapists.

13. Pupils and students who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as those from English speaking families. Very good provision for teaching communication skills and good support from a skilled bilingual assistant help them to make good progress. Pupils with additional special educational needs, such as visual impairment, hearing impairment and autism achieve as well as other pupils because they are supported well. Inevitably, pupils who do not attend well do not make as much progress as those who do. Whole school and individual targets are challenging because senior managers have analysed pupils' performance and have high expectations of what they will achieve.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. This aspect is a strength of the school and creates a good atmosphere for learning. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is equally very good. Pupils' personal development and relationships are excellent in all age groups. They readily accept differences in others. There have been no exclusions in the time the school has been open. Parents responding to the questionnaire and attending the meeting confirm this very positive picture, reporting that their children like school very much and that behaviour is usually very good.

15. Pupils arrive at school keen to learn, knowing they are expected to work very hard. They enjoy school life and give of their best. From an early age, they are fascinated by learning activities. For example, children loved pretending to be crocodiles 'swimming through the water' and 'snapping' at each other in a foundation stage literacy lesson based on the book 'Walking through the Jungle'. Pupils of all ages listen carefully, and contribute well to discussions. They are keen to show their knowledge and understanding and to share their ideas. Staff and fellow pupils wait very patiently when some need time to say or sign their words. Pupils try very hard. They concentrate and persevere even when they find a task demanding. This was evident in a Year 12 art lesson where students were making stained glass windows. Though some experienced difficulties holding and placing the materials, they persisted with the task. Pupils value each other's efforts, and show this by celebrating the work and achievement of others. For example, students in the Bridge Unit tried eating with chopsticks when learning about Chinese New Year. Most found the task difficult and spontaneously applauded the first to succeed.

16. Pupils are very clear about how they should behave towards each other and adults. Occasionally, and as a result of their special educational needs, a few have difficulty managing their behaviour so inappropriate outbursts by a small number cause minor disruptions. Nevertheless, evidence shows that, as a result of effective behaviour plans and very good support from adults, such pupils make good improvement in controlling and adapting their behaviour. No incidents of intimidation or bullying were observed during the inspection. Pupils show a high degree of concern and care for others. They are interested in each other, and care about how their friends are feeling. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds work and play happily alongside their peers; racial harmony pervades the school. Warm relationships between the bilingual assistant and pupils with English as an additional language helps motivate them well in lessons.

17. Pupils of all ages make excellent progress in their personal development. From the start of school, and regardless of levels of attainment, pupils are expected to make choices, of activities, of equipment and of food. The design of the school, the trust and support of staff, and challenging individual goals means that pupils move increasingly independently around the building. Those who are able to take increased responsibility for their personal care by; for example, they operate the hoist under the watchful eye of staff. Pupils of all ages help with day-to-day routines such as returning the class-register to the office. Older pupils and students undertake their allotted duties conscientiously, selling tuck, helping in the toy library and running the school bank. They do this with care and regard for others, moving quietly and sensibly and not making a fuss when things occasionally go wrong. Older pupils and students who form the School Council take their duties seriously, consulting their fellow pupils and making suggestions to the senior management team. Following their survey of pupils, changes were made to the type of music played at lunchtime.

18. Staff provide very good examples of how to behave appropriately, so pupils grow in confidence and learn to value others because they are treated with dignity and respect. The promotion of good citizenship makes a major contribution to the strong feeling of community that exists. Pupils are interested in visitors. They are polite and friendly, often engaging them in conversation. This was demonstrated very well by older pupils and students during 'Industry Day', as they worked with an outside advisor solving a series of challenges including 'Tower Building'.

19. Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory. However, unauthorised absence is low. An analysis of the high rate of authorised absence undertaken by the school has identified that it is due mainly to Asian pupils who take extended family holidays and to those pupils who are too ill to attend school. The low level of attendance has a detrimental effect on those pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. During the inspection, the quality of teaching ranged from poor to excellent with a high percentage being very good or better. Very good teaching was seen in all age groups and in most subjects, although, overall more was observed in the foundation stage, in the secondary department and the Bridge Unit where most teachers are specialists in their area. The good quality of teaching testifies to the success of the school's programme of monitoring and support for teachers, including training.

21. Most staff have coped very well with the changes, increasing their knowledge of the range of special educational needs the school caters for and turning their hand to new subjects. However, a few teachers and non-teaching staff are finding the amalgamation difficult and do not have an affinity to some groups of pupils. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, lessons lacked pace and urgency and there were periods of inactivity. In some cases, higher attaining pupils were given colouring activities when they could have been improving their reading and writing. In a very small number of lessons, some staff found it difficult to relate to the pupils in their care.

22. Lessons are planned to a common format and, though groups are set according to levels of attainment for English, mathematics and science, teachers conscientiously plan further, detailing individual tasks for each pupil. This allows all pupils to make good gains in their learning regardless of need, gender or ethnic background. Staff are familiar with pupils' individual learning targets for literacy, behaviour and mobility and plan how each pupil will achieve this in each lesson. These are suitably reviewed at the end of the lesson. In some lessons, teachers inform pupils of the subject specific knowledge and skills they will acquire at the start of each lesson. For example, 'By the end of this French lesson you will be aware

of the French words for blue, yellow and green'. This is reviewed by asking pupils "What have you learned?" so pupils understand the learning that has taken place. In other lessons no subject targets are shared, and in some others these are masked by individual targets. So, whilst pupils make good progress towards individual goals they are unaware of the subject learning that has taken place.

23. Most teachers and support staff have an extensive knowledge of the pupils in their care. At the start of each lesson, they ensure each pupil is correctly positioned, using specialist equipment if necessary, in order to feel comfortable and gain maximum benefit from their learning. Throughout each lesson, this is checked and a nod from the teacher alerts support staff that a pupil is uncomfortable and may need repositioning, or moving out of their special chair to stretch their limbs. Those with visual impairment are seated where they can best see the teacher and resources; teachers use real objects for these pupils to explore with their hands to help them understand topics being introduced. Similar account is taken in physical education when, for example, staff use a bell to indicate the direction pupils with visual impairment should kick or throw their ball. Staff check that those who need assistance with hearing have their appliances switched on and working. The use of visual timetables helps pupils with autism to anticipate changes which helps them to keep calm. Good use is made of a system of picture exchange to help such pupils communicate. Whilst pupils achieve well overall, the learning of some is affected by the amount of time they spend out of lessons. Though much of this is necessary for the comfort and well being of pupils who require their personal needs attended to, a few pupils miss the same experiences each week, and there is no means of them catching up with work missed.

24. Good support from the bilingual assistant is successful in eliciting responses from pupils who do not have English as their main language. For example, in a science lesson, the assistant repeated an instruction in a pupil's mother tongue, and the pupil duly pressed a switch to activate a tape recording of music. A major strength of teaching is the use of a wide range of strategies and resources to encourage communication. Staff use signs, symbols, speech synthesisers and the written and spoken word to make sure all pupils understand what is happening. They ensure pupils acquire the ability to indicate their likes and dislikes, make choices and make their basic needs understood.

25. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. Most pupils are extremely well behaved. However, a few have difficulty controlling their behaviour because of their complex special needs. Where necessary, a support plan is put into place to help them improve their behaviour and overcome their difficulties. Pupils are encouraged to try hard, and are suitably praised for their efforts. Often, support staff sit close by, helping them by changing their facial expressions and by signing, so pupils remain calm and learn at a good rate. Staff follow consistently strategies in pupils' plans, so positive behaviour is reinforced and pupils learn what is acceptable. This was seen on a number of occasions when pupils with difficulties became restless or displayed inappropriate behaviour. Staff immediately let pupils know when behaviour was not acceptable. On occasions when the behaviour persisted, the teacher or member of support staff quietly turned the pupil's chair away from the group for a few minutes. This was successful in calming the pupil and in allowing others to continue with their work without distraction.

26. Teachers recognise that pupils learn in different ways. To this end they plan their lessons to appeal to all senses, producing a rich blend of sounds, pictures, signs and symbols to interest pupils. Such was the case in a citizenship lesson tracing the development of the media over the last 500 years. Pupils of differing levels of attainment made very good gains in their knowledge and displayed huge enjoyment as they took on a variety of roles, such as a Medieval king, a messenger, and a rider of the pony express at the time of Abraham Lincoln. Pictures, costumes and music from the appropriate era,

accompanied by the clip clopping of horses' hooves made learning real and increased understanding. In a religious education lesson on Friday afternoon, when pupils were flagging, their rate of learning was successfully increased with physical activity. The teacher quickly had them on their feet singing an action song; in addition to improving their body awareness, pupils visibly brightened and applied themselves to their work with renewed vigour.

27. Teachers plan for pupils to improve their basic skills in other lessons. Higher attaining pupils read work sheets and record thoughts in writing, for example in history and geography. Reading is improved, for instance, in science when pupils read the contents of a cereal box in their investigations into healthy eating. Teachers endeavour to extend pupils' vocabulary by introducing them to new words such as 'thrash', 'regalia' and 'executive'. Whilst pupils improve their knowledge of mathematics by, for example, counting in French and in physical education, and looking for shapes, recognising that the planets are 'round like circles' not all staff plan for pupils to improve their numeracy in other lessons. In most classes, new technology is used very effectively to extend pupils learning. Pupils with more profound and complex needs use switches to aid their learning whilst higher attaining pupils use digital cameras and camcorders to enrich learning as was seen when pupils made an advertisement, later analysing their performance and improving the way they communicate. Pupils enjoy lessons using large white boards linked to a computer. They sit wide-eyed and fascinated as a touch on the screen produces the required image. Higher attaining pupils are expected to use word processing to check and improve their writing. A small number of teachers do not make sufficient use of computers, for instance when pupils with physical difficulties need to write.

28. Pupils achieve well because teachers have very high expectations of what they will achieve. Regardless of levels of attainment, teachers expect high levels of participation. They insist each pupil makes eye contact and makes a contribution to each discussion be it signed or vocal. Staff are not afraid to wait, recognising that some pupils take longer than others to form their response. Pupils who are able are challenged "I expected all hands to go up to answer that question" and to explain their reasoning. This was successful in a geography lesson when pupils suggested a number of ways to improve the environment in National Parks by introducing Park and Ride and the construction of more car parks, for example.

29. Some parents expressed concern about the amount of homework their child receives. Homework takes various forms. For example, toileting programmes, sharing toys and books, and collecting objects and information for a lesson. Older pupils have recorded music for an aerobics lesson. Higher attaining pupils collect information and complete work sheets to prepare or reinforce work done in lessons. However, senior managers have consulted with parents and recognise that the use of homework is inconsistent and is an area for improvement.

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

30. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good overall. Within this there are many strengths, the most outstanding being the excellent relationships that have been forged with partner institutions leading to exceptional opportunities for educational inclusion with mainstream schools. Other strengths include the very good curriculum for students in the Bridge Unit, very good careers education and guidance, personal, social and health education, strategies for teaching literacy skills to all age groups, and the very good contribution made by the community to pupils' learning. However, there are some areas for improvement. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 has minor weaknesses in the science programme reinforced by the late implementation of the Key Stage 3 science

strategy. Only one lesson of French is taught each week to pupils in Years 7 to 9, and pupils find remembering what they have learned from one week to the next difficult. As a result, curriculum provision for this group of pupils is satisfactory. The monitoring of subject provision and of the quality of teaching and learning in each subject takes place too infrequently and has not identified weaknesses in the planning of subject-specific learning objectives by some teachers. This results in the focus of some units of work or individual lessons being solely on pupils' individual targets instead of helping them to make consistent progress in the subject as well.

31. The curriculum for children under the age of five in the foundation stage is good. It provides high quality learning experiences for children in all six areas of learning, leading to very good progress towards the early learning goals and prepares them well for the National Curriculum. However, the school is admitting an increasing number of two-year-olds. Transport arrangements require these very young children to attend for full days rather than for a short time each day. They become very tired, and children are unable to play and learn effectively by the end of their day.

32. For pupils in the primary and upper secondary departments, the curriculum is good. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are in place and are planned and taught in ways relevant to the needs of all pupils. Throughout the age range, the school uses assessment data on individual pupils to identify four levels of access that will best suit pupils of differing abilities and different types of special educational need. For example, pupils with more complex needs or profound learning difficulties learn through a multi-sensory interactive approach, whilst planning for the more independent learners includes approaches similar to those seen in mainstream settings. This system of grouping by ability and learning style is effective because it supports teachers in planning work that is relevant to pupils' needs.

