

INSPECTION REPORT

PARK LANE SCHOOL

Macclesfield

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111508

Headteacher: David Calvert

Reporting inspector: Alan Lemon
20165

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th June 2002

Inspection number: 250216

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
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Park Lane Macclesfield Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nick O'Brien
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
8937	Howard Allen	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2480	Christine Gilder	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Special educational needs	
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Religious education	
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Geography History French English as an additional language	

22620	Bob Wall	Team inspector	Science Music Physical education Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Park Lane is a community special school with designated places for 82 boys and girls between the ages of 2 and 19. The school has 71 pupils on roll made up of 38 boys and 34 girls, a few of who are children below statutory school age attending part-time. Pupils travel to school from a wide area of Cheshire and come from quite varied backgrounds. They are almost entirely white. There is one Chinese girl, a student over the age of 16, who understands English and communicates. Most pupils and students have severe learning difficulties and around one quarter have complex learning difficulties. Three pupils are diagnosed as autistic and they have challenging behaviours. Another group of pupils, nearly one third of the total, are classed as having high dependency, either exhibiting challenging behaviours or having additional medical needs or sensory impairments. The attainment of pupils, when they are admitted is well below the first level of the National Curriculum.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Park Lane School is a good school with very good features, except for the provision for students over the age of 16. Teaching is good and quite often very good. Pupils make good progress overall and in many areas they achieve very well. Apart from the provision for students, the school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pre-school age children and pupils in their primary years learn very effectively because they are taught very well.
- The school assesses pupils' needs and their progress very well and uses its assessments very effectively to set targets for them and plan their work.
- Teachers, classroom assistants, together with the rest of the school's staff work very well as a team and provide a high level of care and support to all children, pupils and students.
- The school provides very good learning opportunities for children under the age of 5 and between Years 1 and 6.
- It teaches literacy and numeracy very well, with a very good emphasis throughout the school on learning to communicate.
- It makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development and they adopt very good attitudes towards the school and to learning, including behaving very well and developing very good relationships.
- The partnership with parents is very good.

What could be improved

- The teaching and the accommodation for students over the age of 16
- Curriculum plans in science, design and technology, music and physical education
- The specialist facilities, in particular in food technology but also in science, art and design and technology
- The use of information and communication technology in other subjects

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

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in December 1997 against a backdrop of much time being needed in the intervening period to establish effective senior management. The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action. In particular, there has been a very good improvement in geography and history. The school has resolved some of the curriculum planning issues satisfactorily but has made significant improvements in its assessment and records of pupils' progress. The amount of time for

teaching is now in line with recommendations. A new building extension provides very good additional classroom space. Teachers have had training in using information and communication technologies and these resources have improved. But the wider use of information and communication technology remains unsatisfactory. High standards in the Foundation Stage have been maintained and there are good improvements in English, mathematics and design and technology. However, improvement has not been sufficient in French, music and physical education as well as in provision for students over the age of 16.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	
reading	B	B	C	C	
writing	B	C	C	C	
mathematics	A	A	A	C	
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	C	
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.

Children, up to the age of 5 are making very good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Up to the end of Year 6, pupils are achieving very well in all subjects except English and art where achievement is good overall. Pupils' progress by the end of Year 9 is very good in mathematics, geography and history, good in information and communication technology and satisfactory in English, science, design and technology, French, music and physical education. Overall, pupils' progress is satisfactory by the end of Year 11. They achieve very well in mathematics and well in information and communication technology, satisfactorily in English, art and design and technology, but their progress in science and physical education is unsatisfactory. Students over the age of 16 make unsatisfactory progress overall, which is the result of ineffective teaching and the impact of poor accommodation. They make good progress in information and communication technology, satisfactory progress in English, mathematics, art and design and technology. However, in science and physical education their progress is unsatisfactory. No judgement was possible in relation to progress all pupils make in religious education. All pupils and students achieve very well in communicating using speech, signing, symbols and electronic aids. Progress in reading is good and it is satisfactory in writing. Pupils of all ages achieve very well in recognising and using numbers and coins. The group of pupils between Years 3 and 10 with complex learning difficulties are achieving very well. They increase their awareness and become more involved in lessons.

The school sets realistic performance targets for groups of pupils throughout the school in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. Pupils, up to the end of Year 6, are well on course to achieve all their targets. Pupils, up to the end of Year 9 are well on target in English and mathematics and most should reach their science target. However, beyond Year 9 science targets are unlikely to be met.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are happy to come to school and enjoy the good atmosphere around the school and in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The great majority of pupils behave very well at all times. The few pupils presenting very challenging behaviour are able to engage in learning for most of the time.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils grow in self-confidence. They happily take on responsibilities around the school. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance matches that of similar schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

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

Teaching and learning is good overall and meets the needs of the majority of pupils although not those in the group containing some Year 11 pupils, but mostly students over the age of 16. Teaching and learning in the group of pupils between Years 3 and 10, with complex learning difficulties, is good. A significant proportion of the teaching observed, mainly involving children under the age of 5 and pupils in their primary years is very good. This is based on very effective planning, which ensures the work in lessons is organised to suit the needs of each pupil. Teachers and classroom assistants work very effectively as a team. Classroom assistants offer considerable experience and expertise to promoting pupils' learning. Expectations are high, time is used very well and pupils are very productive throughout lessons. The relationships with pupils are very good, which ensures they are managed very well. Staff manage the challenging behaviour of a few pupils very effectively. Teaching in English is good overall. Throughout the school pupils and students are being taught very well to communicate, using signing and symbols. In mathematics, teaching is very good up to the end of Year 11 and thereafter, for students it is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively and they are prominent in the teaching of many subjects. In personal, social and health education, teaching is very good. No overall judgement on teaching in science was possible. In the small proportion of teaching that was unsatisfactory, affecting pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students over the age of 16, lessons were not planned effectively and time was wasted.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The learning opportunities provided for children under the age of 5 and pupils of primary age are very good. They are satisfactory overall for pupils of secondary age and unsatisfactory for students over the age of 16. The provision for literacy and numeracy across the school is very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The one Chinese student, who has complex learning difficulties, responds to instructions and understands the work in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good. Pupils are made to feel valued and they are given good opportunities to work together and manage responsibilities. Staff are very good role models. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness although multi-cultural dimensions are not sufficiently prominent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are cared for very well. All of the skills of staff are brought together very effectively ensuring pupils' special educational needs are met. Challenging behaviour is managed sensitively and very well. Teachers make very good assessments of pupils' progress and use these in setting appropriate individual targets.

The school gives a high priority to its links with parents and these are very good. It has provided them with training on sign language and organises a support group for parents of pre-school age children with special educational needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Very good in respect of the work done in the foundation stage and primary phase. Unsatisfactory in relation to the provision for students over the age of 16, although the school has been aware of, and is addressing, this. Overall, the school has a clear sense of purpose. The climate of the school is very positive and all staff work highly effectively as a team.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors support the school wholeheartedly and have responded positively to the need to be more involved. They are well – informed on the work of the school although not in as good a position as possible to make their own minds up on what is effective or not.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Pupils' progress is closely monitored. Teaching is observed regularly by senior managers and this practice is expanding to involve other key staff. The curriculum and other provision is not scrutinised closely enough.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The very effective teamwork of the staff gives good value. The school plans and manages its finances and developments well. It takes reasonable steps to check it derives best value in its purchase of goods and services.

There are a good number of teachers and support staff. Overall, the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory although the new extension has provided some very good additional spaces. The demountable building for the students is wholly unsuitable to the demands of their curriculum and meeting their individual needs. The curriculum for the pupils of secondary age is constrained by the lack of specialist subject facilities, especially in food technology but also in science, art and design and technology. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that their children like school • the teaching is good and sets high expectations • they are comfortable in contacting the school and are kept well-informed by the staff and school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of time allotted to teaching • more use of communication aids • the number of out of school activities

Inspectors agree with parents on what they see as the strengths of the school. Inspectors found the amount of time for teaching each subject is satisfactory. The teaching of communication was seen to be very good across the school. Inspectors found there to be a good range of out of school activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children up to the age of five and pupils up to the end of Year 6 achieve very well as a consequence of being taught very well and given very good support. Teaching is not as consistently strong for older pupils, although by the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving well overall. The pupils around this age with complex learning difficulties who are grouped together are achieving very well. Up to the end of Year 9 there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or between pupils with different special educational needs. Up to Year 11, pupils are in the main grouped according to whether they have severe or more complex learning difficulties, which results in most teaching being sharply focused on the best approaches for these different groups. This contributes significantly to most pupils making at least good progress, especially those of primary school age and younger, whatever their special educational needs. However, the group made up of a few Year 11 pupils and students over the age of 16, with a mixture of severe and complex learning difficulties are not achieving as much as expected because of unsatisfactory teaching and because of the severe restrictions to provision caused by poor accommodation. Their permanent teacher has been absent because of illness and this has been detrimental.

2. The school has very good procedures for assessment and have begun developing ways of making precise measurements of pupils' progress, which they use to set annual achievement targets. The assessment system incorporates the special performance levels guidance being used nationally to gauge the very small steps of progress pupils with severe and more complex learning difficulties achieve. The school is setting realistic targets for groups of pupils, for example, for a group to advance by one level over a year. Judging from the progress recorded in pupils' files, in relation to their individual education plans and the annual review of their Statements of Special Educational Needs, it is likely most pupils, more especially those in their primary years, will achieve the targets set in literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education.

3. Pupils, up to the end of Year 6, are achieving very well in science and should reach the science targets comfortably. While, by the end of Year 9, many pupils have not done the quantity of work in science necessary to sustain the very good progress younger pupils make, there has been sufficient for satisfactory progress and for pupils to achieve their target. Beyond the end of year 9, pupils are not achieving as much as could reasonably be expected in science and are unlikely to progress by one full level and meet their target. There is very little evidence in these pupils' records of them achieving in science. The science curriculum for the secondary age pupils is not sufficiently developed to support the kind of progress younger pupils are making and the absence of a science laboratory imposes another constraint on them on how well they achieve.

4. In English, all pupils and students are communicating very effectively using signing, symbols and electronic communication aids. Teachers and their assistants and many other staff throughout the school promote communication in all lessons and out-of-lesson activities. Children develop everyday vocabulary for routines and objects, using an increasing number of signs, symbols and other methods to communicate. They enjoy hearing stories and looking at books. Some are able to hold crayons and make marks, while a few trace over shapes or letter forms. By the end of Year 2, pupils communicate very well and are given many opportunities to use a wide variety of means to express themselves and respond to others. Pupils with complex learning difficulties do very well to use a few signs and symbols for making choices. By the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties

speak using sentences. The school's reading scheme and the extended literacy strategy has contributed well to the good progress of higher attaining pupils in reading. Some pupils read fluently and include a little expression. They write their names and sort a set of instructions into the right sequence. Pupils, by the end of Year 9, chose and explore books and know their way through them. Those with complex learning difficulties recognise their timetable symbols and match them to the right words. Higher attaining pupils write independently using a limited range of words but begin to use sentence structure. By the end of Year 11, pupils with severe learning difficulties have a good command of language, describing what they see and acting roles from *Macbeth*. Over the age of 16, students contend very well with complex instructions.