33. For older pupils of statutory school age, staff have taken advantage of the national relaxation of requirements for some subjects in order to introduce nationally recognised awards to celebrate their achievements. Managers consulted with parents, the careers service and the local education authority before introducing more vocational courses, including learning about the world of work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make choices of subjects similar to their mainstream peers. Students in the Bridge Unit continue their academic studies in a range of subjects and can achieve accreditation for their learning and for the personal, social and independence skills they acquire.

34. Very good quality specialist careers education and guidance is available from age 14, when pupils and their families start to consider their options for staying on at school, for carrying on their further education at college, for day placements or for employment. Taster courses and visits are available for local colleges and for the range of day centre provision. A very good programme of work experience and work related learning is available for pupils of all abilities. Higher attaining students take part in a block work experience placement or attend for perhaps half a day each week over a number of weeks. Those with more severe needs or those not able to cope with the physical demands of a longer-term placement gain valuable work experience on the school site, shadowing school employees and undertaking visits to places of employment. All have opportunities to learn about business practices through taking part in mini-enterprise activities such producing and selling arts and crafts and garden ornaments.

35. Very good strategies are in place for teaching literacy. English and literacy lessons show the national strategy has been implemented effectively and teachers place suitable emphasis on developing pupils' communications skills in all subjects, leading to their very good progress in this area. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum are

good. Again, the national strategy has been implemented in mathematics lessons, and teachers are providing ways for pupils to improve their mathematical knowledge through other subjects.

36. The school is committed to equality of access and opportunity, and this is particularly evident in that almost all pupils participate in mainstream links with local schools. Pupils with English as an additional language are not withdrawn from lessons, except for initial assessment. They have the same access to the curriculum as other pupils. The educational provision described in pupils' statements is reflected well in the school's curriculum. Some therapy sessions and personal care such as feeding programmes take place in the classroom so pupils do not miss lessons. However, many pupils are withdrawn and, as the timetable is arranged, some miss large amounts of the same lesson each week especially in English, mathematics and science. Whilst therapies and care are very relevant and necessary to the pupils concerned, no monitoring is taking place. As a result, many pupils regularly miss, for example, forty minutes of an hour-long session. Occasionally, pupils are toileted at the start of a lesson, immediately after break. Staff recognise they need to assess how this could be minimised by varying the timetable, and ensuring therapy and physical care takes place in the classroom whenever possible. Similarly, the practice of withdrawing pupils from lessons for additional literacy support is not always necessary, as this could be provided in classrooms. Although some staff are careful to ensure that the same lessons are not missed each time, there are no formal arrangements for helping pupils catch up with work they have missed. This compromises pupils' access to the curriculum.

37. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As a result, pupils are confident, tolerant, and helpful, developing into mature responsible students by the time they move into the Bridge Unit.

38. Through work in religious education and events throughout the school year, pupils become aware of a wide range of beliefs and take part in celebrations of major feasts, such as Easter, Diwali, Eid and Chinese New Year. They compare rituals and traditions and are proud to contribute from their own experience. This was seen in an act of worship in the primary department for the observation of Hajj. The faces of two Muslim boys lit up as they described their pilgrimage to Arafat, informing their fellow pupils, "It was brilliant. We walked round seven times, everything looks and tastes different there". A prayer room is set aside for special occasions. Pupils who were fasting for Ramadan spent their lunchtimes with a member of staff, who also is a Muslim, praying and talking about the meaning of their religion. Staff ensure all pupils take an active part through providing a sensory approach. This has been very effective as pupils smell and taste special food, perform ritual cleansing before prayer, dress up in special clothes, take part in a baptism, smell incense, as they listen to Indian music, and reflect while focusing on the light of a candle. A religious garden has been created for pupils and staff to find peace, solitude and contemplation. The garden reflects the beliefs of Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Each of the three areas contains signs and symbols fitting that belief. The importance of this area was demonstrated when the garden was opened and dedicated by the Bishop of Blackburn, a representative from the Hindu temple and an Imam from the Mosque. The combination of knowledge and experience results in an inclusive, accepting community in which pupils take pride in their beliefs.

39. Staff plan for pupils to be excited and amazed by their learning. They read and tell stories with expression, lowering the tone of their voice so pupils lean forward in anticipation of what is to come. Music is used very effectively with all age groups to create an air of calm and tranquillity or to excite as the occasion demands. Adults and pupils alike are moved by the outstanding performances of the 'signing choir'. Following a public performance at Ewood Park football ground, members of the public commented on the emotion brought about as a pupil with perfect pitch gave a solo rendition of 'Let there be peace on earth' prior to being

joined by the whole choir signing and singing in unison. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they do and say and are helped to develop a sense of wonder. This was evident in a conversation between a pupil and a support assistant when the pupil observed the symbol for home as, "A house with a heart in it", to which the support assistant replied, "Of course, because home is where your heart is". There followed a moment of true reflection.

40. Pupils are expected to know the difference between right and wrong and become increasingly aware of the consequences of their actions. Students in the Bridge Unit are expected to provide a very good example to younger pupils in the way they act and consider the feelings of others. Adults in the school are very good models, promoting honesty and fairness. Staff treat pupils with respect and preserve their dignity at all times and expect pupils to do the same. Religious education, and personal, social, and health education lessons contribute well to pupils' understanding of rights and responsibilities. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to care for the environment, from being aware of litter in the foundation stage to producing a computerised presentation about caring for the surrounding district in the Bridge Unit. The awarding of merits for helpfulness and good behaviour, as well as academic progress, reinforces the school's code of conduct. The 'House' system encourages pupils to feel special and part of a community, working for the benefit of a team and contributing to its overall success. Pupils are encouraged to think of others, and regularly take part in fundraising, raising substantial amounts for a number of charities.

41. Pupils' social development is promoted very successfully through school routines including arrival in the mornings and lunchtimes. Staff provide frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs, groups, and teams, in and out of lessons. The 'buddy' system of helping others who are not so confident works well, especially among the older pupils, and all take their responsibilities seriously. All pupils make very good improvement in their social development through links with mainstream schools, learning how to mix with others and how to behave appropriately in different situations. The setting up of a school council has allowed pupils to experience democracy in action. Topics for discussion are varied, ranging from equal opportunities and bullying, to the type of music to be played in the dining room. Council members are shortly to vote for representatives to the Blackburn Youth Parliament, and three pupils from the school will assist in the count. Minutes of meetings are produced, and these are illustrated to make them accessible to most pupils. There is a high expectation that pupils, whatever their needs, will be as independent and self-reliant as possible. This is promoted especially well through outside activities such as orienteering and a residential visit to an adventure centre, where pupils rise to meet personal challenges at the same time as recognising the level of interdependence necessary for safety.

42. The excellent provision for pupils' cultural development includes working with a visiting poet, a drama group, medieval musicians and other professional music groups. Music makes a valuable contribution, and pupils have the opportunity, not only to listen but to perform. An appreciation of art is fostered through numerous visits to museums and galleries. These not only enrich the curriculum, but also offer pupils an insight into their heritage. The study of drama and poetry of other cultures in English and the introduction of French and European citizenship contributes significantly to pupils' awareness of other cultures. Preparation for life in a multi-racial society is outstanding and provides an example of a community, where people of differing abilities, races, and beliefs live and work in harmony.

INCLUSION

43. The school is committed to operating as a truly inclusive school and has developed an exceptional number of well-managed placements for the inclusion of almost all of the pupils with 18 local primary and secondary schools. These experiences raise pupils'

confidence and self esteem and enable them to make very good social and educational progress. The imaginative and challenging opportunities are overseen by a competent and enthusiastic team of staff. A detailed policy document underpins the strategy. This is further supported by an appropriate scheme of work.

44. Once initial contact has been made, extensive preparation ensures the link is effective and beneficial to both parties, socially and educationally. A comprehensive 'Inclusion File' has been prepared. This provides helpful guidance to all taking part, describing the planned range of learning activities and skills to be gained by pupils engaged in the initiative. All pupils in the primary department are set targets for inclusion, related to independence and social skills. A very thorough assessment of all possible risks is made prior to the link starting and, where necessary, behaviour management plans are provided for individual pupils. Progress against targets is recorded meticulously as the link progresses. Whilst participation in an inclusion link may result in a pupil missing the same lesson each week at Newfield, senior teachers aim to prevent any adverse impact on pupils' education by carefully monitoring the inclusion timetable and ensuring that the appropriate balance of learning experiences is maintained for each pupil. Observation of a good number of links indicates mainstream staff value the experience it provides for their schools. They cite the planning, preparation and support for pupils by the inclusion staff as key factors in its success. To date, no formal evaluation of the provision has taken place, though informal review between the special and mainstream staff is on-going.

45. In the primary department, all classes link with a mainstream school for one session each week. In addition, small groups and a few higher attaining pupils are provided with additional opportunities carefully matched to their needs and ability. Secondary age pupils are carefully selected for appropriate inclusion links based upon ability level and suitability of the link activities provided in negotiation with the receiving mainstream school. Individual pupils who show potential in a particular area are encouraged to build on their interests and strengths. To this end, one pupil achieved a very high grade in GCSE history.

46. Not all inclusion links take place off-site. For example, children from a local nursery link with children in the foundation stage for literacy, associated play, and creative activities. Children from each school are evidently pleased to see each other as they smile and make eye contact. Children from the mainstream nursery acquire skills not offered in their setting. For example, they are thrilled about learning how to sign, so that they can communicate with pupils from Newfield who need signs to support their understanding. Students from a local college join older pupils and students each week for wheelchair dancing. This provides very good opportunities for Newfield pupils to achieve their individual social targets. Pupils are given structured opportunities to make eye contact, hold gaze, speak and listen and sign. Mainstream students and staff have been provided with support on communications techniques, making gestures and using basic signs and conversation, enabling effective communication to take place.

47. Pupils in the primary department visit other schools for lessons such as literacy and music. Joint planning between staff at both schools ensures work is at an appropriate level for all concerned with planned opportunities for pupils to work together. On one link, had it not been for the different coloured uniforms, it would have been difficult to identify the two groups as they discussed their work together and sought support from whichever member of staff was closest. As the lesson progressed, staff from Newfield gradually withdrew their support thus allowing pupils to gain independence in an unfamiliar setting.

48. Inclusion for most secondary age pupils takes place in a number of secondary schools; pupils attend singly or as part of a group. For example, higher attaining pupils with good communication skills in Year 9 join an art lesson each week and, with support from their

teacher, are working on the same project as mainstream pupils. Their work illuminating manuscripts is at a similar level to the lower attaining mainstream pupils. A particularly successful inclusion is for a group of Year 8 and Year 10 girls. The girls wear the uniform of the mainstream school. This increases the opportunity for successful inclusion. The girls join a group of about 50 for dance. Following exercises and simple dance steps they were invited by mainstream girls to form a small dance group and work together to create a dance routine which they later had the confidence to perform in front of the whole group. The girls clearly enjoyed the lesson and took their lead from the mainstream staff. Support from their teacher was gradually withdrawn, but was reinstated during the review of the lesson to support one girl with communication difficulties who uses a symbol book. By the end of the lesson, the girls demonstrated very good progress with dance steps, and their confidence and enjoyment levels had risen noticeably during the course of the lesson. Following the dance, pupils moved to art.

49. Almost all the links observed were extremely successful. Difficulties were encountered on a science link when communications between the two schools failed. Detailed planning for the lesson showed that the group be split and join two separate classes. Unfortunately, due to mainstream staff absences, the lessons did not take place as planned so the academic benefits were limited. However, the pupils were welcomed by their mainstream peers, and included in alternative lessons.

50. The school is justifiably proud of this aspect of its work and excellent displays of pupils engaged in inclusion links are situated in prominent places around the school. The displays feature high quality photographs, and show the pleasure pupils experience when working with those in mainstream schools. Letters and written work from pupils in mainstream schools bear testimony to the enjoyment and appreciation of the social and learning opportunities that the links provide. Each summer term, staff host an 'Inclusion Month' when all mainstream participants visit the school. Staff and pupils from all the schools take part in a range of learning and social activities including hydrotherapy, using the sensory rooms and gardens, joining arts activities and physical education lessons. Last year the event was attended by over 60 members of staff from mainstream schools, along with large groups of their pupils. A similar event has been planned for this summer.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school provides a very good standard of care for its pupils. The health and safety of pupils and staff has a high priority, enabling the school to achieve its aim to provide the best possible health care for its pupils. High quality care plans and assessments of risks are in place. The deputy head teacher responsible for the implementation of the health and safety policy undertakes her duties very conscientiously. Most of the support staff are trained in first aid and are readily available in case of an emergency. Throughout the school day, pupils benefit from the high quality support of their class teachers, support assistants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and all others working in the school. Caretaking staff make regular inspections of the school premises and any necessary repairs are dealt with immediately. School nurses have strict procedures for the issue of medication to pupils. Records are carefully maintained and medicines are stored securely. Very good procedures for child protection are in place. The designated teachers have followed the recommended training programme. All staff are aware of the procedures and any concerns are referred to the appropriate authority.