5. Teachers and their assistants understand and apply the National Numeracy Strategy very effectively. This contributes to lively and productive lessons. The youngest pupils in the school, including children below the age of 5 participate in activities and acquire the basic skills to begin counting. By the end of Year 2, pupils with severe learning difficulties recognise and count numbers up to 5 securely and some go beyond this up to 15. One higher attaining girl knows two-digit numbers and immediately recognises 48. Some pupils do extremely well in deducing that with three of the five frogs gone, two are left. A few use a ruler to measure the size of objects and make patterns with shapes. Teachers and their assistants have a very good knowledge of pupils with complex learning difficulties and very good expertise in teaching them. These pupils become very familiar with number songs and rhymes. Hearing them elicits good responses in smiles, movement and holding objects. The most able follow the songs and rhymes closely and interact very well by anticipating the point to drop their object. By the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties recognise numbers up to 100 and perform additions and subtractions using numbers up to 30. A few read and solve number problems, with a little help with finding the right approach. This demonstrates very clearly how the more able pupils are being thoroughly stretched by the work they are set. Pupils with complex learning difficulties consolidate very well counting up to 10 and recognise numerals. By the end of Year 9 and beyond, pupils are not attaining at as high a level as many younger pupils but do very well in ordering numbers to 20 correctly and exploring patterns such as odd and even numbers. Beyond the age of 16, students, because of their more severe learning difficulties, are attaining at a lower level than many younger pupils, which is a major reason for continuing their education. They take turns and match similar picture cards. By playing the game several times their involvement and the pace of their response increases although the task of matching becomes repetitive and less challenging.

6. Several subjects provide practical opportunities for pupils whatever their special educational needs to develop major physical skills and fine manipulation. In physical education, the youngest pupils improve their ability to stand unaided and when standing in water walk forward some distance. By the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties balance themselves well and jump. They are confident in leading others through a simple assault course designed to promote and test their physical skills. In design and technology, pupils manipulate a wide range of materials. For example, they cut paper and card with scissors to a desired shape and work out for themselves good ways of joining these together. In food technology they decide which ingredients are needed to complete a particular recipe, measure out what is required and, using various utensils, combine and cook these to realise an edible and pleasant product.

7. In geography, pupils with severe learning difficulties have, by the end of Year 2, a sense of place and direction. They describe different weather conditions in simple terms. By the end of Year 6, they recognise major physical features of landscapes such as rivers and hills, understand and use simple maps. Pupils with complex learning difficulties match the weather to symbols. By the end of Year 9, pupils with severe learning difficulties know the key

features found in towns such as the supermarket, and train station. They know what features distinguish towns from countryside. In music, the youngest pupils hold instruments and learn to produce a sound. Over time, and by the end of Year 9, they make very good progress and begin to play a chosen percussion instrument. Higher attaining pupils by this stage compose simple scores and lead groups in performing their own music. At the most basic levels of using information and communication technology, pupils learn to operate switches to activate everyday equipment such as CD and video players. They come to understand the function of this equipment and that they can make choices about what to listen to or watch. Pupils with complex learning difficulties do extremely well to operate specialist switches intentionally, either by hand or head movements, to communicate and to make choices. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in some subject areas and, overall, this restricts the opportunities for pupils to learn and make better progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good and this represents good improvement since the last inspection. This view is supported by parents who consider that behaviour in general at the school is good and the school definitely helps children become more mature and responsible. Pupils enjoy coming to school and respond very well to the very good atmosphere permeating it. During lessons, pupils respond very well to the staff. Teachers and their assistants work hard to ensure all pupils are engaged as fully as possible in lessons. Any improvement in pupils' attitude to their work or behaviour is acknowledged and praised. This helps to raise pupils' self-esteem, enabling them to contribute more fully to lessons. Pupils are usually aware of the consequences of their actions on others and show respect for others. This helps promote a very good atmosphere for learning in classes.

9. Pupils' behaviour out of lessons is very good. Those with more challenging behaviour receive higher levels of support, which leads to these pupils rarely disrupting others. Any incidents that do occur are quickly and sensitively brought under control. When moving around the school during lesson times or outside, during break times, the good behaviour has a significant impact on the success of other activities. For example, pupils move purposefully and sensibly when leaving classrooms to take part in sessions in the hall, sensory rooms, the ball pool or physiotherapy and medical rooms. Pupils' behaviour when they go off-site, for example, to attend physical education lessons is also very good. Some pupils clearly understand they are representing the school and behave appropriately.

10. The progress made by most pupils has a positive effect on their self-esteem. Teachers work hard and are generally very successful in ensuring that all pupils are engaged in lessons at all times and this creates a positive community feeling within classes and also helps both in pupils' personal development and their forming good relationships with their peers. Pupils are given some opportunities to exercise responsibility such as taking registers to the office and putting out materials and clearing away in the classroom. However, due to the limitations of the accommodation due to the small size of the hall and restrictive outside play area there are few opportunities for pupils to mix outside of lesson time. The school has recently formed a healthy eating committee that includes some senior pupils as members. This provides an opportunity for them to accept responsibility and is also used by the school to encourage cross school involvement, for example all pupils had the opportunity of completing healthy eating questionnaires.

11. The level of pupils' attendance is satisfactory. Overall attendance is affected by the pupils with complex learning difficulties, who often have associated medical problems that require them to be away from school for treatment. Pupils generally come to school when they are well and able to do so. A significant number of pupils are withdrawn during term time

for family holidays and this is reflected in recorded absences. Most lessons start promptly. However, some lessons at the start of the day are adversely affected by the staggered arrival of school transport.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. Overall, the great majority of pupils are learning well because the teaching they receive is good and quite a large part of this is very good or excellent. Compared with the quality of teaching at the time of the last inspection, there is a satisfactory improvement in teaching overall, although the proportion of very good teaching being received by the younger pupils has improved significantly. Children under the age of 5 and all of the pupils of primary school age up to the end of Year 6 are learning very well as the quality of their teaching is consistently very good. While good teaching takes place beyond this age, it happens inconsistently. The group of pupils in Years 3 to 10, with complex learning difficulties are taught well. Pupils up to the end of Year 9 with severe learning difficulties are taught satisfactorily overall. However, beyond this, in the group containing some Year 11 pupils but mostly students over the age of 16, teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Here at the present time, teaching is not sufficiently settled and the group are therefore not learning as well as expected. In the lessons observed, teaching was not planned effectively for the mixture of severe and complex learning difficulties of this group. Their classroom accommodation falls well below what is expected to deliver the relevant curriculum successfully to such a wide range of students.

13. There is a large amount of very good teaching which is based upon very effective planning by teachers. They produce clear learning objectives, which they set out at different levels of challenge that match the range in pupils' attainment. All but one of the groups are organised by attainment, which means the large majority are actively involved in learning at the appropriate point for them. By planning as well as they do, teachers see more easily the best approaches, for example, the most beneficial ways of using time and organising pupils and the types of resources that would support their learning. In Class 5, for example, the teacher sat at the centre of an excellent semi-circular table and her group of pupils with severe learning difficulties sat around it so that each pupil was close. This meant she was able to maintain a very high level of interaction with individuals without needing to move and she could observe easily how they were tackling their numeracy tasks. The support and teaching each pupil received in this example was of the highest quality, particularly the instant assessments leading to very well targeted instruction, which made sure each pupil managed their task. They concentrated very well, could deal confidently with problems and complete their work successfully. Teaching assistants are very much part of this organisation and very well organised in themselves, making a significant contribution towards all pupils learning successfully. They share in planning lessons, follow the objectives, applying their experience and expertise, ensuring pupils are thoroughly involved and consolidating knowledge, understanding and skills.

14. Teachers and their assistants apply a great deal of expertise to what they do. In particular, the highly skilled level of communication with pupils particularly through sign language, referring to or exchanging symbols. They use songs and rhymes like '*Five Speckled Hens*' very effectively and pupils, through listening, signing or reciting them, learn about number, taking turns and relating objects to the signs, symbols or words being spoken. Expectations are high, but no more than each pupil can stretch to achieve. They are securely based on the very good knowledge of each pupil possessed by teachers and their classroom assistants. A group of younger pupils, baking a chocolate cake in a food studies lesson, had to use their knowledge to work out the ingredients required and then had to assemble these and the right equipment to complete the task. In an art lesson, besides the enjoyment of creating work, pupils had challenges involving decision-making, explaining their

thinking, solving problems, for example, in how to join materials together and finding the skills to shape and cut materials. Teachers know about pupils' special educational needs and how best to provide the care and support each pupil needs. The very good assessment of the progress pupils' make means teachers and their assistant are very clear of what level each is at and so set the right challenges for them. In an excellent lesson on information and communication technology, for example, the teacher of Class 4 took great care in ensuring a pupil with complex learning difficulties was making an understandable choice and not random responses by getting her to repeat several time the selection of a symbol on the computer screen.

15. Pupils are managed very well. Relationship between adults and pupils are very good and so their co-operation and good will is forthcoming. The few pupils who have challenging behaviour, which is at times severe, are supported very effectively. Teachers and assistants use well-prepared strategies for responding to these pupils and this is successful in keeping them engaged in learning for increasingly longer periods of time in the classroom.

16. Overall, the teaching of English and literacy is very good for pupils up to the end of year 6 and for older pupils who have complex learning difficulties. More able pupils up to the end of Year 11 and students over that age are taught satisfactorily. Teaching of all subjects of the curriculum is done by each class teacher, which helps greatly towards promoting their literacy and numeracy. Teaching approaches and programmes set out in the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are understood very well and applied imaginatively. All pupils are being taught very well to communicate. At the start of each day, pupils are actively engaged by staff in signing, for example, *'good morning'* and each day they read their symbol timetable. In reading stories, teachers engage all of the pupils senses so they are actively looking, listening and feeling objects that bring the story to life and leads them to much greater interest and understanding of the plot and characters. Stories are used in geography, for example, one about a river trip, to explain the course of a river. Mathematics and numeracy are taught very well to all pupils up to the age of 16 and students over that age are taught satisfactorily. With the youngest pupils, and especially those with complex learning difficulties, the combination of songs, rhymes and objects captures pupils' interest very effectively in counting activities. Pupils respond very well to the wide range of visually attractive counting aids they can use in their work. Very regularly teachers and their assistants when working on other subjects include mathematical ideas or counting practice, for example, counting the wheels on a model car or weighing the ingredients in a food technology lesson.

17. In the other subjects of the curriculum, where sufficient evidence could be gathered, teaching is good in design and technology for pupils in their primary years. No judgement was possible beyond this stage. Teaching is good in music and overall in physical education. No overall judgement was possible in science or art, although the teaching in the few lessons seen in both subjects was very good. There are no overall judgements on the quality of teaching in history, geography, French and religious education. Teaching is good overall in information and communication technology, with an example of excellent teaching of pupils with complex learning difficulties, where exceptional skill was shown by the teacher in eliciting responses from pupils either through signing or interaction with a touch sensitive screen.

18. Teaching was judged unsatisfactory in a small proportion of lessons mainly because they were not planned effectively. These lessons affected most pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 and included students over the age of 16 with the exception of the group pupils in Years 3 to 10 who have complex learning difficulties. In the one unsatisfactory lesson in physical education, in which a group of pupils in Years 7, 8, 9, and 10 took part, activities were not matched well to what pupils could do, the pace was slow and what pupils' achieved during the lesson was not assessed effectively. In another instance, when pupils from Year 7 to

Year 11 combined as a large group with students for choices of leisure and recreation, the activity was not thought out clearly, particularly in relation to the wide range of special educational needs in such a large group. Time was wasted while each pupils or student made their choice from a variety of activities. The activities lacked suitable objectives and were often unchallenging, for example, some pupils opted to watch a film on video. Similarly, in a personal, social and health education lesson for Year 11 pupils mixed with students, the personal care activities were badly planned in relation to the pupils' and students' needs and were ultimately unchallenging for them. In some lessons, time was wasted. For example, in one, work stopped well before the end of afternoon school and pupils and students stayed inactive and unengaged until it was time to depart. In another, the first period of the morning, when pupils arrive and are prepared for lessons no significant work took place and a half an hour was lost while pupils waited to depart for a swimming lesson.

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

19. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory overall and the school's curriculum meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for children below the age of five and for pupils between Years 1 and 6 is very good. This is well planned, using national guidance to ensure close attention to addressing the full range of pupils' special educational needs. Overall, their curriculum is satisfactory in its breadth and balance. The group containing pupils with complex learning difficulties, who are all between Years 3 and 10, have a curriculum tailored effectively to their needs. In the curriculum for children under the age of five, English, history, geography and French, the curriculum co-ordinators have developed their plans to provide a good progression of experiences and skills as these pupils get older and attain at a higher level. However, there are shortcomings in science, design and technology, music and physical education for most of the older pupils and students. In science, music and physical education the planning of curriculum to cover several years is ineffective and results in pupils revisiting topics taught previously with limited progression in skills, or experiences. In design and technology, as pupils get older, there are not sufficient opportunities for them to learn about or use materials such as wood, metal and plastic.

20. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress where it has had to in developing the curriculum. The weaknesses in the provision for humanities and information and communication technology have been addressed and now meet statutory requirements. The taught time for pupils up to the end of Year 6 has been increased to match the recommended amounts of time. Good improvements have been made recently to medium term plans in all subjects, which reflect the national guidance on curriculum for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Plans now include clear learning intentions for pupils of differing abilities and as a result the needs of higher attaining pupils are now generally being well met. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been very well introduced and are making a very good impact on pupils' and students' achievements.

21. Generally, the provision for pupils with additional special educational needs such as sensory impairment, behavioural difficulties, autism and complex communication difficulties is very good. The range of specialist provision to support these pupils is very good. These pupils and students benefit greatly from the work of therapists, and there is very close cooperation between them and class teachers and support staff. As well as individual sessions with pupils, therapists develop specific programmes, which are ably implemented in class and at lunchtimes by staff. The school has developed staff knowledge and understanding and provided information and resources so that pupils with visual and hearing impairments gain the maximum benefit from the support available from the Local Authority Support Services. An excellent example is the employment of a classroom assistant who is deaf. He works very effectively with all the pupils in the class. The school provides additional

interpreter support to ensure his entitlement to participate fully in all the school's activities, including training sessions and continuing professional development. He acts as a powerful role model for disabled pupils and has already had many successes, notably working patiently with a pupil who was most resistant to signing and now makes very good progress. His presence as a valued team member also improves everybody's signing skills, including extending the staff's signed vocabulary.

22. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Targets in pupils' and students' individual education plans include many related to personal social and health education and this aspect of the school's work takes a high priority. The school now makes provision for drugs education, which was not in place at the last inspection and was a key issue at that time.

23. The provision of extra curricular activities is satisfactory. Pupils and students take part in a range of sporting and cultural activities, such as an inter-school athletics event and a concert in the local church at Christmas. However, these opportunities have not extended to regular residential experiences and little opportunity is made to organise structured lunchtime or after-school activities.

24. The provision for careers and vocational education is good. The support of the local Connexions Service is a key element of this provision. An annual Careers Week is held at which pupils and students beyond Year 8 have an opportunity to undertake a series of activities involving local employers, public services, the Connexions Service and students from the adjoining college for further education. Vocational experience opportunities are well structured and are closely linked well to individual students' needs.

25. Good relationships exist between the school, other institutions and the local community and make a positive contribution to pupils and students learning. Younger pupils have access to lessons at a local primary school, pupils mainly between Year 7 and Year 9 use the gym at a local secondary school and students over 16 make good use of the facilities available at the further education college on the adjoining site. Very good use is made of local sporting facilities to counteract the limited facilities available on the school site.

26. Provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good overall. Promotion of spiritual development is very effective. Pupils learn about a range of beliefs and traditions, through assemblies, religious education, and literature. Learning is enhanced, particularly for pupils with complex learning difficulties, through the use of artefacts and role-play. Pupils are encouraged to reflect, in moments of stillness during assemblies, with the aid of a candle, and often at the start or end of the day, with a brief prayer. All adults in the school, whatever their role, show pupils respect, helping them to feel valued, and enabling them to respect others. This was especially noted in the sensitive handling of pupils with behavioural difficulties. In lessons, pupils are given time to respond, and their response is valued and celebrated. Those with more profound and complex learning difficulties are encouraged to be aware of others. Strategies, involving good use of eye-contact and for pupils with visual impairment, attentive listening, were seen to be very effective, in raising awareness, and creating a sense of community in pupils, whose difficulties tend towards isolation. Moments of wonder were observed during some very good literacy lessons and there were many examples of pupils being excited by learning.

27. Adults in the school provide very good role models, and pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong. From an early age, they are encouraged to listen to each other, be helpful and supportive, and recognise that their behaviour affects others. Care of their environment is well promoted, and a sense of personal responsibility developed. The display of simple rules, supported by symbols, and referred to during lessons, promotes an understanding of what is

expected. The merit system, and awarding of achievement certificates, rewards the fulfilment of these high expectations.

28. Within the constraints imposed by the accommodation, promotion of social development is good. The small hall, and lack of play space, restricts social interaction across the age range at lunch-time, and limits whole school activities. However, there is one whole school assembly each week, when achievements are celebrated, as well as theme days throughout the school year, used to encourage a sense of community. The mutual respect observed during the inspection, together with the consistent acceptance and appreciation of each individual, creates in the pupils, a confidence which enables them to respond well to familiar and unfamiliar people. Co-operative work is encouraged in lessons and pupils are expected to help others, as well as being responsible for their own equipment. Pupils are given responsibility for small tasks, such as returning registers, delivering milk, or taking messages. However, older pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use initiative, although a recent good example is the student representatives on the school's award winning food and healthy eating committee.

29. Provision for the development of cultural development is good, and would be very good, if the multicultural aspect, well promoted through literacy, was reinforced by displays, which provided images of a wider range of cultures and traditions than pupils are likely to experience in their daily lives. Pupils learn about their own culture, past and present, through visits and visitors, and through lessons in history, geography, religious education and music. The library, though small, has a good range of non-fiction books, and, as a result of well-chosen Big Books, literacy lessons are a rich source of experiences which encourage cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The close liaison and teamwork between education and health professionals is a strength of the school. High priority is given to the dignity, physical and emotional well being of pupils at all times. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well. The strong ethos of care and support is the basis upon which teachers very effectively monitor pupils' personal development. All the statutory requirements concerning statements of special educational needs are being met appropriately. Pupils' annual reviews of their progress towards their targets are of a very high standard. The individual pupils' record files maintained by staff are of a very high standard. The teaching team is well supported by other members of staff working for the school or outside agencies. Since the period of the last inspection the school has made good progress in improving standards of care for all pupils and has addressed very well the issue of the need to implement consistently procedures to promote good behaviour. This view is supported by parents who confirm their children like school and that teachers work hard to ensure all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

31. Very good procedures are in place for the monitoring and promotion of good behaviour. The behaviour policy emphasises positive reinforcement as the preferred means of improving behaviour. Intervention programmes are produced where appropriate and these are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. All teaching and support staff are involved in regular training sessions to ensure consistency of practice across the school. For pupils who have difficulties with their behaviour, extremely good behaviour management plans are in place, which provide clear guidance for all the class team including supply staff. Throughout the inspection, there were many examples of sensitive, calm and effective management, which promoted higher standards of achievement both for the individual pupil and for the others in the class.

32. There are very good procedures for child protection in place and there is also very good practice for the promotion of the health, safety and well being of pupils. The school benefits from having full time nursing staff. The school buildings are in a safe and clean condition and the grounds secure. Safety audits and excellent risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis and all staff are trained in the correct techniques for lifting pupils.

33. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school follows up unexplained absences and will contact parents if pupils fail to arrive when expected. The school is aware of the need to record pupils' absences better so that unauthorised absences are properly reported. Opportunities are taken to ensure parents are reminded of the importance of good attendance in ensuring their children receive the best possible educational opportunities.

34. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are very good. They were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and significant improvement has occurred. There are now some excellent features, in particular, the pupil profile records and the assessment of communication difficulties carried out by the multi-disciplinary assessment team, whose work is highly regarded. In relation to a pupil with severe communication difficulties and autism, for example, the team's assessment covered his use of symbols and picture exchange techniques as an aid to communication. The value of using a computer was explored along with the range of devices to improve this pupils' access to a computer. The speech and language therapist, physiotherapist and occupational therapist made contributions that helped the pupil's parents understand the range of strategies and equipment that could help accelerate their child's progress. Recently placed at the school, the pupil's parents had already recognised rapid progress in communication and were able to see what future developments may be possible to accelerate the progress further.

35. The school has been using the P scales to assess and record the small steps in progress over the past three years, analysing the data collected and using this to set performance targets for pupils' progress that are realistic and appropriate. Extensive documentation is collated for every pupil that includes annotated samples of work indicating progress in all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The annotations show clearly the amount of support pupils need to achieve tasks successfully and evidence from the whole staff team in a class is collected and recorded on a day to day basis. Teachers use their assessment information effectively to plan their work for the whole class, and learning objectives are made clear for the low, medium and high attaining pupils in each class. This contributes to teaching being effective and, overall, to the large majority of pupils making good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. Since the period of the last inspection the school has made significant progress in ensuring it maintains very effective links with the parents. The school is developing its policy promoting parental involvement through which it acknowledges the essential contribution of parents' unique knowledge and understanding of their children and the impact this has on their education. Parents have a very positive view of the school and generally consider they are well informed regarding the progress their children make and that the school works closely with them.