52. In conjunction with other professionals, very good provision is made for pupils with additional needs specified on their statements. Advisory teachers for sensory impairment regularly visit the school, assess pupils' needs and give advice at annual reviews. Speech and language therapists work closely with staff to ensure that pupils are well supported in

acquiring communication skills, and where pupils need communication aids or computers to help them, suitable assessments are arranged and sources of funding accessed.

53. Pupils' personal development is monitored very effectively, especially the priority needs of communication and physical development. All education and health professionals contribute, and monitor each pupil, with particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils acquire skills for life after education, and to help them gain some level of independence. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. This is evidenced in very good behaviour throughout the school, and has been achieved by a consistent approach by all staff.

54. The school has identified attendance as an area for improvement and has undertaken an in depth analysis of pupils' absences. Following the identification of pupils who are very ill and those who take extended holidays, the remaining pupils who have problems with attendance have been targeted. Parents and carers of these pupils are contacted on the first day of absence. This, alongside other well-established procedures, has resulted in unauthorised absence being kept to a minimum. Strong links have been forged with the education welfare officer. Attendance registers are kept up to date and most parents co-operate by contacting the school if their child is sick. Despite requests from the school, many families continue to take extended holidays during term time. Recognising this has a significant impact on learning, staff provide educational activities for pupils whilst they are away from school.

55. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress make a significant contribution to the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development. Nationally recognised systems for assessing and recording the attainment of pupils with learning difficulties who are working towards achieving National Curriculum levels have recently been adopted. Although the systems have only been in place for just over a year, senior staff have begun to analyse assessment information, both to monitor progress and to set challenging targets for groups of pupils, and statutory targets for the whole school. For example, results of annual pupil assessments are analysed by gender, by ethnic origin and by age group. Pupils' performance in different subjects is also analysed by breaking down the results into different parts of the subject. Patterns that emerge are then explored to see if they indicate strengths or weaknesses, for example in what is taught or how staff plan for or teach the subject. In addition, the information has been used successfully to identify pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy and from this to place them into one of four attainment groups based on ability.

56. Individual progress is further tracked effectively through individual education plans, which have targets for personal and social development, mobility, and academic areas such as numeracy, communication and other literacy skills. These are shared with all staff who teach or work with a particular pupil, and teachers' planning identifies which of the targets will be worked on in any particular subject or session. This, alongside staff knowledge of pupils has resulted in very good educational and personal support and guidance. Older pupils and students in the Bridge Unit gain nationally recognised awards for academic and personal achievement through gaining units of accreditation in a variety of key skills and subject areas. The school has several qualified assessors on the staff, with plans to train more.

57. Assessment procedures are good. Children in the foundation stage are assessed on entry to the school and before they move on to the National Curriculum. Pupils are then assessed annually to check their progress. Although pupils do not routinely participate in national standard tests in Years 2, 6 and 9, the school has introduced its own assessments at these points, carried out at the same time as mainstream schools. This enables valuable information to be gathered on pupils' progress that can be used to plan work for pupils and

can be shared with parents as an end-of-key stage profile. High quality 'Records of Achievement' and 'Pupil Progress Files' are maintained. These are very well illustrated by regular use of digital photography to record pupils' achievements in lessons and other school activities. They are well annotated by staff as to the context of the achievement and supported by examples of written work, artwork or taped audio evidence. Overall, these provide a very good record of pupils' progress in all subject areas. A weakness in the consistency of how these are annotated as to the level that the pupil has attained in the subject has already been identified and is included in the action plan. Additionally, records often record pupils' attainment under the National Curriculum level towards which they are working rather than the performance level that they have just reached.

58. The assessment of individual subject-specific skills is inconsistent. Some subject managers have devised and implemented checklists of subject skills that can be used to demonstrate pupils' progress in the subject and to plan suitable work for the next stage of learning, for example information and communication technology, design technology and physical education. Other subjects are part way to achieving this and some subject managers have not yet introduced subject-specific assessment. For example in history and geography there is no system to assess the sequential development of specific historical skills such as the use of sources to gain information or geographical skills such as the use of maps.

59. Annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are carried out in accordance with recommendations, and these are well attended by parents and professionals. Clear targets are set at annual reviews; these closely reflect needs on statements and are translated into targets on individual education plans. Almost all targets are met within the time scale set, and this supports pupils' academic and personal development well. Transition plans, to help pupils from the age 14 consider their future after school, are comprehensive and plan wide involvement of professionals from the appropriate services. Pupils attend their annual reviews, and where able provide a written contribution.

60. Support for pupils whose families speak English as an additional language is good. Their abilities are assessed when they enter the school, and support is targeted where it is needed most. The school analyses assessment information to see whether ethnic minority pupils achieve as well as others, but does not analyse information by mother tongue.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. The geographical location of pupils' homes and the wide range of ethnic backgrounds make regular face-to-face contact difficult on occasions. Nevertheless, staff work very hard and very effectively to overcome these problems. Parents responding to the questionnaire and those attending the meeting prior to the inspection were very supportive of the school. A small number indicated that homework provision could be improved and that they would like more interesting activities out of lessons. It was clear from listening to parents that they feel very strongly that the school helps their children and that the staff are committed. The very good links between the school and parents make an important contribution to pupils' learning.

62. Parents receive very good quality information from the school through the annual governors' report, the school prospectus and regular newsletters. The excellent newsletter, published each term, covers all aspects of school life and contains photographs and contributions from pupils. Every edition is translated into community languages so all parents can enjoy each issue. Parents know they may contact or visit the school at any time if they have a concern about their child. Formal meetings are organised twice each year to discuss their child's progress. Reports of a child's overall development and progress are sent out to parents at appropriate intervals and in line with the legal requirements for the annual review of

a statement of special educational need. Home-school record books are detailed and very useful to parents and staff.

63. The bilingual assistant plays an important role in supporting parents who speak little or no English. She speaks seven languages, and is available at the beginning and end of every school day to speak to parents, should they wish to call or telephone. Satisfactory use is made of interpreters, to attend annual reviews, for example. However, the school does not translate annual review reports for parents, as the cost of this service is very high and the specific wording of targets could be lost in translation.

64. Staff recognise the importance of including parents in their child's learning. From the time children enter the foundation stage, parents are visited at home by staff and encouraged to meet other parents at the weekly meetings. A carefully planned schedule provides parents with useful ideas of how they can help their child learn at home. For example, a video and talk about numeracy demonstrated to parents how they could contribute to learning by counting alongside their child and encouraging their child to experience shape and size. Parents are valued. A well-equipped room has been set aside for their use. Information regarding benefits and support groups is clearly displayed and parents report this is important to them. Education and health staff make home visits and give advice to parents on topics such as equipment to aid accessibility.

65. Many parents help in school, in the classrooms, at lunchtime and on visits out. A strong Parents and Friends Association organises social and fund raising events. In addition to raising substantial amounts of money for the school, the association provides a support network for parents who need help.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Prior to the school opening, there had been bitter opposition from some parents and staff to the amalgamation. The school opened in a very short time scale with no opportunity for staff training. Understandably, most staff were very apprehensive and this contributed to an acrimonious start. The headteacher and senior managers have worked tirelessly to successfully bring about a change in attitude and in performance. Determined to unite concerned staff, they have provided numerous opportunities for staff to work with those from 'the other school' and to increase their knowledge and skills. For example, by ensuring that teacher and support staff in each new class came from different establishments a sharing of expertise has been possible, there has been a familiar face for pupils in each group and this has been successful in to improving relationships.

67. Two years on, the mission statement, 'Together we achieve', permeates most aspects of school life. Very high priority is placed on the inspiration and motivation of all staff. The headteacher and her senior managers provide very effective leadership, and, in the very short time that the school has been open, have created a warm and supportive ethos in which pupils and staff are valued as individuals. The school's aims and values, compiled by all staff, are reflected well in the practices of the school.

68. Senior managers are aware of the priorities for further development and are good examples for other staff, making themselves available to support staff during the course of each day. As part of measuring the effectiveness of the school, they have compiled a very wide range of evidence in all key areas of school life, such as 'teaching and learning', 'partnership with parents and carers', and for the curriculum. These demonstrate how the school has improved, and are used well to support further improvement. The school evaluation file detailing measures checking on the quality of teaching and its impact on learning evidences great strides in the quality of teaching and learning in the time the school

has been open. Initiatives such as shadowing an individual pupil throughout the school day highlighted variable lesson planning, the way support staff are used and the use of new technology as areas for improvement. Much of this has been tackled through training with the result that, when the activity was repeated twelve months later, there had been progress in each area.

69. The governors, senior management team and some teachers know what is happening in classrooms and the impact that practice has on pupils' learning. Until the opening of the school, some teachers had very little management experience. Senior staff have worked exceptionally hard to provide knowledge and support to help those new to the role. In their time in post, all subject managers have compiled a useful file including development plans, policies and schemes of work which provide helpful guidance for teachers. English, mathematics and information communication technology have been subject to an in-depth consultancy by senior managers. The results have had a significant impact on achievement through observing what is taught and how it is taught. As a number of subjects are still to go through this process not all subject managers have had the opportunity to observe what is happening in classrooms, consequently their knowledge of what is happening in different parts of the school and their overall contribution to the school's development is limited. Managers recognise that whilst useful information has been gained from this exercise, a system of more frequent monitoring is needed to ensure continued improvement in all subjects.

70. Management of provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory. There is clear delegation to subject co-ordinators of responsibilities for different groups of pupils. Support needs are identified by analysis of assessment information, and a clear policy determines the nature of withdrawal. However, there are no arrangements for monitoring time lost, or formal arrangements for pupils to catch up on work missed. Staff have been well trained in the use of particular approaches, such as the picture exchange system of communication used for pupils with autism.

71. There is a strong commitment to creating an environment that reflects the many cultures and languages of the school's population. This is reflected in the helpful signs in several languages around the school. Support for pupils with English as an additional language is well managed. Responsibility for provision is delegated to a teacher, and funding is used to employ a bilingual assistant. There is a good range of resources, such as bilingual books and tapes for those pupils whose mother tongue is one spoken in the Indian sub-continent, but no resources in Chinese.

72. The governors make very good use of their professional skills and knowledge to help shape the direction of the school. The setting up and staffing of a new school has been extremely demanding on time and knowledge. For example, over 160 staff interviews were held in a matter of weeks. The composition of the governing body reflects the ethnic mix of the school. Asian parent governors report how they are able to explain the workings of the school and provide channels of communication between managers and those parents who have a limited understanding of the provision for special educational needs in English schools. The governors' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is very good and targets for development are set in a systematic way. Governors are fully committed to providing a high quality education for pupils and the monitoring of school improvement is a high priority. Many governors have regular and frequent contact with the school, taking part in training and working with senior managers to produce documents such as the Race Equality Policy. Some have taken part in 'pupil shadowing days' which highlighted areas for improvement. The governing body works very efficiently and its committees are effective. The headteacher provides extensive useful information to assist governors and inform policy decisions. Alongside governors, staff and parents are consulted

about areas for improvement. The resultant plan reflects the school's aims for improvement and reflects local and national priorities as well as whole school issues.

73. Secretarial and administration staff provide very good support to help the school run smoothly. Day-to-day management of finances is very good. All the recommendations of the recent audit report have been fully implemented. New technology is used very effectively for financial planning and accounting. As a member of the senior management team, the finance and business services manager plays an active role in the management of the school. She provides good quality reports for the governors on the financial administration of the school, and has established effective systems to monitor the budget.

74. The number of teachers and support staff is very high for a school of this size and type. Almost all staff employed in the two closing schools were appointed to the new school as there was a policy of no redundancy and no re-deployment. Nevertheless, the high staffing levels have been used imaginatively to create teams of staff to support individual learning needs and to extend pupils' experiences, for example by providing opportunities to work alongside pupils in mainstream education. Many teachers and support staff are very experienced and well qualified. This has a significant impact on pupils' achievements. Senior managers provide very good support for new and less experienced staff. Induction procedures are very good for both teaching and non-teaching staff. A copious amounts of staff training has taken place over the last two years. Effective policies to monitor the performance and development of all staff are well implemented. The very good support and opportunities for professional development enabled the school to gain an Investors in People Award in 2002.