37. The school is conscious of the difficulties many parents have, given the special needs of their children and the constraint this places on their time. A significant number of parents have the opportunity of talking to staff including nursing and physiotherapy services at the start or end of the day when taking or collecting their children to and from school. However, many parents live some way away and their children attend school on arranged transport. In

these circumstances very good use is made of home school diaries for younger pupils and those older pupils who have more severe learning difficulties. Many parents also have contact with the multi-disciplinary team outside school, for example when their children attend hospital, and this also helps foster good relationships. The school office staff play an important part in forging good links with parents. They know the pupils well and are able to talk knowledgeably with parents when they visit or telephone school.

38. The school communicates very well with parents and provides appropriate opportunities to keep them well informed and able to support their children's learning at home. The school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents are of a high standard and provide useful information on the working of the school as well as including contributions from pupils of the school. Weekly class newsletters are sent home informing parents of activities pupils have been involved in. These newsletters are written so that parents can share reading with their children. In addition parents receive a whole school termly newsletter that celebrates the achievements of pupils across the school

39. Some parents have the opportunity of being involved in the life of the school by attending school productions, assemblies, Fun Days and helping on school trips and with swimming lessons. The school and parents also benefit from a strong friends association that has been very successful in organising events that provide opportunities for them to meet informally as well as raising considerable funds that support the school in providing the resources its pupils need.

40. Pupils' individual education programmes that are shared with parents and the reports produced for statutory annual reviews were found to be of a high standard providing detailed information for all curriculum subjects of what pupils have achieved, the progress made and future targets. The school runs workshops for parents to both keep them informed of educational developments. For example the school recently organised a signing workshop and also holds sessions in school for parents with pre-school age children who may wish their children to attend the school in the near future.

41. A significant number of parents were particularly concerned there is an insufficient range of activities for pupils outside lessons. The inspection findings confirm that the school does organise a significant number of extra-curricular activities and that there are considerable difficulties in organising such events due to the limited accommodation and, in the case of after school activities, issues associated with transporting pupils home. However, more could be done to increase the range of activities available to pupils outside lessons particularly as many have a long lunch break.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The leadership and management of the head teacher and deputy head teacher are good, although not in relation to the provision for students over the age of 16 where leadership is unsatisfactory. The head teacher was aware and taking action in relation to this. The teacher in charge of this provision has suffered illness and has been absent for significant periods. While students continued to be taught by a competent temporary teacher, the overall situation has had an adverse impact on programmes offered to students and the standards they achieve. In a great many respects the head teacher has done well to maintain effective leadership and management over the long term since the last inspection. It has taken most of this time to establish a settled and united senior management team. His clear sense of purpose and direction has been consolidated in that time and this has led to good improvements in many parts, but not all of the school. The commitment to a shared vision, which has been a primary aim, has been achieved and a strong sense of purpose exists among all the staff. There is a clear sense, expressed by the head teacher that the

school is now moving forward at a better rate, but unfortunately this was hindered to a significant extent since the last inspection in the time taken to get the right managers in place and fully onboard. The head teacher and staff have the full confidence of the governors. The climate of the school is very positive and staff reflect openly on the considerable contribution the head teacher and other senior staff have made to this, in particular the good quality of inclusion throughout the school. Team work across the school is of a high order and involves all staff and their different roles towards creating provision for the wide range of pupils, much of which is of very high quality. This results in pupils being thoroughly happy and very well engaged at school and the great majority make significant progress as a consequence.

43. The governors' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory, although they are very conscious of the need to keep closely engaged. They support the school wholeheartedly and act on its behalf with external agencies. The head teacher has consistently encouraged their increased involvement by keeping governors fully informed and by constantly seeking their views on issues. Governors have a positive attitude to this and the chair of the governing body visits school each day and talks to the head teacher. There is a lot of attention given in committee meetings to such matters as curriculum development. However, in their direct contacts with the school and in governors' committee business, they work mainly through the head teacher, his deputy and occasionally other school staff. They do not hold more focused and independent responsibilities, for example, for subjects or other aspects of the curriculum or particular classes whereby they could aim to reach their own evaluations to set against those of the school. Without this the governors are not as effective as they could be in knowing the school's strengths and where improvements are required and therefore not in the best position to provide the school with the regular challenge concerning its work.

44. Effective management ensures that the school's aims are largely being realised. There is thoroughness in planning the programmes of work and training through the year, which is carefully recorded and tracked. The head teacher had gone to considerable lengths, setting out on paper in detail the systems by which the school's aims will be achieved. This contributes to clear communication throughout the school and complements the good range of meetings by which all staff are kept informed and included in managing the school. Much effort has been invested in delegating areas of responsibility to staff. This has progressed satisfactorily; time is being found for subject co-ordinators to monitor the provision for their subjects, identify development priorities, which are linked to action plans and the co-ordinators performance management objectives.

45. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is satisfactory. The importance of gaining an accurate picture of the school's performance and using this to decide future actions is appreciated well. However the school is at an early stage of a comprehensive scheme of monitoring and evaluation and this is linked to the fact the senior management group are just becoming settled. There is some good practice and this is reflected in the very good monitoring of pupils' progress. This takes place through regular scrutiny of their individual education plans, teachers' records and annual review reports. There is, for example, a six-monthly review of each pupil's progress towards the objectives agreed in the preceding annual review meeting. Together with very good assessment of pupils this goes a considerable way to keeping teaching on track for each pupil. There is a good programme of observing teaching throughout the school. The head teacher observes the teaching of each class and a fuller process is planned. The respective co-ordinators of literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology have carried out initial observations of the teaching of their subjects and it is intended other co-ordinators will do likewise. However, curriculum provision as a whole is not looked at in sufficient detail. Teachers comment on the success of medium term plans inconsistently and individually they are not in a good position to develop a perspective on how curricular planning across the school succeeds in

broadening study and increasing the challenge for pupils as they grow older. Shortcomings, therefore, are not quickly detected and for example, action has been slow on halting the decline in the provision for post-16 students resulting from staffing difficulties.

46. The school's ability to provide positive learning experiences for pupils is strongly supported by its induction programme and in-service training. An effectively planned induction programme enables all staff to become familiar with the school's systems and thus provide useful support for pupils. The school provides a very good range of professional development and training opportunities which are available to all staff. There is a good mix of training, with some being linked to the school's improvement plan, and some to individual professional development.

47. Accommodation is, overall, unsatisfactory. A new extension has recently been opened, providing some new and very good classroom space as well as a staffroom. This provides a pleasant working environment for the classes located there and has eliminated the need to use the corridors in the old building as storage space. There is a well equipped sensory room and the hydrotherapy pool, which has been fitted with very good sound and light equipment. However, the key issue from the last inspection in relation to the provision of specialist rooms for subjects such as science and design and technology, has not been addressed, and this limits the curriculum which can be offered to pupils beyond Year 6. This is particularly the case with the food technology aspects of design technology. The small hall means that it is very difficult to have many pupils together there, and this lack of space limits the number of pupils who can meet together socially, for example, at lunchtimes. The hall is unsuitable for physical education for the older pupils, but this is rectified by the use of facilities at the nearby secondary school. The demountable building, which is used to house the group of Year 11 pupils and students over the age of 16, is unsuitable for this purpose. It fails to provide the variety of teaching spaces, social areas and the adequate specialist facilities, particularly required to meet the care needs of students with complex learning difficulties. The new building, while bringing many advantages, has significantly reduced the outdoor play area and the temporary loss of play equipment for the younger pupils and pre-school age children. The school has plans to rebuild this outdoor play area. While the best use is made of the space available, the limited space outdoors restricts pupils' educational and social experiences.

48. There has been a good improvement in resources for information and communication technology since the last inspection, and these are now satisfactory. The provision of resources for mathematics is very good up to the end of Year 11, with a good range of materials for practical work. But for students over the age of 16, resources are not as exciting and varied. There is now a good range of reading books and big books for use in English, together with books for pupils to take home to read. In history and geography, there is a good range of resources, and the early years classrooms are well equipped. Resources in religious education and design and technology are very limited, while those in art are suitable only for the primary years. Resources are satisfactory for science where there is a basic range of equipment available. For physical education there is a good range of equipment, but its use is limited by the size of the hall.

49. The school makes good use of its resources including the various grants it receives. Its most expensive resource, staffing, in the main, gives good value as a result of the high quality of team work overall in teaching, supporting and caring for each of the pupils and students. There is very good value gained from the very good progress made by children under the age of 5 and pupils to the end of Year 6. The number of pupils to each teacher is above that of similar schools and the size of each class is larger by comparison. However, any adverse effects are removed by the above average provision of support staff. Most pupils' special educational needs are being met very effectively as a consequence and

additional resources have been planned effectively to meet needs arising, as in the case of pupils with autism and challenging behaviour. However, students over the age of 16 are currently not being provided for effectively. The processes of development planning are good and lead to identifying appropriate educational priorities, although monitoring and evaluation work is not yet sharp enough to signal where urgent action is required. All of the staff contribute to the development planning process and the actions and costs needed to achieve the development targets agreed are set out in good detail. The costs of supplies and services are regularly challenged in the interests of best value. All of principles of 'best value' are known but they are not yet applied fully.

50. The school is moving forward well in its use of new technology as staff become more expert and confident in computer based operations. For example, nearly all teachers produce their sections of pupils' annual review reports electronically, which is a considerable saving on the school office time. The computer system used for managing the school's financial transactions is out-dated and causes some inefficiency in maintaining accounts and transmitting information. Overall, the work of the school's administrators is very effective. They are very much part of the team and make a considerable contribution to the efficiency of day to day operations. However, the school's financial procedures have not been professionally audited by the local education authority for many years and until this is complete there is no sufficient way of confirming if they are effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. To ensure that the group containing Year 11 pupils and students over the age of 16 are achieving satisfactorily or better, the head teacher and the governing body should:

(1) Substantially improve the provision for this group by:

- i) eliminating unsatisfactory teaching
- ii) upgrading the accommodation for this group for it to be, safely accessible to all pupils and students, matching the demands of a relevant curriculum, providing a suitable and well resourced variety of learning spaces and social areas so that it is fully appropriate to the needs of students developing independence as young adults

(see paragraphs: 1, 12, 18, 42, 45, 47, 133 and 134)

(2) refine further the plans for what is taught in science, design and technology, music and physical education to ensure that over time pupils are presented with appropriate and challenging learning opportunities

(see paragraphs: 19, 80, 86, 97, 123, 125 and 129)

(3) develop specialist areas dedicated to science and food technology that are well resourced to meet pupils special educational needs and for them to learn effectively in these subjects

(see paragraphs: 3, 47, 80, 92 and 97)

The governors and head teacher should also consider, although there has been a good improvement in information and communication technology and pupils are achieving well, that they should:

make sure all teachers and their assistants put their training in the use of information and communication technology to good use and include this technology in all of the subjects they teach

(see paragraphs: 7, 68, 78, 86, 104, 110, 117)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7.1 (4)	37.5 (21)	34.0 (19)	14.3 (8)	5.3 (3)	1.8 (1)	0.0

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

Care should be taken in interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents nearly two percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	71
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.4	School data	0.0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	70
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	10:1
Average class size	10

Education support staff: YR – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	812

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	809131
Total expenditure	767275
Expenditure per pupil	10691
Balance brought forward from previous year	58829
Balance carried forward to next year	100685

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	71
Number of questionnaires returned	50

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	40	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	40	2	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	41	3	0	10
The teaching is good.	65	31	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	24	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	16	6	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	67	24	2	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	71	22	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	36	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	33	6	8	6

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The large majority of parents responding to the questionnaire believe Park Lane to be a good school. Overwhelmingly, their children enjoy being at school. Most parents believe teaching to be good, that teachers set high expectations and provide good opportunities for their children's personal development. Most feel they have a good partnership with the school.