75. The extensive accommodation is generally very good. Interior decoration, furniture and fittings are of a high quality. Specialist rooms, for the teaching of subjects such as art and information communication technology for both secondary and primary aged pupils contribute to their achievements in these subjects. The four halls allow teachers to work with pupils of differing physical ability separately during physical education lessons thus ensuring all work at appropriate levels. Similarly, the four rooms designed to stimulate all the senses are used in innovative ways to support the teaching of most subjects, and to help pupils with more complex and profound needs. The provision of a Toy Library encourages parents to play and work alongside their child, thus contributing to learning. The book library is small and not well positioned. The layout of the room is not suitable for pupils who use wheelchairs to access to books and information. The well-resourced and spacious parents' room is used very effectively each week for parent groups to meet socially and to learn more about their child's education.

76. Equipment to support teaching and learning is good overall. Very good resources for information and communication technology allow all pupils to take part in all learning experiences regardless of severity of need. Most resources are of good quality and easily accessible to staff and pupils. Very good use is made of the excellent technology equipment such as interactive white boards to enhance the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Whilst the school is maintained to a high standard, this masks the underlying problems associated with ageing buildings such as the inefficient heating systems. Well-maintained grounds and well-designed gardens and play areas provide very good venues for social opportunities for all pupils.

77. Managers have produced a 'Best Value' statement for finance. Whilst they have a clear understanding of the principles involved, the document has been written to evaluate the educational provision and to reflect the current good practice. In order to improve, the headteacher and governors have sought parent and pupil opinions of the provision through a questionnaire to parents and through the school council. Responses to the questionnaire

have been carefully analysed and used to identify whole school issues, such as homework, as well as individual and departmental needs. An attempt has been made to compare the school's cost to that of similar schools. When making purchases, the school engages in competitive tendering, consulting widely on major expenditure decisions. Consideration has been given to systematic procedures to enable the governors and the senior management team to measure and check the impact of the major spending decisions on raising standards.

78. As a result of the amalgamation, the school has inherited a very large budget. This has protected job security and enabled considerable improvements to be made to the accommodation. The substantial reserves at the end of each financial year have been carefully documented with details of planned expenditure. The governors and headteacher are aware that they receive a generous budget and are currently working with the Local Education Authority to phase an adjustment. The surplus funding has been managed very well, aiding a smooth amalgamation over a very short period of time and has enabled the school to carryout an ambitious range in inclusive activities with mainstream schools.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. Whilst maintaining the many strengths of the school, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- Improve achievement in science in Years 7 – 11 and French in Years 7 - 9
(paragraphs 5, 7, 30, 111, 115, 116, 149, 150)
- Further improve attendance
(paragraphs 19, 54)
- Ensure all subject managers have a clear overview of what is happening in their subject by monitoring more frequently
(paragraphs 30, 69, 103, 122, 136, 151, 162, 167)

In addition to the above, the following should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan.

- Monitoring time that pupils spend out of lessons and providing opportunities for them to catch up on what they have missed. (paragraphs 36, 102)
- Ensuring homework is consistent and that tasks set support what is done in lessons. (paragraphs 29, 61)

All the above have been identified in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	106
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	39	37	17	3	1	0
Percentage	8	37	35	16	3	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	162
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	54

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	64

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	16.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
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	97	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	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	39	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	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

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.8
Average class size	8.5*

* registration group size, teaching groups 6.5

Education support staff: YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	57
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1148

FTE means full-time equivalent.

* this figure includes £155,000 given to set up a new school

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	2,569,058*
Total expenditure	2,434,979
Expenditure per pupil	15,218
Balance brought forward from previous year	150,639
Balance carried forward to next year	290,999

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
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	159
Number of questionnaires returned	76

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	18	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	33	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	37	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	32	14	1	1
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	22	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	15	0	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	24	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	76	23	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	12	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	25	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	21	5	0	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

80. Work with young children in the foundation stage and their parents is a strength of the school. Children are admitted from the age of two. At the time of the inspection, there were three three-year olds and the remaining children were four. All of the three-year olds attend part-time, two for two whole days and, where parents are able to provide transport, one for half days. A carefully planned programme helps children settle into school life. Children quickly become familiar with routines through the daily singing of well known songs, and pictures of the activities they will be undertaking. The teacher has invested time and energy establishing close links with parents and carers, including weekly meetings. This has instilled confidence in parents and has been instrumental in helping them find ways to contribute to their child's development, by agreeing targets for the next stage of their child's learning, for example.

81. The quality of teaching is very good. All the required areas of learning are taught equally well. Teachers, support staff and health professionals work effectively as a team, providing a stimulating, fascinating environment which helps young children learn. Assessment when children first join the school gives a clear picture of each child's level of attainment. Understanding and skills are recorded and the information is used to plan individual programmes, carefully tailored to each child's specific needs. Planning is detailed and activities are meaningful and challenging. As a result, children make very good progress towards their personal targets. Staff ensure that children with additional needs are comfortable and that they are aware of what is happening. For example, staff make sure that any symbols or objects being discussed are within 10 centimetres of children who have visual impairment. In many cases, physical needs such as feeding through a gastro-tube and physiotherapy are undertaken discreetly in the classroom to avoid losing valuable learning time. Children have fun, and enjoy learning because of the lively, imaginative and enthusiastic way lessons are presented. Throughout the foundation stage, high quality records of individual achievements are maintained, then bound and presented to parents as each child moves on to the next class.

Personal, social and emotional development

82. Children make very good progress in their personal development because of the very wide range of experiences offered to them. On arrival, children are greeted warmly by staff. In response they beam in anticipation of what is to come. Whatever their abilities, children are expected to make choices in lessons and in their free time. For example, they choose between two colours of paper, or who they sit next to. Conscious that children with severe, profound and complex needs can be isolated, staff provide opportunities for pupils to be aware of who they are sitting next to by turning them to face each other in their special chairs and supporting them to touch each other's hands. A weekly lesson with children from a local mainstream nursery has proved beneficial to both parties. Children wait in eager anticipation for their friends to arrive, then work and play alongside each other expressing their likes and dislikes. A respect for the beliefs of others is fostered. This was demonstrated when a child from the mainstream nursery arrived in her special party dress for Eid Mubarak, with rangoli patterns decorating her hands. The young girl stood proud in her finery, as the teacher explained the significance of the occasion; the children reverently stroked her velvet dress. At the end of each day, children reflect on what they have learned and listen to the plans for the following day.

Communication, language and literacy

83. Achievement is very good because all staff use every opportunity to extend children's understanding of signs, symbols and the spoken word. All children are expected to make a response depending on their level of need. Some make contact with their eyes, others exchange a picture for an object such as a drink, and some make a sound. All children are becoming more vocal and beginning to form sounds through using a microphone. They are amazed at the sound of their voices as they gurgle into the 'mike' and giggle as they realise they have produced the sound, endeavouring to make a louder or longer sound the next time. An attractive, comfortable reading corner has been established where children share books with adults. Prominent signs label different areas of the classroom so some children begin to recognise that text has meaning. Children enjoy listening to stories and poems. All are read with expression, successfully maintaining children's interest. Poems such as 'Here comes the Ball' are used as a basis for other work with children; for example they maintained intense concentration whilst they followed a ball with their eyes from left to right, then right to left.

Mathematical development

84. Achievement is very good because staff consistently draw children's attention to number, shape and size, and they match the activity to each child's level. Those who are able to sometimes join in number songs. They become aware of numbers when listening to adults counting how many children are present, for instance, counting toys in and out of boxes and counting coats in the cloakroom. Higher attaining children are aware of 'one more' through stories such as 'Kipper's Friends', when four friends are joined by 'one more' then there are five 'altogether'. Positional vocabulary is taught with humour and at a level children understand by telling stories and using toys placed 'next to' each other. Children enjoy such activities. They chuckled as a snake and a rabbit jumped 'in' and 'out' of the toy box leaving their poor teacher breathless. An awareness of 'big' and 'little' is gained through actions such as the 'rubbish search' when staff encouraged children to put their litter in the 'big' bin. Children who have more profound and complex needs hold circles and fix their gaze on shiny objects. As they progress they begin to track movement, such as shiny water flowing downhill.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

85. Children enjoy the activities provided immensely. They are visibly bursting with anticipation as they are led into the 'sensory room' that has been set up as a jungle or a cold climate. They take on the guise of 'Edward the Explorer' as they follow a simple trail through white 'snow' and silvery blue 'ice', encountering penguins and fish. In the jungle, they listen to the sound of exotic birds as 'crocodiles' slither out of the water, "snapping their jaws" and "thrashing their tails". During a visit to a 'hot country' children dressed in jallabas, visited a souk and made couscous, eating it with their fingers. Children have an awareness of colour and light. Higher attaining children know light comes from the sun and that the sun helps plants grow. All have planted seeds and have experienced touching and smelling the plants in the special garden.

Physical development

86. Great emphasis is placed on children's physical development. Most of the children have a very limited range of movements. Nevertheless, all make very good progress because of classroom activities and additional therapies such as hydrotherapy and regular work with the physiotherapist. Children increase the length of time they support their heads or stand in their special frames. Some make very good progress in the length of time they can sit

unsupported. Children become aware of their body through daily action songs where 'arms, arms' are raised, extending the range of movements and contributing to mobility. All children have a personal target for this area of learning. During lessons, staff provide opportunities for children to be out of their chairs and standing frames, giving them freedom and the opportunity to move unrestricted. Where appropriate, attractive toys and shiny objects are placed just out of reach, to encourage more mobile children to pull themselves up to a standing position and move forward. Children who are sufficiently mobile are assisted by members of staff to 'walk' between activities thus increasing the strength in their legs and establishing a pattern for walking. When handling small objects and toys, some children are able to grasp, but others need a helping hand.

Creative development

87. Children achieve very well in this aspect of their learning. They explore a very wide range of media and, with adult help, produce items such as colourful animal masks. As part of their work 'in the jungle' they have produced black and white striped patterns, emulating zebras, with adults holding their hand to guide the brush. In other activities, children choose the colours and materials which appeal most to them. With help, they control a computer programme with a special ball to produce line patterns. Children love investigating sounds, and beat drums with gusto. They nod and smile at the familiar songs that accompany each lesson. Music is used very successfully to create an atmosphere, to calm children down or to motivate them for action.

ENGLISH

88. Overall, pupils of all ages and levels of attainment make good progress. In speaking and listening, pupils make very good progress because teachers of all subjects place very good emphasis on the development of communication. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. Students in the Bridge Unit make very good progress in all aspects as they have numerous opportunities to develop and use their knowledge of literacy in a wide range of real-life and social situations.

89. In speaking and listening, pupils develop and improve their communication skills systematically as they progress through the school. Through the emphasis placed on working towards pupils' individual education plan targets in all subjects, pupils have opportunities to reinforce and develop their communication skills. Many pupils have more than one communication target on their plans, and this contributes well to achievement in this aspect. Many pupils join the school with a very limited ability to communicate verbally. Pupils are supported by a variety of systems to help them to communicate, including signing, the use of symbols, a system of exchanging pictures for items and electronic communication aids. As a result, they communicate their needs, feelings and preferences and gain a greater understanding of spoken language used around them.

90. The youngest pupils learn to listen carefully to their teacher and other adults, to follow basic instructions and take turns when communicating. For example, in 'hello' sessions at the start of the day or the beginning of lessons, they wait patiently for their turn, listen to the responses of other pupils, and exchange greetings with staff and with their peers. They start to make choices and communicate these effectively, for example at snack time. Pupils continue to extend their vocabulary steadily. By Year 6, those who use verbal language begin to answer questions in simple sentences rather than with single words or phrases. Those with more profound and complex needs answer similar questions using signs, symbols or communication aids. Many groups of pupils in this age group benefit from regular daily speaking and listening activities where the focus is on the development of communication.

91. Pupils in the secondary department continue to make very good progress enhanced by good quality drama. By Year 9, pupils recognise how body language and facial expressions contribute to communicating information about how people feel. Those with more profound and complex needs recognised the signs for 'happy' and 'sad' when they were distinguishing between happy and sad faces. Higher attaining pupils made faces to match happy and sad mask; they observed themselves doing this by using digital camera images then acted out a simple improvised story using the emotions. By Year 11, those who have little or no speech improve their inter-personal skills by greeting each other in more sophisticated ways such as tapping out the syllables of each others' names at the start of a literacy session. Those with the most profound needs communicate by making eye contact and use this to indicate likes and dislikes. Higher attaining pupils talk about their work in full sentences, answer questions with increasing confidence and use a wider range of vocabulary. Two of the oldest more able pupils were able to devise a list of appropriate questions for an interview with one of the inspection team for their class newspaper. They were sufficiently confident to conduct the audio-taped interview without staff support, and used a relevant formal style of language befitting journalists talking to an unknown interviewee.