Other issues raised by parents

A parent whose son has a hearing impairment and is fitted with a cochlea implant device expressed concern at the parents' meeting that not enough was being done to support his son's hearing needs. Inspectors looked into this, including lesson observations and are satisfied this pupil is supported well and is taking a full part in learning, which in his situation is of a high quality.

Another parent was concerned about whether enough time is devoted to teaching. This was a key issue from the last inspection, which the school has addressed. Inspectors monitored the use of time

carefully and concluded that there is sufficient teaching time, which has been carefully planned by the school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. Provision for children below the age of five is a strength of the school. Children are achieving very well overall, as they were at the time of the last inspection. They are attaining well below the level they should for their age because of the severity of their special educational needs and, as a consequence, they are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage Curriculum by the time they reach the age of five. However, because of the very good teaching and the wide range of stimulating activities, children make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Pupils are taught in two classes which are for pupils between the age of two and six. One group is for pupils with severe learning difficulties and the other is for pupils with complex learning difficulties. The two teachers involved, employ a very good strategy to widen children's opportunities for learning and increase their inclusion by arranging for children and pupils to move between the classes in a variety of groupings for different activities.

Personal, social and emotional development

53. Children make very good progress in this area. Recently built and refurbished classrooms provide a stimulating and safe environment to which pupils respond well. Children are learning to settle well, and to be involved in individual and group activities. The more able are developing an understanding of the structure of the school day. Teachers provide a variety of opportunities for personal development which are appropriate to the needs of the pupils. They provide pupils with choices, for example, of activity or drink, and children with more complex needs are helped to make these choices by eye pointing or gesture. For example, in a lesson aimed at developing understanding of number through the use of songs, pictures and objects were used to enable pupils to choose a favourite song. Children are developing self help skills, such as feeding themselves, dressing and undressing. Children are beginning to form very good relationships with adults and are learning to play alongside other children, and, on occasion to play together. Children are learning the names of their peers, and to greet them at the start of the day by word or sign. Teachers and learning support assistants have high expectations of children's behaviour and explain clearly the difference between right and wrong. As a result, behaviour is usually very good. Where children have difficulty in managing their behaviour, as in the case of autistic pupils, teachers have good strategies for helping them settle, for example, by providing secluded working areas where they are not distracted. There are clear plans for managing difficult behaviour, which are known to, and followed by, all adults, enabling pupils to become calm and to join in lessons. All adults are good role models and staff praise and encourage children and positive attitudes are consistently reinforced.

Communication, language and literacy

54. Children make very good progress in developing language and communication skills. Throughout all activities, language and communication are reinforced, for example, in developing a vocabulary of everyday routines and objects. Children are beginning to listen well to adults and to respond by word or gesture. Children with more complex needs are encouraged to gesture, sign, point or vocalise whenever possible. Teachers provide good role models for the development of language, and support pupils' learning by means of signing, the use of symbols, objects of reference, or aids such as the '*big mack*' switch, where these are needed. Children gradually increase the number of signs and symbols which they recognise and can use. Listening skills are being well developed, and more able

pupils are learning to follow instructions of increasing length. Those with more complex needs are beginning to recognise the cue songs used for various activities. Children enjoy listening to stories and to poems and looking at books with an adult, the more able knowing where to start reading. Story telling is very well supported by a range of sensory experiences to help the less able pupils to develop some understanding. Some children are beginning to make marks on paper as a pre writing skill, while others are beginning to copy over patterns and shapes, sometimes hand over hand with an adult. Teaching of communication, language and literacy is of a high quality, with well-planned experiences across the curriculum which have a positive impact on the progress the children are making.

Mathematical development

55. Children are acquiring the skills that will help them begin their mathematical development. Teaching is very good and lessons are well planned to give many different activities to introduce and develop concepts such as number, colour and pattern. There are many mathematical activities throughout the day, for example, sequencing the day's activities, and teachers are very effective in helping to extend children's' mathematical vocabulary. Learning in mathematics is very well supported by the use of counting rhymes and songs, which help pupils to remember the numbers and make the learning an enjoyable experience.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

56. These are developed through a variety of practical experiences, for example, finding their way around the school. Children are encouraged to observe their environment, for example, by looking at the weather. They explore a variety of materials, and experiment with floating and sinking. They look at different vehicles and some name parts such as "*wheel*". Some operate toys using a switch, or a lever to operate the computer and the more able use single switch programmes. Teaching in this area is good, with learning supported by exploration of the environment.

Physical development

57. Children benefit from having the use of a small hall, a hydrotherapy pool, a soft play area and a sensory room. However, because of the recent building works, the outdoor play area has been demolished and a new area has yet to be developed. Pupils are developing movement and manipulation skills at levels appropriate to their abilities. Pupils with more complex needs begin to increase movement, walking with aids or crawling around. Some children are tracking lights in the sensory room; others reach out to touch objects. Pupils gain in confidence in using the pool and begin to float with the help of aids. Manipulation is developed very effectively through activities such as using crayons and pencils and painting.

Creative development

58. Children make good use of a wide range of opportunities to work creatively in different media. They use paint, pencil, crayon and different types of modelling material, such as clay. They make a collage using various pastas and pulses. Children join enthusiastically in music and begin to listen to music and to learn about loud and soft. Singing is used on a number of occasions throughout the day. Pupils enjoy playing different instruments and begin to learn about the beat as they use rhythm sticks, with great enthusiasm. Teaching is good, with clear learning objectives which focus on the development of skills.

59. Teaching of pupils in the early years is, overall, very good and never less than good, which is an improvement from the last inspection. The quality of teaching has a very positive

impact on children's learning as the teachers have a good knowledge both of the needs of young children and of their special educational needs. They plan very carefully and effectively to ensure that all areas of learning are covered. The team working with support staff is exemplary, with all staff knowing exactly what is needed at any time of the day. This team working ensures that pupils are provided with a very good range of opportunities for learning. Children generally enjoy their lessons, and are enthusiastic participants in many of the activities. New procedures for gathering information about children before they start at the school have been developed, with very useful meetings attended both by parents and a wide range of professionals who will work with the children. This ensures that staff have a good knowledge of pupils' needs when they enter the school. Children's development is closely monitored. All have individual education plans which are regularly reviewed. Daily information is recorded by both teachers and support staff. Knowledge of children's needs is well used by all staff to support pupils to ensure that they have access to all aspects of school life. Staff work hard to develop good relationships with parents and carers, who have many opportunities to meet teachers both on a formal and informal basis. This partnership further enhances learning opportunities for children.

ENGLISH

60. Pupils, up to the end of Year 2 are achieving very well in English. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress. Thereafter, to the end of Year 11 and including students beyond Year 11, progress is satisfactory. However, all pupils and students are making very good progress in developing communication, speaking and listening skills. Progress in reading is good, and in writing is satisfactory. Because each group of pupils have their own teacher for all of the subjects they study, their literacy skills are being effectively developed across the curriculum. There is a consistently good emphasis on communicating and extending vocabulary, for example, pupils naming the materials they used for making their art work.

61. Pupils' communication skills develop very well as they move through the school, as they are provided with a wide range of opportunities to speak, sign, use symbols, gestures, eye pointing and information and communication technology to enable them to respond to others and to make their wishes known. By the end of Year 2, pupils with severe learning difficulties show good comprehension of events during the day. They listen well and make comments and ask relevant questions. They participate in drama and role play in class and in assembly. Pupils with complex learning difficulties use some signs and symbols to make choices or to follow their timetables. Some use communication books and are able to give an object on request. Some imitate actions during rhymes. Pupils learn to take turns, for example, with vocalising. Others use 'big mack' switches, for example, to respond to the register or to complete a phrase in a rhyme or song.

62. By the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties are gaining confidence in speech and expressing feelings and opinions. They use clear sentences of increasing length and show good understanding as they respond to sentences and to requests. Others use a series of words to convey meaning and begin to ask simple questions, such as "where are we going?" They show good understanding of language in following school routines and in listening to stories. By the end of Year 9, pupils with severe learning difficulties speak appropriately, paying attention to their listeners. They take part in role play, deliver messages and follow instructions. They are able to follow the story line when they attend a play or a film. Lower attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties increase their signing vocabulary and use symbols to recall events or to remind them of topics being studied. Pupils with complex learning difficulties show interest in stories, as they are provided with a variety of sensory experiences to gain their attention.

63. By the end of Year 11, pupils with severe learning difficulties have developed a good command of language. They answer questions and make relevant comments in discussions. They describe pictures, and take part in role play, for example, based on *Macbeth*. They enjoy listening to a variety of age appropriate literature such as *Travels with Charley* and enjoy discussing books and poetry. Less able pupils with severe learning difficulties begin to initiate conversations, for example, changing the tone of their vocalisations to indicate meaning. Higher attaining students over the age of 16, with severe learning difficulties, show very good comprehension of books and in conversations and are able to follow complex instructions. They listen well to stories and poems, and join in with role play. Other pupils show an increased interest in literature, listening well to what is read to them. Pupils and students with complex learning difficulties show interest in plays by, for example, sitting to listen for a longer time. They use switches to take part in role play, for example, for the witches chant in *Macbeth*.

64. Pupils have good opportunities to develop these skills in different subjects. For example, in many classes, pupils are encouraged to greet one another and adults at the start of the day, by saying or signing "hello". These skills are also used in most areas of the curriculum to help pupils to understand and to communicate their knowledge and views.

65. Overall, pupils make good progress in developing reading skills. Progress in reading has been helped by the development of the reading scheme, and by opportunities for pupils to read at home. This, together with the introduction of the Extended Literacy strategy, is helping to ensure that more able pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils with severe learning difficulties show knowledge of the features of a book, such as title and author, and they know where to start reading the book. They begin to learn letter sounds and to match words, and a few begin to read books. Pupils with complex learning difficulties explore the materials which are used to provide them with understanding of the story. Some hold a book and look at the pictures while a story is being read to them. By Year 6, some pupils with severe learning difficulties are able to recognise some frequently used words and the most able read fluently and with some expression, using a variety of strategies for unknown word, such as context and picture cues and phonics. Others recall words in familiar books, such as the names of characters in their reading scheme, and begin to try to use some phonic strategies. Less able pupils sequence story pictures and match everyday symbols. By the end of Year 9, pupils choose books to look at in their free time and follow the story through word and picture. They experience a range of texts in class, for example, *Macbeth*, *Harry Potter* and *Matilda*. Others use symbols for their timetables, and select and match words to the symbols. Pupils with complex learning difficulties use symbols and eye point to activities on the timetable.