92. In the Bridge Unit, students develop and use their communication skills in a range of practical contexts, including on work experience, at college or when dealing with customers when working on their 'mini-enterprise' activities. They have opportunities to gain accreditation for their achievements, for example in a unit using the telephone to find out information.

93. In reading, pupils of all ages make good progress overall, with some groups making very good progress where teachers are more knowledgeable and experienced in the teaching of basic reading skills. Pupils make good progress in developing their individual reading skills and a significant number of pupils in all age groups learn to read basic graded reading books successfully. Those with more severe needs learn to recognise and read signs and symbols, at first singly and later in symbolic sentences. The recently introduced Newfield communication system, NEOCAS is beginning to raise achievement in reading and writing, especially in groups where teachers and support staff are confident in its use and use the system regularly to support pupils' learning. In their response to reading, pupils make good progress in understanding and responding to the texts they share as a group. Pupils in the primary department begin to recognise the main characters of a story read to them by their teacher, with higher attaining pupils recalling the sequence of events and reading along with the teacher. Pupils with more severe needs learn to sign the names of each character as they appear. For example, when reading 'Dear Zoo', pupils signed 'elephant', 'snake', 'dog' and 'lion' and had enormous fun roaring each time the lion appeared.

94. Older pupils respond to a wide variety of texts recommended by the National Curriculum programmes of study. Those in Years 7 to 9 share texts including Greek myths and legends, classic novels such as Charles Dickens' 'Oliver Twist', multi-cultural stories and a range of poetry, including modern poems and some by Christina Rossetti. They begin to understand the language and suggest adjectives to describe characters, such as those from a play script based on Homer's Odyssey. Some are aware of prepositions, and in response to an electronic story, take turns to show this; some place a toy dog in the right place in relation to a model kennel, others point with their eyes to the correct location.

95. By Year 11, pupils have an awareness of a good range of literature, including works by Shakespeare, Steinbeck and a play script based on The Diary of Anne Frank. They experience a variety of media texts such as newspaper articles and web pages from the Internet. Higher attaining pupils remember the characters and write descriptions of them. They recall and write about the main events from the story, and compile reviews of books

they have read. Some gain nationally recognised awards for achievement in English. Students in the Bridge Unit continue to develop independent reading skills, and use reading as a key skill to support their learning in other subjects, such as home management. They read signs and health and safety information at college and in work placements.

96. In writing, pupils of all ages and levels of attainment make good progress. Those using the picture exchange system move from using a single picture or symbol to making symbolic sentences to record their work or to communicate their needs or responses to questions. Others begin to sequence symbols or combinations of words and symbols to write in English and when recording their work in other subjects, such as science. Though much of pupils' writing is related to the books they share as a group, they also learn about letter sounds and spelling rules; they use this knowledge to help them recognise words they do not know by sight and to help them spell correctly. Pupils in the primary department begin by making marks, and colour in carefully within two lines. They make patterns in sand, flour and with paint in preparation for forming individual letters. Higher attaining pupils practise forming the initial letter of their name. By Year 6, pupils make regular patterns and start to overwrite on words and sentences written for them by staff. Higher attainers learn to put sentences in the right order and begin to use capital letters at the start of the sentence and full stops at the end.

97. Pupils in the secondary department move on to writing their first and second names and learn to write a greater range of letters. By Year 9, they label characters from the books they read. Higher attainers write simple sentences independently from a bank of given words. Some learn to spell the names of days of the week and months of the year. Those with more profound and complex needs record their work in symbolic or pictorial form. For example, in work related to 'Macbeth', pupils assembled a picture of Macbeth, a crown symbol and the word 'king' as a character description. By Year 11, some pupils underwrite sentences that they have dictated to staff or key them on the computer using word or symbol grids to support their writing. Higher attainers write independently as part of accredited modules. The range of writing includes a simple autobiography, an imaginative poem on a 'spooky' theme, a book review or a descriptive piece on a place they have visited. Their handwriting is often neat and regularly formed, depending on their physical ability to hold and control a pen. Students in the Bridge Unit continue to develop their writing skills in a range of practical situations, for example when completing a work experience log, options forms to express preferences for activities or when writing a shopping list or recipe. Achievement is accredited through the National Skills Profile.

98. Teaching of English and literacy is good overall. It ranges from a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching observed in the primary department to many instances of very good teaching. Examples of very good teaching were seen in all age groups. Where teaching is very good, planning includes subject-specific learning objectives as well as opportunities for pupils to work towards their individual communication and literacy targets. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve, a detailed knowledge of the national literacy strategy and experience of how to teach basic reading and writing. In addition, they use information communication technology very effectively to support pupils' learning. Many of these elements were seen in a very good lesson with pupils in Years 10 and 11 that was conducted in the computer suite. The teacher had chosen a challenging text from a serious newspaper. She used technology well to support pupils' reading of a simplified version of the article, after the group had read the main piece together. She set clear objectives that were matched to pupils of different abilities within the group. She expected all pupils to produce a coherent piece of writing by the end of the lesson using personalised programmes on the computer. Consequently, all pupils were working at suitable levels to enable them to build on prior learning whilst being challenged to improve. All achieved the objectives and worked on their individual targets at the same time. Because the teacher

made the lesson interesting and had very good relationships with pupils all enjoyed the lesson and were motivated to learn.

99. A further strength of teaching is in the multi-sensory approach that many teachers use to enable pupils to understand texts. Teachers use music, fabrics, and items that feature in the story for pupils to look at and handle. They devise innovative ways for those with more profound and complex needs to record their work, such as making collages of characters and doing rubbings of related objects. In a very good lesson with younger pupils based on the story of 'The Gingerbread Man', pupils listened to the story, chanted the main character's rhyme, put features onto a sandpaper cut-out of the Gingerbread Man, 'wrote' in a tray of icing sugar and then iced their own gingerbread figures. They were helped to recall and retell the story by using an interactive book they had made that could be played on the class computer.

100. Where teaching is less effective, teachers plan too little work and do not match the work well to pupils' different levels of attainment; as a result, pupils produce too little work. Some teachers use too many worksheets, or rely on techniques such as pupils cutting and sticking to record their work when computers could be used to support pupils' writing. Some are less experienced in the teaching of basic literacy skills, and do not record pupils' errors when hearing them read, thus missing opportunities to look for patterns of weaknesses that might necessitate further work. This has resulted in some pupils who are otherwise potentially competent readers not having a secure knowledge of the highest frequency words in everyday use. Because the library is inconveniently sited in the school, some teachers do not make sufficient use of reference and non-fiction books and pupils do not develop the skills of reading for information.

101. Subject management is good. The co-ordinators provide very good support for colleagues. Good assessment procedures have been introduced, and these are used well by the more effective teachers when planning further work. Extensive use is made of digital photography to illustrate key gains in knowledge, skills and understanding, especially for those pupils who do not produce traditional written work. Whilst most teachers annotate pupils' records of achievement in good detail, others give insufficient information.

102. The curriculum provides a good balance of work in all areas of the subject and for pupils to access a good range of texts, which makes a good contribution to their cultural development. The curriculum is enriched by the use of drama and role-play, and by opportunities to work alongside writers such as a local poet who visited to share his work with older pupils. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is beginning to raise achievement. However, some pupils leave the classroom to attend therapy sessions or to deal with personal care needs, and miss substantial portions of lessons on a regular basis, often as much as forty minutes of an hour's lesson. Whilst these are necessary for many pupils, staff do not monitor how much time is lost, nor make arrangements for work to be caught up. This reduces some pupils' rate of progress.

103. Resources are good overall. Recently purchased texts are of good quality. Big books and class sets of the same book are being supplemented by activity packs added to by teachers as they use the text. However, these are still low in quantity, resulting in texts being repeated inappropriately with two, or sometimes even three age groups. All classes have small class libraries, but the school library is not sited centrally so as to be equally accessible from all areas of the school. It is not appropriately fitted out so that books can be reached by pupils who are wheelchair users. The coding system does not promote use by pupils of all levels of attainment. For example labels are written in capital letters. The joint subject managers are aware of these issues, and the need to improve resources is included in their action plan. Although they monitor teachers' planning and some pupils' work, they have

insufficient regular opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on learning in order to identify weaknesses or good practice that can be shared.

MATHEMATICS

104. Achievement is very good in all age groups. This is the result of the successful introduction of the National Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies, the setting of pupils by ability, and opportunities to use number and mathematical knowledge in other lessons.

105. Pupils in the primary department recognise numbers up to ten and use this knowledge, when counting out cups for break-time drinks for instance. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand the concept of adding on, using a number line to assist them, and select number symbols on request. A few pupils understand the 'none' or 'zero' when all the objects have been taken from the line. Some are beginning to trace, copy and write numbers independently. When working on shape, space and measurements, pupils engage in practical investigations, such as one to determine which foods are heavier than others. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils sort and make sets of objects by colour, shape and size. They name simple shapes and draw circles, squares and triangles, often labelling with the written word. Some progress to measuring the shapes, and understand that a square has four equal sides. Pupils with more profound and complex needs focus on giving, taking and holding objects, and on feeling the shapes of numbers. Higher attaining pupils complete simple additions and subtractions through practical activities and written work. They are developing an awareness of time with some drawing the hands on a clock to show o'clock and half past the hour. The most skilful recognise coins and find different ways of making 5p, 10p and 20p.

106. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand more complex number rules. When adding numbers together, they know that it is easier to split the number into tens and units and use the 3, 5 and 10 times table to make calculations. They handle data well, creating and interpreting findings on a bar chart. Weights, such as grams, and units of measurement are used in practical tasks and recorded in workbooks. Pupils with more complex needs enjoy a sensory approach to their learning and track moving objects; they taste, and observe different textures in a counting story about a birthday party. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils relate mathematical understanding to practical situations. They make mental calculations and count on from a given starting and finishing point, starting at 15 and finishing at 31, for example. Pupils extend their knowledge of time through the use of digital clocks, and experience a variety of ways of recording the time. A few pupils complete problem solving exercises relating to their understanding of time, and state how long it takes between waking up and arriving at school each morning. Work in shape, space and measurement involves pupils in sorting shapes into those which have straight and curved sides and describing three-dimensional shapes such as 'cuboid', 'pyramid' and 'prism'.

107. Students in the Bridge Unit work towards a range of accredited courses. They improve understanding of costing, and budgeting through 'mini-enterprise', projecting figures and ensuring they sell items at a profit. Students take part in investigative work and apply this knowledge to a range of practical tasks and work based activities such as time management. Pupils in all age groups extend their knowledge of mathematics in other lessons. For example, in physical education they count the number of skittles knocked over and how many are left.

108. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in all age groups. Most lessons were of a high standard; teachers demonstrated a good understanding of the subject and had organised the sessions very well. Pupils' needs were fully understood, support staff were deployed well, and work was very carefully planned with an imaginative use of resources. Teachers working with those with more profound and complex needs have high

expectations for them to succeed. In one very good lesson, on shape, these pupils extended their awareness of spheres and cubes through feeling the shapes; there was constant reinforcement of the vocabulary along with well-organised activities and skilful classroom practice. These factors combined to produce an environment that promoted very effective learning for all pupils. Staff form very good relationships with pupils. They expect pupils to follow their example. This was evident in the many examples of pupils assisting each other, as when one pupil helped another complete a worksheet. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use new technology to aid learning.

109. The subject is well managed by two very experienced teachers who have successfully provided training for other staff in the national strategy. They offer support to staff in the implementation of lesson plans, and have produced very good policy guidelines and an extensive scheme of work. Good procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the subject, and managers are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. They work very closely with parents, and plan to improve the range of homework offered to the pupils. One very good example of parental involvement was observed when a video was shown to illustrate the different levels of mathematical attainment throughout the school.

SCIENCE

110. Pupils in the primary department achieve well in science through a broad range of suitable learning experiences and good teaching. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science, and in developing their investigative skills. By Year 2, all pupils understand that breathing keeps them alive with higher attaining pupils knowing some of the characteristics of living things. All have grown plants from seeds, and higher attainers know that seeds need light, warmth and water for them to grow. Pupils at this stage observe changes, such as when water and flour are mixed together; they change the shape of dough by pushing and pulling. Higher attaining pupils record their findings in simple ways and increase their mathematical understanding. For example, they make sets of things that float, and those that sink. By Year 6, pupils have taken part in a good range of investigations, such as finding out how far bubbles will travel when blown by a fan at different speeds, and measuring the distance that toy cars travel down slopes covered with different materials. They begin to make predictions, with higher attainers recording their findings as tick charts, or recounting them as short sentences. Pupils of all ages enjoy their science lessons. They work hard, and those who need help co-operate well with the adults who provide this. Their good attitudes help them to make progress. In one class, a pupil well exceeded his target to remain involved in activities for 20 minutes; he was attentive and co-operative for almost 35 minutes.

111. In the secondary department, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science, but higher attaining pupils do not make enough progress in developing their investigative skills. Teachers do not assess or record pupils' achievements in developing an understanding of whether their investigations are fair or not. By Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding has progressed well. They develop their understanding of heat, for example. Higher attainers know that some materials burn better than others, and what to do if there is a fire. However, although they take measurements, and record using reports, drawings, tables and charts, they do not yet recognise an unfair test. Those with more profound and complex needs feel ice melting when they hold an ice-lolly in their mouths; they are supported to draw cold and warm colour charts. They have sound opportunities to make responses to a variety of stimuli, and make satisfactory progress. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding as they progress through their examination course Certificate of Educational Achievement. They continue to weigh, measure length and volume, plan

procedures, and record using a variety of formats, but do not progress well enough in their understanding of fair testing.

112. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 to 6, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. In all age groups, teachers plan very well to promote pupils' communication skills. Pupils' individual targets are incorporated well into lesson plans, and suitable activities are provided to help develop communication. For certain pupils, there are opportunities to track projected scientific images as they move across a screen. Where this is linked to a communication target, staff encourage pupils to choose between two pieces of equipment, such as a bicycle pump and a foot pump, that have been used in the lesson to explore moving air. Teachers introduce new vocabulary carefully, and reinforce it well. For example, teachers and support staff mark key words with hand signals, or signs, and this helps pupils to develop an understanding of scientific vocabulary. A few pupils begin to use these words too. At the end of a lesson, one teacher recapitulated by signing a sentence to reinforce the fundamental idea that had underpinned all activities; this helped to remind pupils what they had been learning about. A particular strength is the use of information communication technology for recording pupils' work and providing evidence of scientific achievement. Digital photographs and annotations are used well to build up records of pupils' achievements. In Years 7 to 11, some very effective use of video clips, downloaded from the internet, was seen. This showed the beating of the human heart, and it fascinated pupils.

113. Teachers make imaginative use of everyday objects that help to develop understanding. For example, a microphone was used to symbolise breathing; pupils listened to their own breathing, greatly amplified. After a lesson using an exercise bike, they noticed their breathing was faster. Scientific apparatus is used equally well to promote understanding. For example, pupils begin to understand that food contains energy when they find that water in a test tube is warm after it has been held above a burning peanut; the water was previously cold. Similar good use is made of scientific models, to help pupils understand where their heart is situated within their bodies, for instance. A beating drum and a stethoscope were used well to develop pupils' understanding of the rhythmic beat of the heart.

114. Numeracy skills are reinforced well in science. Younger pupils are encouraged to count and measure whenever there is an opportunity, and teachers challenge a deeper understanding when they demonstrate more difficult concepts, such as two thirds of the body being made up of water. Pouring water into a large bottle so that it was two thirds full showed this. Eight cups were counted out; showing how many glasses of water should be drunk each day. There are good opportunities to weigh, measure and time during investigations.

115. There is room for improvement in the setting of learning objectives in lessons. Most teachers set clear objectives, others set ones that are too general, and a few do not include scientific objectives at all. Most teachers review learning well at the end of the lesson, but do not maintain records to show what investigative skills pupils have acquired. The lack of comprehensive records is reflected in annual progress reports to parents, which are not always clear about what pupils know, understand and do, or what progress has been made in that year.

116. Leadership is good. Resources are good in the primary classes. The recently appointed specialist science teacher for the secondary classes has started to review and replace resources, many of which were found to be inappropriate. As planning develops, resources are being purchased. At present they are satisfactory. The accommodation is good; the science laboratory for secondary pupils is well suited to the needs of pupils, and is well appointed. Primary age pupils have a similar room, and staff make good use of the school's sensory rooms for science activities. The school has identified science as a priority

for development in Years 7 to 9, and has clear plans to support the development. All pupils have been assessed, and staff have prepared well to collect and analyse assessment information so that monitoring of the achievements of different groups of pupils can be carried out.

ART AND DESIGN

117. Achievement is very good in all age groups. Only four lessons were observed during the week and of those, two had only a very small number of pupils present due to the religious observance of Eid. Judgements are based on a thorough analysis of pupils' work, displays around the school and discussions with pupils and teachers.

118. Pupils in the primary department make very good progress. They have experienced the tactile qualities of a range of materials such as fabrics, textured and coloured papers, dough and sand. Their writing is developed as they make shapes with their fingers in a tray of sand or corn flour and water mixture. Pupils experience tearing paper and use glue sticks and spreaders to make collages of familiar literary characters such as Elmer and Penguin Small. They begin to experiment with doodle images on the computer, using different colours and free drawing to produce pictures. By Year 6, pupils have experienced a range of print making techniques using rollers, combs and blocks to make patterns. Pupils continue to develop their understanding of colour and shape through collage work and learn the technique of papier mâché by applying glued paper to a balloon to make a planet mobile. Pupils construct three-dimensional models and confidently describe how they made rockets by using tubes, yoghurt pots and silver paper. A wide range of materials is used to add dimension to art work, for example glitter and printing is applied to winter bubble pictures and forest scenes.

119. The very good progress continues through the secondary department. By Year 9, pupils are becoming familiar with the work of artists and use the work of artists such as Klee, Hockney and Miro as an inspiration for their own work. One pupil described how he looked at the work of Paul Klee to produce a fabric painting pattern and another used a piece by Matisse to inspire him to design a picture with coloured paper shapes. Pupils with more profound and complex needs use art activities to work towards their individual communication targets, such as maintaining eye contact. In a project based on space, they chose marbling ink colours, squeezed them onto water and placed paper on top, being amazed at the finished result. Skills in ceramics are very well developed by Year 11. Pupils have produced wall tiles, models of sheep and kings and queens. They are able to describe the techniques involved and know and understand that the clay has to be air dried, biscuit fired and then glazed. Older pupils working in the style of famous artists, such as L.S. Lowry, have sketched draft designs of the characters and used these to guide them towards their finished piece. They describe how they applied a colour wash to form the background, and then placed the figures on top. Photography is used well to show how patterns, shapes and shadows can be observed in the environment, on a recent snowy day, for example.

120. Students in the Bridge Unit, draw on their experiences and use numerous techniques to produce goods for sale in their 'mini enterprise'. For example, they have made cards to sell for Eid and Valentine's Day celebrations. They make a significant contribution to the appearance of the school by creating wall murals, such as on the wall of the swimming pool. Some pupils have painted the background, whilst others have designed fish and sea creatures which will eventually be applied to the surface. Students produce creative and imaginative pieces of work, such as a wall hanging of embroidered and sequined fruits, which is the result of combining different textures, through appliqué and fabric fusing techniques.

121. Overall teaching and learning are very good. In the lessons observed the teaching was never less than good. This is because the teachers had developed their expertise and because they provide activities designed to interest and match a very wide range of needs. Lessons were planned and organised very well, enabling pupils to experience three different activities. Support staff were deployed well, and encouraged and supported pupils effectively throughout the lesson, ensuring that they were fully engaged. Very good use was made of resources and the accommodation, with one lesson taking place in a multi-sensory room. This allowed pupils to experience images of space before making pictures of planets. Adults give suitable praise and encouragement, which contributes to pupils' confidence and very good relationships. From discussions with pupils of all ages, it is clear that they have a very good understanding of the processes involved. For example, one pupil described how he created a design, applied wax to form an outline and used paints to complete a fabric painting. Pupils assess their own work using worksheets and digital photography describing what they did, what they found difficult, and what they liked about the finished piece. Teachers extend pupils' knowledge of numeracy and literacy well. For examples pupils learn to recognise pattern and shape. Higher attaining pupils learn to recognise the names of famous artists through specially printed cards and symbols. All age groups use special computer problems to create work and to aid design.

122. The two subject managers support teachers from all age groups. They are well experienced and qualified staff who work well together to provide the school with a vibrant and varied curriculum. The policy is good, and the scheme of work enables pupils to build on their knowledge and skills as they move up the school. Specialist art rooms for primary and secondary age pupils contribute to work undertaken and to achievement. There are limited opportunities for the subject managers to monitor the teaching in other classes. The good range of resources is used well to provide a wide range of learning opportunities. Work is displayed well in corridors and in classrooms. The use of high quality frames for selected pieces of work celebrates achievement and enhances the school environment. Displays demonstrate the very good contribution the subject makes to other subjects such as literacy and numeracy through work on shapes patterns and storybooks. Art has a high profile and is promoted effectively through events such as Artsweek and Arts in the Environment. The school has recently applied for the prestigious 'Artsmark'

CITIZENSHIP

123. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well, as do students in Years 12 to 14. The subject is well developed, and discrete lessons are taught to each class. Pupils and students are given a rich variety of learning experiences, and teaching is very good. The subject has a high status in the school, and the curriculum is enriched considerably by the activities of the well organised school council, and fund raising activities. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' and students' personal development.

124. By Year 9, pupils have deepened their understanding of topics such as the media. For example, when researching Christmas stories in newspapers, those with more profound and complex needs show preference for certain stories, such as a mother with her new baby, born on Christmas Day. Higher attainers realise that newspapers print happy stories at Christmas time, and they write short sentences about their favourite ones. By year 11, pupils have extended their understanding of rights and responsibilities. All recognise acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Some demonstrate this by varying their facial expressions. Higher attaining pupils are aware of their rights when shopping, knowing if an item is broken when they buy it they have the right to return it. They also understand that if they decide they do not like something when they get it home, it is the shop's choice whether to give them a refund or not.

125. Students in the Bridge Unit make very good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding, as they work towards external awards. As part of their work improving the local environment, students have refurbished a patio garden at school. Those who need more support identify metal and paper that could have been recycled, when they sort through classroom bins and record what they have found using symbols and text. Higher attaining students take a keen interest in current affairs, and write about topical news items, such as the Blairs' house being redecorated. Students produce their own newspaper, the Newbridge Times. Items include interviews, such as one with the careers adviser, presenting the article as a dialogue between interviewer and subject.

126. Teaching is very good. Teachers plan a very broad range of relevant experiences, including visits, which are prepared carefully to allow pupils and students to benefit fully. For example, thorough preparation of pupils in Years 10 and 11 enabled them to participate well, alongside mainstream peers, in a local citizenship conference. During the inspection, pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 were seen preparing for a visit to the Mayor's Parlour. The teacher had brought in a good range of clothes and interesting objects for pupils to explore, and this helped them to learn the vocabulary associated with the visit, such as 'regalia' and 'mace'. During this lesson, the teacher drew well on the pupils' own experience of the school's council to develop their understanding of the role of the mayor and council in local democracy.

127. Teachers make very effective use of information and communication technology to support pupils' and students' learning. For example, they prepare computerised presentations that pupils activate by using switches, and encourage pupils and students to use digital cameras to record activities. Members of the school council receive their notification of forthcoming meetings by e-mail. There are numerous opportunities for pupils and students to further develop their literacy skills, through word searches, the use of software that generates symbols with text, and by contributing to class and school newspapers. Numeracy skills are reinforced well too; the counting of votes in school council elections is one very real example.

128. In an excellent lesson in Years 7, 8 and 9, exceptionally good use of role play enabled pupils to become involved in tracing the development of communication from medieval times to the introduction of the first postage stamp. The teacher had prepared a good range of 'props', so pupils were able to assume roles with realism, and careful thought had been given to involving pupils of all abilities. For example, the medieval king wore a crown and held a sword, and a wooden rocking horse became an integral part of the mail coach, held up by a highwayman. Pupils entered into their roles very well. As one was stripped of his 'jewellery', he looked ruefully at his wrist and remarked, 'It cost me a fortune'. The pace was brisk, and pupils became absorbed in the lesson. The success of this lesson was clearly demonstrated towards the end, when pupils recalled many salient facts, and some of the key words introduced, such as 'recipient'.