66. By the end of Year 11, all pupils continue to have experiences of a range of literature, the more able developing knowledge of frequently used words, and of objects around them. Those with complex learning difficulties develop further the use of symbols in following activities and instructions. Students over the age of 16 have opportunities to listen to books and plays and some read for life skills. Students with complex learning difficulties use symbols to make choices and to help understanding of different subjects.

67. Overall, progress in writing is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2, pupils with severe learning difficulties develop a range of pre-writing skills, colouring shapes, making marks and copying over letters and words. Some more able pupils among them begin to write their names. By the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties sequence sets of instructions. They write their news, spelling some words independently and making use of a wordbook for unknown words. They read back what they have written. They also sequence and label pictures which summarise stories they have heard. Others copy under an adult's writing, developing correct formation of letters. The less able pupils among them trace over

an adult's writing, and begin to write their names. Pupils with complex learning difficulties choose colours and make marks or attempt to colour a picture, usually hand over hand with a support assistant. By the end of Year 9, pupils with severe learning difficulties write some words independently, for example, in writing their news. Some write using symbols. They begin to write in sentences. By the end of Year 11, less able pupils are able to write their names, sometimes hand over hand, while the more able copy words or sentences, or begin to write short sentences independently. Students over the age of 16, use symbols to draw up shopping lists, or to write a list of equipment needed. They use symbols to make a request, for their timetables or to record their weekly news. Some use is made of word processing, including a symbol writing programme. However, most pupils who use this are doing so by spelling out words on the keyboard, which means that they work very slowly. At the time of the inspection a touch screen programme was being installed, which will allow pupils to touch symbols and generate work more quickly.

68. All pupils and students are being taught to communicate very well and they learn the use of symbols and signing very effectively. Teaching is very good for pupils in the primary classes, and for older pupils with more complex needs. For other pupils of secondary age, and for students over the age of 16, it is satisfactory. This is an overall improvement on the last inspection when teaching was judged generally satisfactory. The best lessons are well planned with clear objectives which link to pupils' individual education plans. Lively presentations engage pupils' attention, and their understanding is assisted through sensory experiences. For example, in a lesson based on "*Row the boat*" pupils were provided with many opportunities to look, touch and smell items, which aided their understanding. Good use is made of a wide variety of resources to support this learning. Adults have a very good knowledge of the pupils and of their needs, and of how they are able to respond, and they target their teaching to these needs. As a result, all pupils are engaged in the lessons. Pupils' communication skills are well supported by very good use of signing and symbols. The use of support assistants is well planned to provide support to pupils in managing their behaviour and with their learning. All adults are very clear of their roles at all times. There are clear expectations of behaviour, and all adults are aware of the behaviour management plans which have been drawn up for pupils with more challenging behaviours. All adults follow the strategies in these plans, enabling pupils to participate in lessons. Lessons are well rounded off with a summary of what pupils have done, thus reinforcing what has been learned in the lesson. Less progress is made when lessons are not well planned, so that the organisation is unclear and pupils are not able to focus on the task. Not enough effort is made in these lessons, to involve pupils who are disengaged. There is not always sufficient use of signing to aid pupils' understanding and there are not enough opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills, for example, through the use of information and communication technology.

69. The English co-ordinator has been in post for two years. There is an updated policy direction which aims for the school to be a literate environment. The co-ordinator has implemented the National Literacy Strategy very well and planned appropriate schemes of work, which link age appropriate literature with basic literacy skills at pupils own levels. There are plans being laid to introduce the literacy element of Key Stage 3 Strategy for special schools next year. In addition an audit of literacy has been conducted to check the use of reading thorough the school.

70. There has been good improvement in English since the last inspection. As part of the plans to address the issues from the last inspection, in relation to meeting the needs of the higher achieving pupils, the extended literacy support programme has been introduced, providing good opportunities for those pupils who are ready to developed their reading skills. Good progress in the development of assessment has been made since the last inspection and use is made of the advice from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in relation to the different levels of knowledge which pupils may have. There are plans to introduce a

standardised reading record for use across the school which will enable careful tracking of pupils' progress.

71. Some monitoring of teaching has taken place to evaluate the success of the school's literacy strategy, but the monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator is not done frequently enough. The school is taking action to increase the time the co-ordinator has to observe and support colleagues teaching English. A satisfactory range of resources for English has been developed, including further additions to the reading scheme and the introduction of Big Books for whole class reading. Support for the literacy development of pupils with complex learning difficulties is provided through items such as story sacks. The library, which is at present situated in the entrance hall and not ideal, will be moved to the resource area now that the building works have been completed. This should provide a more suitable environment and enable pupils to make better use of the facilities. The curriculum in English has been well supported through a variety of theatre and cinema visits, together with a drama workshop and a visit from a storyteller.

MATHEMATICS

72. The great majority of pupils are achieving very well because, in most classes, the teaching and support given to pupils is very good. Higher attaining pupils, whatever their age are achieving very well in numeracy and in all areas of mathematics. Teachers and their support assistants have a high degree of proficiency in teaching numeracy, using the National Numeracy framework to create lively and hard working lessons. As each teacher is attached to a specific class and in charge of that class's curriculum, numeracy is promoted very well through other subjects. In design and technology activities, when pupils make food, they are encouraged to weigh out flour and other ingredients and measure milk or water. Higher attaining pupils, making wheeled models counted the wheels, which matched their need to consolidate numbers up to 5. They also explored wheels 'going round'. In literacy lessons the stories involve exploring ideas of large and small. In science pupils learned that one of their magnets was an octagon shape and shape and size are explored in art lessons.

73. By the end of Year 2, most pupils with severe learning difficulties or autism, who are the higher attaining groups, are secure in recognising and counting numbers up to 5 and some go further, up to 15. One girl instantly recognises the number 48 and is comfortable identifying two-digit numbers. As a group, they sing happily *5 Speckled Frogs*, counting down from 5 and remembering which of the 5 each of them is. A boy with hearing impairment is involved fully and knows at one point there are 3 frogs left. In the broad area of mathematics these pupils use shapes to create pictures and patterns, making sequential or non-sequential patterns. Some have started to use a ruler to measure objects and lines. They enjoy the engagement with number, trying very hard and gaining a sense of achievement from their efforts.

74. The very effective assessments carried out by teachers show convincingly that up to and around the end of Year 6, pupils with severe learning difficulties have made substantial strides in their attainment, with the highest attaining scoring within the first two levels of National Curriculum attainment. One boy, for example, counts to 100 and uses values up to 30 to perform additions and subtractions. He carries out simple investigations on the symmetry of shapes and whether a circle tessellates. Several pupils add together numbers with values up to 10 or 20. The highest attaining pupils read number problems and decide, usually with the teacher's support, how to set out a solution to the problem. Lower attaining pupils are consolidating counting to 10, recognising and writing numerals. Beyond the end of Year 6 and by around the end of Year 11, pupils with severe learning difficulties are not generally as high attaining as some younger pupils. However, the more able sequence numbers up to 20 and are beginning to explore odd and even numbers. They can add 8 and

2 by counting on two steps from 8. The less able pupils count up to five and usually recognise each of these numerals.

75. Over time, pupils and students with complex learning difficulties throughout the school are responding increasingly well and become more actively involved in the classroom. Teachers and classroom assistants have a very good knowledge of the range of pupils and students needs, using this to devise very effective learning opportunities. This leads them eventually to accessing the early stages of knowledge, skills and understanding in mathematics. By around the end of Year 2, they are very familiar with the number rhymes and songs often performed in lessons and show their enjoyment of these. Most are beginning to associate objects they are given to hold with the song and a few participate, closely following the *Brown Teddies* song, anticipating their turn and dropping the teddy on cue. They carry on making very good progress in consolidating giving attention and focusing on objects and events. Pupils up to the end of Year 6 and towards the end of Year 11, often indicate choices with their eyes or indicating yes or no in various ways. They engage with activities consistently, for instance by looking at or handling an object, operating a switch for a sound or music. Beyond the age of 16, students are not making the very good progress others do because they have had the same consistency of teaching. Their permanent teacher has been absent with illness occasionally and a temporary teacher, who knows the group has stood in. More able students are achieving at a satisfactory level in mathematics lessons. They take part fully in a game, taking turns to examine and match similar picture cards. By playing the game several times their involvement and pace of their responses increases although the task of matching becomes less challenging.

76. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all the classes, except for the class for students age 16 and over, where it is satisfactory. While class sizes are large for this type of school, adverse effects are off-set by very effective teaching and high quality of team work between teachers, classroom assistants and other support staff. Typically, lessons are very well planned in terms of arranging the right activities and resources to aid learning. This is informed by clear learning objectives for pupils, which are written at different levels of challenge to suit the range of ability in each class. What is intended for each pupil very closely matches the teacher's assessment of what each pupil already knows, understands and can do in mathematics. It ensures too that staff are very alert to new learning demonstrated by pupils, which is loudly praised and recorded. Both teachers and their classroom assistants have a good knowledge of teaching numeracy and they know their pupils very well. This leads to lively lessons for pupils with severe learning difficulties and, as a result, they become very interested and involved. Lesson time and resources are used very effectively and the pace of work is fast and, in their enthusiasm, pupils keep up with this. The same is true for those pupils with more complex learning difficulties who are able to involve themselves actively in work.

77. The management of groups is very good, which is an important consideration given the size of each group. Teachers and their support staff are skilled and consistent in interacting with pupils, communicating very clearly and using sign language when appropriate. The few pupils with extremely challenging behaviour are very well supported through clearly defined strategies. Staff are very sensitive to their needs and exceptionally patient. This helps considerably in keeping these pupils engaged in learning most of the time and ensures they do not disrupt the learning of others.

78. The co-ordinator for mathematics is relatively new to the school as well as to giving leadership in this subject. She has a clear understanding of her responsibilities, which she treats seriously, participating, for example, in a working group developing an assessment scheme in mathematics for pupils with severe learning difficulties, which is advanced work of its kind. The co-ordinator has made a good start to measuring the effectiveness of

mathematics provision, having begun to observe the teaching of numeracy. Careful thought has been given to the best format for accomplishing this. However, a programme to observe all teachers is not in place, although the school is intent that this should happen in the near future. The priorities in the development of mathematics have been identified. They inform the co-ordinators performance management objectives and are being pursued in an annual action plan. The need to review the long term mathematics curriculum plan for older pupils and clarify how their activities will progress over time is one of the key priorities. There has been a build up recently of mathematics resources for use with information and communication technology. However, at present these resources are not being used effectively across the classes. Other resources are very good and are used very well.