129. Leadership of the subject is very good. There is a clear and comprehensive policy, which, though awaiting approval by governors, guides work in the subject well. The co-ordinator has a complete grasp of his role and has been instrumental in establishing the subject's high profile. The action plan identifies the right priorities for development. Assessment is very good and utilises levels for personal and social development and National Curriculum descriptions for history and speaking and listening as a guide. In conjunction with staff, the co-ordinator has written its own level descriptors for attainment at higher levels. Staff are well placed to begin tracking pupils' progress by using the information it collects. Annotated samples of work and achievement provide good evidence for pupils' and students' records of achievement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

130. Achievement in food technology and resistant materials is good in the primary department and very good in Years 10 and 11 and the Bridge Unit. Achievement is very good for higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9, but not so for those with more profound and complex needs. High quality work displayed around the school supports learning and promotes pupils' and students' self esteem.

131. In the primary department, pupils have made biscuits following a pictorial recipe and have tried changing the shape and taste of the biscuits by using different shaped cutters and adding chocolate. Pupils with more profound and complex needs have exercised choice of ingredients and have sampled different tastes and textures. When working with resistant materials, all have investigated the properties of various materials and familiar products such as books and cards. They have experimented with ways of joining materials, such as using tape, adhesive and split pins. Some operate a hole punch by pressing a lever, and higher attaining pupils independently thread strips of fabric and other material through the holes. Pupils with more profound and complex needs indicate their preferred position for the hole and choice of coloured fabric by pointing with their eyes. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils use a range of cutting and shaping tools with confidence and are beginning to evaluate their work. Those with profound and complex needs exercise choice. They explore the shape and texture of a range of materials such as card, paper, wood, and plastic and are assisted in using these, to make stringed or percussion musical instruments, for instance. Higher attaining pupils design and construct a musical instrument with more independence. They manipulate materials, and fix and fasten them to produce an item. Some use the correct technical language. All make suitable choices of materials, experiment with changes and evaluate their constructions.

132. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 increase their awareness of fabrics. Those with more complex and profound needs have made colour choices and marked fabric using a roller. One pupil has produced a wall hanging based on the view from windows in different countries. Higher attaining pupils have experimented with fabric paint to achieve variation in colour. All have experienced 'wax resistance' and have created a fabric picture. When using resistant materials, all pupils designed and made a carrier bag, with higher attaining pupils achieving very well. However, this task proved difficult for pupils with more profound and complex needs because of the way the task was presented and because there was insufficient adult support for them to be successful. In food technology, all pupils have experienced making pizza and all have made choices of ingredients. Many pupils have increased their manipulative skills by mixing and making their pizza independently. All pupils have investigated different types of soup, focusing on taste and the effects of using differing amounts and types of ingredient. Pupils with a flair for the subject have linked with pupils in a mainstream, where they have produced money-boxes in wood, based on a book design. They have measured and marked their wood, cut it to size, joined the components and finished the work to a good standard.

133. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to explore the properties of materials and processes, and consolidate earlier learning. By Year 11, their work with fabrics has progressed and they have designed and made attractive wall hangings. Some pupils are able to use a peg loom with support, choosing the coloured materials and threading the loom. Pupils have the opportunity to work on joint projects. They work together to solve a design problem, for instance planning and testing out their strategy to construct a tower. In resistant materials they use a variety of cutting tools, scissors, craft knives and saws with more confidence. Higher attaining pupils measure with increasing accuracy and use the appropriate technical vocabulary when assimilating their work.

134. Students in the Bridge Unit work with greater independence. In food technology, higher attaining students follow written recipes and are critical of the finished result. They show good awareness of food hygiene, and their work is recognised through the Achievements in Food Skills “Silver Award”. Those with more profound and complex needs are assisted to follow recipes through pictorial symbols and exercise choice of ingredients. When working with resistant materials, students have designed and made a range of high quality products to sell including planters, candles, wheat bags and bird feeders. Students have used software for desk-top publishing to produce a very professional catalogue “Newbridge Enterprises”.

135. Teaching and learning is good in the primary department. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, teaching ranged from poor to very good. Some staff have not been able to make the adjustments in teaching style necessary to secure achievement for pupils with more profound and complex needs. Good and very good teaching is based on detailed planning and preparation by teachers who have a clear understanding of their pupils’ needs and levels of attainment. Resources are used efficiently and effectively so pupils enjoy learning. Appropriate levels of support allow pupils to increase their independence. Through very good opportunities, pupils test their own predictions and discuss outcomes. Pupils gain confidence because staff insist that pupils attempt tasks for themselves wherever possible, rather than providing so much support that it inhibits learning. In most lessons, teachers have a high level of expectation of pupils’ work and they reinforce this through praise. Where expectations are low, pupils’ behaviour is less positive and learning is inhibited. Staff help pupils improve their numeracy by providing opportunities to measure and compare sizes. Computer programmes are used to help pupils gain confidence in design the design element. All pupils increase their literacy with older and higher attaining pupils following written instructions.

136. The subject is managed by a non-specialist teacher who has planned and drafted good coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Suitable assessment procedures are in place and good annotated portfolios of pupils’ work have been compiled. The subject has not been observed by senior managers, and the co-ordinator has not had sufficient training or time in order to exercise the full responsibilities of what is a large role in co-ordinating all the staff who teach this subject. Resources are good. There is separate provision for resistant materials and food technology in both primary and secondary departments.

HUMANITIES

137. Overall, the quality of provision in humanities is good. Geography and history are taught together as humanities for pupils up to the end of Year 6 and as separate subjects in Years 7 to 11. Achievement is good in all age groups.

138. In **geography**, pupils in the primary department enjoy learning about different climates as they dress up, for the cold weather that they would experience in the arctic regions, for example. Younger pupils touch ice to reinforce their understanding of ‘very cold’, and enjoy the heat and sunshine of the Sahara desert as they dress in Bedouin style clothes and walk through trays of warm dry sand. Older pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 recognise the scenery and features of hot and cold climates, such as ‘icebergs’ and ‘sand dunes’ and chose appropriate clothing to wear in such climates. In **history**, pupils are aware that the Vikings lived a long time ago. Through wearing a helmet and trying on chain mail and shoes, they begin to understand the Vikings wore different clothes. Similarly, they have an awareness of the Romans, developed when visiting a nearby Roman museum.

139. In **history**, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have studied extracts about Blackburn from the Domesday Book, and have considered changes between then and the present day. Through drama, they have increased their understanding of periods such as the Civil War; activities included a graphic 'reconstruction' of the execution of Charles I. During this lesson, all took an active part as they listened to music of the period; pupils took on the roles of king, queen or executioner, royalist, cavalier or by-stander. Records show that pupils were very excited when they visited Preston museum and handled precious historical objects. Older pupils of Years 10 and 11 follow nationally recognised courses. One pupil linked with a mainstream school and gained a Grade 'B' pass in the GCSE history examination of the Oxford and Cambridge Board. Pupils with more profound and complex needs handle materials and interesting objects, look at pictures or watch video recordings. Higher attaining pupils take part in discussions, use computers and record their findings very successfully. All pupils have benefited from the visit from a group of actors who visited to give pupils experiences of life in Viking times. In **geography**, higher attaining pupils in this age group recognise features of the countryside such as hills and rivers, and compare them with those found at the coast. They have an increased understanding of the need to look after the environment and demonstrate this by keeping the school tidy.

140. The quality of teaching in humanities is consistently good. A striking feature is the use of objects, music and pictures to ensure all pupils are fully included in lessons. Lessons are carefully planned, with clear indication of the knowledge and skills pupils will acquire. Teachers make sure that the items they need are ready before the lesson starts, and on occasions they use computer slide presentations to help pupils understand the new ideas being taught. Good use is made of the Internet to provide a rich source of information and pictures. Teachers make sure work is sufficiently challenging to keep all pupils interested and yet not too difficult to put them off working. They are very skilled at keeping the pupils interested. They talk very calmly and with confidence, they treat all pupils with the greatest of respect and dignity. The good quality of teaching ensures that all pupils learn well. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution, enabling all pupils to take a full part in lessons. Their encouragement is clearly reflected in the interest and enthusiasm shown by pupils in all year groups. Pupils extend their vocabulary because staff emphasise new words, using signs and symbols for those with greater needs. Pupils become familiar with positional words such as 'above' and 'under' and improve their understanding of number by, for example, counting pieces of litter as they place them in the rubbish bin.

141. Management is strong. Each of the three managers has a responsibility, one focusing on geography, another on history and the third overseeing the provision. This works effectively because of close team work. Work in humanities makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

142. Overall, pupils achieve very well. Younger pupils make good progress in lessons. Progress in the secondary department and the Bridge Unit is very good because pupils and students are taught by the very knowledgeable and experienced co-ordinators.

143. In the primary department, pupils learn to use switches to control a toy, to produce music or images, and to operate equipment such as a fan or a light box. Higher attaining pupils understand that different switches perform different functions, and choose between two. They operate a remote controlled car with a joystick. In an English lesson, pupils used switches to turn the pages of a talking book on the computer. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils can programme a carpet robot to move forward and backwards with a high degree of accuracy. Pupils with more profound and complex needs experience this with support, and

enjoy tracking the robot's progress as it carries symbol messages and objects. When using a computer, higher attaining pupils drag and drop images onto a screen.

144. Achievement is very good in the secondary department as a result of very good teaching, very good resources, and the system of access designed by the co-ordinator. The majority of pupils navigate through the system independently to reach the required programme. One of the most skilful pupils has taken photographs around school, put them into Power Point for a presentation, and Word, to make a booklet. Pupils access the Internet for pictures, and copy and paste images as part of their work. They show familiarity with the keyboard, using 'backspace', arrow keys, and 'caps lock' to edit their work. Pupils draw on their knowledge, to create valentine cards, for example. Older and higher attaining pupils in this age group work with drop down menus, scroll bars and dialogue boxes, and use their skills very effectively in other subjects. For example, in English, one pupil has created a computerised presentation about Manchester United. Pupils with more profound and complex needs learn to use switches for a variety of purposes giving them access to equipment they could not otherwise activate.

145. Work for students in the Bridge Unit is very challenging, and exciting. Higher attaining students are collaborating in making interactive books. In an excellent lesson observed, students received email with attachments, from their mainstream link school; they opened, downloaded and saved the attachments. Others used a special programme to record their voice onto the page. A student with physical difficulties was the "test pilot" for one of the books, navigating his way through to check its accessibility. All students make very good progress at an appropriate level. In addition to working with computers, they increase their understanding of technology in daily life, such as use of a cash point, video recorder, and photocopier. Students are working towards accreditation through National Skills Profile and the Short Course GCSE.

146. Teaching and learning was good or better in all the lessons observed and analysis of work shows that such teaching is consistent. Pupils become increasingly independent because of the introduction of NEOCAS, the system devised and produced by a parent, one of the co-ordinators, and the technician. The system, which has achieved national recognition, allows pupils with physical, hearing, or visual difficulties, to access their area of work independently. The system ensures that the user's needs are catered for. For example, a signing environment is provided for a hearing impaired pupil, and a scanning system for switch users. The system is in use throughout the school and is the main reason for pupils' early independence in computer use. Teachers enable pupils increase their literacy by expecting them to recognise word and symbols to guide them through various programmes. Similarly staff help pupils increase their understanding of number, position and shape by drawing attention to these whenever possible.

147. Management is very good. The appointment of a technician has contributed significantly to the provision. The co-ordinators and technician provide very good support for their colleagues. As a result, new technology is used very effectively in other subjects and makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. All teachers have grown in confidence because of recent training, and are now enthusiastic practitioners. Interactive whiteboards are used for lessons in all subjects with some success. However, the one in the primary department is fixed in a position which limits its effectiveness, being in a corner of the room, and is too high for smaller pupils or those in wheelchairs to reach. Whilst staff endeavour to work around the problems, this combined with the fact that not all the computers have touch screens, limits the use of new technology for some pupils with more complex needs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

148. French is taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been disappplied in order to chose 'options' as their peers in mainstream schools would do at this time.

149. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils of all levels of ability concentrate well and improve their listening at a good rate. All pupils recognise when their teacher is greeting them and most respond, either with a sign or with the word 'Bonjour'. Higher attaining pupils know numbers to 20, and some know the names of some of the months of the year. Whilst some pupils recall vocabulary from previous lessons, others have difficulties remembering because lessons take place only once each week. This limits progress. Pupils of all levels of attainment are aware of the French vocabulary for items of food and drink, with higher attaining pupils making simple requests, for milk and bread, for example.

150. Teaching and learning in the two lessons seen was satisfactory. Both lessons had been very well planned, with opportunities for pupils to make progress towards their personal targets as well as improving their awareness of French. In one lesson, pupils with more profound and complex needs increased their awareness of French through taking part in a birthday party, and listening to a French version of 'Happy Birthday'. Though staff used signing well to accompany the lesson, many opportunities were missed to use French, for example 'merci' or 'au revoir'. In the second lesson, the teacher set a good example of pronunciation and, through verbal and visual prompts, higher attaining pupils extended their vocabulary of colours and recognition of the written words 'bleu' 'jaune' and 'vert'. Whilst French words and phrases were used, opportunities were missed for instructions such as 'écoutez' and 'regardez' and the lesson lacked pace. In both lessons, where appropriate, staff ensured Asian pupils, for whom this is a third language, understood what was happening. The experience of learning a language other than their own makes a positive contribution to pupils' confidence and to the development of their cultural awareness.

151. Subject management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, but now only teaches one group of pupils, as her role has changed with the introduction of European studies. As the subject is not yet due for monitoring, no classroom observations have taken place to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.

MUSIC

152. Music and the performing arts are strengths of the school. Music is greatly enjoyed by pupils in all year groups. Achievement is good in the primary department where pupils benefit from the use of music and song to support learning in different subjects. In numeracy, for example, learning is strengthened by the use of songs to help them remember the order of numbers. By Year 2, pupils are aware of a number of musical instruments, by listening to a piano accordion and feeling the vibrations produced by the passage of the air across the reeds, for instance. Pupils make good progress in the primary department so by Year 6, they are confident using percussion instruments, and take pleasure in shaking a set of small bells to the rhythm of the song. Those with more profound and complex needs turn their heads towards sound, such as a triangle, and play instruments with assistance.

153. Achievement is very good in the secondary department because of skilled teaching. By Year 9, pupils have produced a series of actions, different rhythms, symbols and sounds to create their own composition. Higher attaining pupils recognise the difference between crotchets and quavers, and use this to develop rhythm. During one lesson, each pupil created a unique rhythm using crotchets and quavers. Pupils in this age group are proud to be members of the signing choir. They achieve very high standards in performance, and

audiences marvel at the solo voices that are powerful and perfectly pitched. The choir is in demand for public performances and is currently rehearsing for the Lord Mayor's Concert. Similarly moving performances in lessons create a strong sense of spirituality. Pupils thoroughly enjoy performing and are eager to improve their skills. One senior girl played her clarinet especially for the inspector, although she had previously avoided playing in front of any audience. She was very successful in playing three different modern tunes based on light classical melodies. Strong teaching results in pupil making very good gains in handling, playing and listening to a very wide range of musical instruments. Some of the instruments are computerised, and as pupils experiment with the electronic instruments, they make very good gains in information and communication technology.

154. The teaching of music in the primary classes is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and sing tunefully, providing a good example for pupils. Lessons are very well prepared and the songs are carefully planned. Very good use is made of a wide range of compact discs and taped music. Teaching in the secondary department is very good; here, pupils benefit from instruction by music specialists. In the lessons observed, the teaching was excellent and pupils were highly motivated and successful. The teacher has a strong singing voice, and sang her 'registration' session at the beginning of the lesson. Each pupil received a different hello melody, which they repeated perfectly. The teacher is extremely highly skilled in being able to communicate with every pupil at his or her own level, whilst maintaining a level of challenge to which the pupils cannot help but rise. This ensures that all lessons are fun, animated and exciting. Pupils leave the classroom at the end each lesson having worked extremely hard, learned well and gained in confidence and competence. The work of the classroom assistants is invaluable as they support the pupils by signing and singing. They add a supportive voice to that of the teacher when working with a group who experience difficulties in singing. Support staff give useful cues to pupils and teachers, enabling all to perform in unison.

155. The subject is extremely well managed. The co-ordinator has very effectively raised the profile of the subject, and boosted the confidence of teachers who work in the primary department. Assessment is very good. Detailed records are maintained, and lessons planned in the light of pupils' performance and achievement. Music resources are very good and are carefully catalogued. Pupils are able to borrow from the very wide selection of instruments to practice in school or at home. Music makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spirituality is present in the awesome nature of the performance, moral elements are reinforced as pupils learn to work together in harmony, so social development is encouraged. The wide range of music from the United Kingdom and from other countries such as Africa and Japan helps develop cultural awareness, as does the study of the origins of different forms of music and the different instruments being used.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

156. Achievement is good in the primary department, and very good in the secondary department and the Bridge Unit where subject specialists teach most lessons. Pupils of all ages and levels of need are offered a wide range of learning opportunities. Pupils are grouped according to their physical needs and given challenging activities. For example, pupils and students with very limited movement and profound needs take part in a rigorous physical programme each week to maintain and extend their range of movement. All older secondary age pupils take part in outdoor and adventurous activities, either in the locality or during a residential stay at an activity centre; there are opportunities for canoeing, orienteering and abseiling in wheelchairs. Many of the activities are extremely challenging and make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.

157. In dance, pupils of all ages interpret music. Those who are able to move independently in different directions and at different levels, others need adult support to do this. A few use space well. Though most in the primary department make good gains, one class did not, because the activity lacked challenge; there was no contrast in the music used and no teaching to improve the quality of movement. Pupils in the secondary department make very good gains in imaginative dance and in traditional country dancing. Pupils who are wheelchair users have enormous fun 'wheelchair dancing'. Alongside their able bodied classmates, some propel their chairs independently as they weave in and out of their sets when dancing the Circassian Circle and the Flying Scotsman, for example. Those who need more support chuckle and nod their heads in time to the music as support staff manoeuvre them around, skipping, galloping and promenading to the music.

158. Achievement in swimming is very good in all age groups and for all levels of need. Most are developing confidence in the water and float with adult support. In each age group, a few pupils swim without help for short distances; a few pupils are confident swimmers, entering the water independently and, using a variety of strokes, swim on their back and front. The achievement of younger pupils, and those with greater physical needs, is equally very good because of skilled teaching and the use of the hydrotherapy pool where pupils feel safe. The use of music to create a calm atmosphere and familiar songs allows pupils to make very good gains. For example, in one lesson, the teacher had all pupils in one primary class using their arms to propel themselves as they sang 'Row, row, row your boat'.

159. Older pupils and students make very good progress in outdoor and adventurous activities because of a very good programme and detailed planning. When orienteering, they understand the rules for safety and follow a trail of over a mile with adult help. Higher attaining pupils align their map using a compass. Most match photographs on their map to features in the landscape. Those who are unsteady on their feet make very good progress in walking on uneven ground, and in ascending a steep flight of stone steps.

160. The quality of teaching and learning ranged from unsatisfactory to excellent, being good overall in the primary department and very good overall in the secondary department and the Bridge Unit. All staff are diligent in ensuring that pupils are safe when undertaking activities, by making sure they are correctly dressed and not wearing jewellery. Prior to outdoor activities, they assess any risks or hazards that pupils might encounter, and take suitable precautions. All teachers provide tasks at an appropriate level to help pupils warm up their bodies. Whilst teachers of older pupils encourage them to recognise the impact of exercise on their bodies, this is not so in many of the lessons for pupils in the primary department. The use of demonstration to improve movement is variable. Where it is used very effectively, particularly in the secondary department, pupils improve their skills at a very good rate. This was observed in a Year 10 and 11 dance lesson where, after the teacher's demonstration, pupils with more severe needs and limited physical ability made very good progress in mirroring each other's movements. In addition to following the movement of the arms, they endeavoured to copy facial expressions. Similarly, where teaching is more effective staff have the knowledge to help pupils improve their performance. Students in the Bridge Unit improved their aim and distance in curling because the teacher asked them to consider their starting position and the angle of their arms when making the push.

161. Pupils and students of all ages and levels of attainment make very good improvement in communication and numeracy because teachers plan for them to do so. Most give increasingly complex instructions, so pupils improve their listening and increase their concentration. Instructions are accompanied by clear signs and, where necessary, staff check that those who do not speak English as their main language understand what is expected of them. In dance and gymnastics, pupils count the number of steps and discuss patterns. Music is used very effectively, especially in dance. For example, pupils interpreted

Japanese music, making flags and streamers to imitate Japanese dancers. This makes a very useful contribution to pupils' cultural development.

162. Subject management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a good knowledge of physical education, and has worked hard to produce a programme which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the physical needs of all pupils. She has compiled a useful checklist of skills for each element of the subject and this gives a clear indication of what pupils need to do next to improve. Subject monitoring is imminent. To date no classroom observation has taken place, and the co-ordinator has a limited overview of what is happening in the secondary department. Resources are good overall. The generous accommodation with four halls allows all pupils in each age group to have lessons at the same time, thus facilitating grouping according to need.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

163. Achievement is very good in all age groups as the result of very enthusiastic teaching with a multi-sensory approach. The sights, sounds, smells and tastes, associated with a range of faith celebrations reinforce pupils' learning. Pupils follow the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus, adapted to meet their special needs.

164. During the primary years, pupils become aware of the rich diversity of world faiths, and they learn that though we are all different, we are all special. Through work on 'beginnings' they consider and take part in Christian baptism. By Year 6, pupils consider similarities in religions and how to learn from the beliefs of others. For example, they explore the value of elders in Hinduism, and respect for grandparents in all families. As they listen to Indian music and smell burning incense, they learn about the Muslim call to prayer, and experience 'wudu', or ritual washing.

165. In the secondary department, pupils compare the rites and rituals of a number of faiths, including Christian baptism, and Purim, the Feast of Lots, in Judaism. They recall the story of Esther, and the importance of festival to Jewish people. In one lesson, the reasons for Ghandi's visit to Lancashire was very well explained and illustrated with film excerpts. By Year 11, pupils use the Internet to explore a Mosque, and are fascinated and very respectful, as they learn more about Muslim worship. Those of the faith are proud to contribute from experience. Students in the Bridge Unit extend their knowledge of Christian festivals and beliefs, and have made a certificate of baptism. Through celebrations such as Chinese New Year, students contribute from their own experiences of celebration.

166. In all the lessons observed, teaching was very good, and pupils made very good progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge; they use resources very well to bring the subject to life. The consistent practice of providing sensory experiences to reinforce learning is very effective. The emphasis on acceptance and celebration of difference makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. New technology brings images from around the world alive and the very good emphasis on key words encourages pupils to understand the meanings of these.

167. Apart from the provision of schemes of work, which are implemented imaginatively by those teaching the subject, there is little co-ordination or monitoring of planning, teaching and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

168. Progress is very good because lessons are planned and delivered very well and because of the high priority placed on pupils' personal development. Through daily routines,

pupils of all ages become increasingly independent; those with more severe and complex needs increase their ability to contribute to their personal care, and to make choices.

169. In all age groups, pupils become increasingly aware of the importance of friendships and relationships, safety, healthy eating and hygiene. Through repetition, understanding increases. For example, safety for younger pupils includes being aware of things not safe to put in the mouth, such as medicines or household products, while older pupils, in Years 10, 11 and the Bridge Unit, are well informed about the dangers of smoking and drug and substance misuse. Pupils' knowledge of sex education extends from body awareness in the primary department, through body changes in puberty in the secondary department, to essential information about sex and relationships in the Bridge Unit. Pupils are taught to say "no" to things that may harm them, and things that make them uncomfortable. They learn to be assertive if someone does something they don't like, and can list people they would tell and trust.

170. Pupils in the primary department learn in practical ways, for instance to be aware of litter, and clear up after themselves. This results in pupils taking a pride in their environment. Many older pupils are aware of the need to eat a healthy diet. Higher attaining pupils know food provides energy and give examples of foods containing carbohydrates and fat. A few understand why fat is bad for you.

171. Teaching and learning is very good; lessons are well planned, practical approaches are used successfully, and all topics are handled with sensitivity. Most of the recording is in the form of photographs and saved work which provide some evidence of progress. However, there is no written evaluation or recording of individual pupil's progress. Nevertheless, very good progress is clearly shown in the personal development of pupils throughout the school, in their sense of responsibility, their care for others, their self-confidence and independence. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to improve their knowledge of new technology by using the Internet for information. On these occasions, higher attaining pupils make good improvement in their reading as they recognise familiar words.

172. Subject management is good. A good policy and useful programme have been produced. The school is taking part in a pilot study for sex education, run by community nurses, including a male community nurse who has, in the past, provided one to one support for older pupils.