79. The improvement since the last inspection is good. The large majority of pupils are achieving more now and this is related to a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in most classes. A very good numeracy strategy has become embedded in the work of teachers and this has contributed to addressing some of the shortcomings in curriculum planning found at the last inspection.

SCIENCE

80. Up to the end of Year 6, pupils are achieving very well. The improvement in the quality of the plans for what should be taught in science between Years 1 and 6 has had a significant impact on the standards pupils achieve. Clear learning objectives are now included for pupils of varying abilities. This is a good improvement and has had a positive impact on pupils' achievements. By the end of Year 9, achievement is satisfactory and it is unsatisfactory by the end of Year 11. The lack of clear planning for science results in repetition of earlier topics in which there is insufficient consideration given to adding new learning or increasing the challenge of the work for older pupils. This limits the opportunities for pupils between Year 7 and 11 to make the very good progress of earlier years. This was the case at the time of the last inspection and improvement here has been unsatisfactory. The lack of a specialist science room further restricts the range of work that pupils beyond Year 6 can undertake.

81. By the end of Year 2, pupils with complex learning difficulties predict the outcomes of experiments by signing "Yes", "No" or pointing. Pupils with severe learning difficulties sort materials, for example into textiles or wood. Year 1 and 2 pupils are taught alongside children below the age of 5, but the teachers' expectations are high and activities appropriate to all pupils and children. Higher attaining pupils have good investigative skills, experimenting to find that sand and water poured from a jug will make a wheel turn. Lower attaining pupils are well supported by teaching assistants to access the same activity with physical support.

82. By the end of Year 6 pupils have made very good progress in science. Pupils with severe learning difficulties name different materials and match materials with similar properties. They record the results of their findings on simple worksheets that make good use of symbols to aid pupils understanding. The highest attaining pupils experiment independently and make clear conclusions. In a lesson on magnetism, one pupil reported back to the teacher that not all metals would "stick" to the magnet. Lower attaining pupils select and match materials when offered simple choices and can handle and explore materials with minimal support.

83. By the end of Year 9, it is clear from records that pupils have experienced less work in science. Annual review reports indicate that higher attaining pupils are able to identify different chairs made of wood, metal and plastic. They are also able to name different parts of an electrical circuit and make a complex circuit with two outputs. Lower attaining pupils are able to match materials to symbols and handle a range of different objects. There is little evidence of a progression in experiences as pupils become older.

84. By the end of Year 11, there is very limited evidence of scientific achievement in pupils' records, particularly for Year 11 pupils and students over the age of 16 taught together. Higher attaining pupils are reported to enjoy choosing different materials to make a miniature bedroom, whilst lower attaining pupils point to their sensory organs and make a shadow using an overhead projector. It is clear that if science were better planned and taught pupils would make better progress and achieve more highly.

85. Due to the small number of observed lessons during the week of the inspection it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching in science. However, where the quality of teaching is best, which is up to the end of Year 6, lessons are well planned, activities are closely matched to pupil's abilities and teachers and support staff have consistently high expectations of all pupils. In one lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully introduced the concept of magnetism with familiar toys, moving on to divide the class into three ability groups that carried out different experiments on a variety of classroom equipment. Well-briefed teaching assistants made a very significant contribution to pupils' learning in this and other science lessons. Pupils' attitudes towards their science lessons are consistently very positive. They are keen to be involved in investigative activities, concentrate for extended periods and are very well behaved. Teachers use investigative activities very well to promote pupils' spiritual development. Pupils gasped with wonder and surprise as the sand they poured moved the wheel.

86. The science co-ordinator has worked hard to develop the plans for what should be taught in science between Years 1 and 6, incorporating the recent guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on curriculum for pupils with severe learning difficulties. The co-ordinator has very clearly identified the need to extend this work into plans for older pupils to include greater detail on what they should be taught. A satisfactory range of resources, stored centrally, has been developed for use in the subject. There is no evidence that information and communication technology is used to support science. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for science since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

87. Judging by the records of pupils' and students' work and the art on display, pupils are achieving well up to the end of Year 9 and beyond this pupils and students are achieving satisfactorily. Older pupils and students are not making as good progress because the curriculum planning for this phase is not sufficiently developed. Equally, their standards are affected by the lack of expertise in teaching art and having no dedicated room for the subject. The limits in provision for older pupils are partly off-set by the occasional workshops led by visiting artists when very creative work takes place. In sensory week, which was a special curriculum event, for example, pupils and students of all ages were involved in a weaving sculpture activity, working foil, fabrics, papers, plastics and straw together on a simple loom. They handled over and under, in and out movements with the materials as well as making choices of colour and textures. Their work became an impressive part of the attractive displays of art around the school.

88. Up to the end of Year 6, the sensory and tactile qualities in making art are used well to promote pupils' learning and particularly pupils with complex learning difficulties. There is a good emphasis on pupils extending their manipulation skills through holding brushes and other tools, spreading paints freely or with control and shaping soft modelling compounds. Some higher attaining pupils cut designs into folded paper with scissors using fine control to create intricate repeat patterns and they are visibly impressed with the visual effects they achieve. Throughout their art activities, pupils use colour, texture pattern and line. The youngest pupils hold crayons and take rubbings from different surfaces and discover varied

textures. Others have made collages from fluorescent coloured paper, combining together stripes and squares of colour. A Year 5 pupil, with severe learning difficulties, made the shape for a three-dimensional mask by moulding it from *papier mache* spread over a plate.

89. Up to and around the end of Year 9, pupils experiment with paints, colours and mark-making, for example, imprinting in wet paint the patterns of wheel and tyre tracks from toys. In the one lesson observed, pupils achieved well developing ideas for collages on the theme of boats and rockets. They chose and adapted a range of materials to suit the purpose, cutting the shapes they needed and assembling these as a composition. Throughout the work they compared their compositions with pictures of boats and rockets. More appropriately, a visiting potter helped pupils hold clay on the spinning wheel and manipulate it into a pot shape. Pupils, at the end of Year 11, have made fabric designs using a tie and dye technique in which they chose the dye colours and experimented with the ways of folding and tying the fabric to create a pattern. Students over the age of 16 continue to experiment with paints, colours and mark-making, for example, making expressive abstract drawings in response to a Turner landscape. Students with complex learning difficulties show interest and awareness in a lesson when given materials. With the teacher's encouragement, they hold the paper. Among these, a higher attaining autistic girl cuts along the outline of a shape on paper using scissors and glues coloured pieces of paper she chooses onto this to make a flowering plant image.

90. It was possible only to observe a few art lessons and an insufficient number to judge the quality of teaching and learning overall. The teaching seen was at least good. Planning is effective and in one lesson it succeeded very well in setting out a good variety of activities. These reflected the different abilities of pupils and provided a breadth of study, for example, elements of design and technology, where some pupils generated ideas for and built model cars. They counted the wheels on their cars, re-enforcing the knowledge of numbers to 5. Others were focus on language and communication, naming the materials they used in their collages. A temporary teacher taking charge of the group containing Year 11 pupils and students over the age of 16 with complex learning difficulties had a good knowledge of their needs and provided work that targeted essential areas of learning for them. She elicited good responses from students, for example they looked at, held on to and, with help, tore paper into shapes.

91. The art curriculum is co-ordinated across the school satisfactorily. The curriculum has been developed since the last inspection to focus better upon addressing key areas of learning in relation to pupils' special educational needs and in this respect it is having a positive effect on achievement. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Pupils, up to the end of Year 6 are achieving very well. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. However, between Year 7 and Year 11 as well as for students over the age of 16, achievement is satisfactory. The absence of specialist design and technology facilities and the school's heavy emphasis on food studies restricts the range of learning opportunities, particularly the chance for pupils to work with materials such as wood and plastic. This has an adverse impact on the achievement of pupils and students beyond Year 6.

93. The youngest pupils make rapid progress in knowledge and understanding of the subject. By the end of Year 2, pupils with complex learning difficulties, given support, choose materials to use when making models and begin to experience joining and shaping them. Working with food, they experience combining ingredients and some are skilled enough to grasp and use equipment such as spoons. They enjoy the sensory experiences of touch,

taste and smell. Pupils with severe learning difficulties identify parts of their toy vehicles such as the wheels, and explain how they work. They investigate a range of ways to join fabric and choose the most effective one. Pupils with communication and learning difficulties are able to explain their choices using sign or symbols. By the end of Year 2, these pupils, with support, manipulate a plastic needle and thread. They have the manual skills to cut material and spread butter. More able pupils cut and join materials with increasing accuracy and confidence, and with verbal prompts, join textiles and combine food ingredients with minimal support. They identify and group materials correctly, make 2 or 3 different designs and indicate their preference for transfer using fabric paints.

94. In a project, making sandwiches, Year 6 pupils with complex learning difficulties, with support, insert the sandwich fillings and give a clear like or dislike response to textures and tastes. They are beginning to make evaluations by indicating preferences for a particular sandwich. One pupil, for example, who had been resistant to a wide range of food, ate a tuna and mayonnaise sandwich with enjoyment. The highest attaining pupils plan and make a simple lunch, assembling the equipment they need and choosing ingredients from a symbol list. When making models, they are able to analyse and evaluate a cart made in balsa wood, copy its design and measure tape to secure free-moving wheels. When cooking, they begin by working out what ingredients they will need, collect them correctly and weigh, measure and combine them effectively.

95. Beyond Year 6, pupils work more independently in design and technology. By the end of Year 9, pupils with complex learning difficulties show preferences more consistently. They are helped to join materials but contribute with more skill and understanding. They also collaborate in shared work around making models. The most able pupils can choose the most appropriate material for a garment and when preparing food, choose a filling for a friend, taking into consideration their tastes and preferences. Several of these pupils are able to use equipment such as sharp knives safely. By the time they leave school, many students, when preparing food, regularly choose menus, prepare a range of snacks and meals, wash and clear up and provide meals for staff and pupils.

96. It was only possible to judge the standards of teaching and learning for the pupils up to the end of Year 6. It is good overall with some excellent teaching of the older pupils in the age range. The very best teaching is extremely demanding of pupils – they are expected to be able to work through a cookery assignment by working every step out for themselves, but are supported by judicious advice and encouragement from their teacher about difficult questions such as which ingredients they need to add to chocolate, sugar and butter to make a chocolate cake. Every opportunity to reinforce the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is taken, with vocabulary work extending pupils' understanding of words such as taste and texture and excellent reinforcement of calculation and measurement. This builds strongly on the achievement of the pupils when they reach seven and the pupils' progress reflects this. In less successful lessons opportunities to do this are occasionally lost and more could be made of links with other subjects when exploring breads from around the world. In all the lessons seen, teachers showed an excellent grasp of each pupil's abilities and needs for support. Across the primary age range, inspectors observed a wide range of techniques used to make sure that every pupil participated fully, regardless of their ability. Teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning is reflected in choice of classroom activities and in their ongoing recording of achievement, progress and gaps in understanding.

97. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Time and thought have been given to the development of the design and technology curriculum, which was a major shortcoming at the last inspection. This now provides a reasonably clear framework for teachers on relevant learning opportunities that match the special educational needs of pupils and students. The breadth of study, particularly for pupils beyond Year 6, is unsatisfactory

overall. Higher attaining pupils especially, are not challenged sufficiently to plan, design and evaluate products and processes using a wider range of materials and the school lacks the specialist facilities to do this well. There is an appropriate priority given to pupils learning about food and its preparation. However, the school is poorly equipped for kitchen activities. This takes away from the quality of pupils' learning and their achievement, as having prepared food they are unable to see the cooking process or immediately evaluate their work. They see their finished work usually the next day, when the immediacy and recall is harder to regain.

GEOGRAPHY

98. Pupils achieve very well in geography, as a result of detailed and effective planning of what they should learn over time. These plans also make a strong contribution to developing pupils' literacy. The improvement since the last inspection is very good.

99. Pupils up to the end of Year 2, show a growing understanding of the world around them, developing a sense of place and direction, recognising and recording changes in the weather.

100. By the end of Year 6, pupils recognise a range of geographical features, such as rivers, woods, and hills, and identify their correct symbols. The more able make maps showing a roundabout, traffic signals and a zebra crossing, and also a map showing the route of the Gingerbread Man. They are becoming familiar with more complex maps, and one boy identifies the beach, and traces the course of a river, on a road map. Most pupils in the class know that the river was coloured blue on the map, and that it was wider, and slower, by the time it reached the sea. Pupils make judgements about the weather, and can identify suitable clothes to wear in hot, cold or wet weather.

101. Pupils with complex learning difficulties are helped to link the weather to symbols, and to understand their environment in terms of position and direction, in the classroom and around the school.

102. By the end of Year 9, pupils are learning about a variety of environments and noting differences. The higher attaining pupils can identify the supermarket, and train station in the local area, and know that there are more farms near villages than near towns. They have a more detailed knowledge of their immediate environment and have co-operated in producing a three dimensional model of the school grounds. Pupils have learned, and put into practice, rules of road safety. The less able pupils and those with more complex learning difficulties are led towards greater understanding of their environment through a range of experiences, enhanced by visits, visitors, the handling of artefacts, and very good use of stories.

103. It was only possible to observe two lessons during the inspection, one very good, and one satisfactory. Teaching is very good for pupils of up to the end of Year 6 because of very good, detailed and imaginative lesson planning, and high expectations of teachers and their classroom assistants. Behaviour management is very good, and staff work well as a team to ensure that all pupils participate at a level appropriate to their ability. The well-briefed support staff make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the lesson. The use of a relevant story, about a river adventure, motivated pupils and increased their geographical knowledge. The lesson for older pupils, observed during the inspection, was less well planned, with poorer monitoring of learning, so that pupils were given more information than they could absorb. However, there are good links to literacy and numeracy with appropriate vocabulary introduced and emphasised, good use of relevant stories, and evidence that good progress is achieved over time. Pupils are given many opportunities to show personal responsibility and

independence, and behaviour management is good. The support assistant makes a valuable contribution in organising, motivating and encouraging pupils.

104. The subject is very well managed. Planning is well co-ordinated to ensure that work is targeted appropriately, and that pupils build on previous learning. Ongoing evaluation is used to monitor the subject carefully, and findings are used to further develop the planning of the curriculum. Teaching is not monitored at present, but the lesson plans and evaluations provide the co-ordinator with a fairly clear picture of what still needs to be done. She is highly motivated and enthusiastic and determined to continue to further improve the delivery of the subject. Resources are satisfactory but not wide ranging enough. Information and communication technology is under used.

HISTORY

105. The teaching of history and geography alternate each term and this term the work concerns geography. As a result, it was not possible to observe the teaching of history.

106. However, through discussions with teachers, the examination of their curricular planning, their reports of pupils' progress in history and pupils' work there is convincing evidence that pupils make very good progress. The learning opportunities planned are very good. There is a steady build up of historical knowledge and experience based on a three year topic cycle. In each topic there are very thorough and detailed plans of what pupils should learn, which ensures that the relevance and challenge of the work is maintained and is appropriate to pupils of all ages. These include suggested activities, adjusted for three levels of ability and the age of pupils and remove the risk of repetition often associated with topic cycles. Instead pupils consolidate and build on previous learning.

107. Pupils with complex learning difficulties are given a sense of the passage of time and events using symbol timetables and objects of reference. Their experience is enhanced through visits, visitors, and the handling of artefacts. They take part in theme days, dressing up, for example in a Roman toga. Teachers and support staff are skilled in enabling pupils with complex difficulties, to learn through experiences, using very good communication strategies.

108. Pupils with severe learning difficulties move from simply recalling facts, to making judgements, for example whether an artefact is old or in current use. By the age of eleven, they have learned about the life of the Romans, through role play, hearing about their diet and handling artefacts and making rubbings of Roman coins. Their learning was enhanced by visitors from Grosvenor museum. During the Roman theme day, older pupils learned to recognise pictures of Roman soldiers, sort Roman coins from British coins, and compare Roman tools with those used today. They understood that many of the differences were due to the use of electricity.

109. Though teaching is not monitored in the classroom, lesson plans and evaluations are used by the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning, and to improve curriculum planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

110. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in how information and communication technology is taught. The training of teachers and classroom assistants in the use of information and communication technology has contributed. Equally, the time available for teaching information and communication technology has also been increased and, as a consequence, all pupils steadily achieve their individual education plan targets for information and communication technology. The use of information and communication

technology in other subjects is unsatisfactory. Most use of information and communication technology is made in planned activities at the start of each day and in individual tuition, although it is not sufficiently prominent in English, mathematics and science.

111. Pupils' progress in information and communication technology is good overall. However, pupils up to the end of Year 6 are achieving very well because of the high standard of teaching at this stage.

112. By the end of Year 2, pupils with complex learning difficulties begin to use a roller ball to control the cursor on the screen. They operate some simple programs independently and watch computer graphs on screen change when a temperature sensor is put into hot and cold water. Pupils with severe learning difficulties use the mouse accurately to produce patterns and they learn quickly to operate new programs by themselves. Shown the temperature graphs, they can indicate where cold and warm water are represented.

113. By the end of Year 6, pupils with complex learning difficulties enjoy familiar programs and press the correct buttons on an adapted keyboard to make their favourite images appear. They are aware of everyday technology and use a tape recorder and CD player with minimal support. Teachers and their assistants make very careful assessments of pupils with severe communication difficulties and devise good solutions to meet their particular needs. Their parents are involved in the assessment process and plans are drawn up that include the use of computers with specialist equipment at school and at home, which helps many of them make further progress. The highest attaining pupils build on their understanding of control technology and use colour coded instructions effectively to produce a pattern of movement with a robotic toy. They also show good understanding of screen icons and how computer programmes work.

114. By the end of Year 9, pupils with complex learning difficulties greatly enjoy the control using information and communication technology gives them. In the sensory room, two pupils who have severe communication difficulties make clear and positive responses to the range of lighting and sound effects, and use switches to choose and then control them in different ways. Using the karaoke machine and two microphones, they sing to each other and to the staff, taking turns and altering the volume – to considerable effect. The most able pupils improve their accuracy with the mouse and can recognise most letters on the keyboard with minimal prompting. Some are able to type their news each week using a 'Writing with Symbols' programme and using the Internet to search for information about Shakespeare and *Harry Potter*.

115. By the end of Year 11 and beyond, all pupils and students make increasing use of information and communication technology to communicate, indicate preferences and enjoy some leisure interests. A 16 year old student with complex learning difficulties uses a switch which she operates with head movements to make choices and communicate. Sometimes this is not managed well by staff, for example, when the switch is not required it is not removed and gets in the way of the student moving her head. Several other students with similar difficulties use switches and the computer keyboard to select words and symbols to choose from several options and indicate their decisions, such as "*I would like some orange drink*". Students use computer based painting programmes and also enjoy finding websites on the Internet with content they enjoy, such as clowns and pop stars, and can operate simple programmes successfully, which gives them much pleasure. The most able pupils are very interested, understand the operation of several computer programmes and use these independently, for example, communicating using simple text, graphics and information gathered from the Internet.

116. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The subject knowledge possessed by staff is now good and this can be seen in the detailed records and annual reports they provide for parents. However, few teachers use computers sufficiently in their teaching. Where teaching of information and communication technology or the use of this means occurs, as in the start of the day activities, it is good. It is used particularly well in relation to providing pupils with complex learning difficulties the sensory experiences that elicit their strong responses. Much of the work on pupils' individual targets or in the sensory room was led effectively by classroom assistants. The planning for the individual teaching of information and communication technology skills is thorough, builds carefully on progress and understanding and is very effectively assessed and recorded. Targets are reviewed regularly, and the multi-disciplinary assessment team works very closely with class teachers and families to design solutions and programmes of activity to stretch pupils. A few examples of very good teaching were seen, where teachers' knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs was clear. Pupils respond very well. They are enthusiastic and gain a great sense of achievement when they master a new skill, or make the computer do something they want.

117. The co-ordination of information and communication technology is good. The major development in the school has been the extended and intensive training that teachers and support staff have shared – their subject knowledge is now good and this can be seen in the detailed records and annual reports they provide for parents. Equipment and resources have been built up steadily and are satisfactory. A most productive relationship has developed with the major regional centre for communications assessment, and there are plans for further development and investment. The curriculum covers all the key requirements and is well adapted to meet the learning and communications needs of the pupils. However, the curricular planning in other subjects is not sufficient in setting out the opportunities for incorporating the use of information and communication technology as part of pupils' learning and activities.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

118. Pupils make satisfactory progress in French following a structured scheme of work. However, this achievement is not as good as was found at the time of the previous inspection and overall, improvement since then is unsatisfactory.

119. Pupils learn to say "*bonjour*" in response to hearing it said to them. They are introduced to specific vocabulary associated with topics such as sport, my school, my body, Christmas, and food. When assessed at the end of each topic, higher attaining pupils show understanding of most of the words, the majority need physical or symbol prompts. Most pupils will attempt to repeat words in French, and can match them to sign or symbol. Higher attaining pupils recall words previously learned, and say them in response to the English word accompanied by signing.

120. Pupils, with complex learning difficulties, learn to associate French words with experiences, for example through taste, in the food topic, and body parts with action songs.

121. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection in which the teaching was satisfactory. Lesson planning is well-structured, differentiated, and based on the scheme of work. Signing and symbols are used well to bridge understanding from English to French words. However, apart from the specific list of words associated with the topic, very little French was spoken, instructions, comments and questions all being given in English, even though they would have been understood in French, when accompanied by the teacher's very good signing. In the lesson observed, there was no use of resources such as posters or music, to create atmosphere, and no use of tape recorders or computer programmes to increase vocabulary and improve pronunciation. However, some video programmes have

been used to provide pupils with some understanding of French life and the experience of hearing the language spoken fluently. Teaching could be improved by use of a greater variety of strategies such as the use of role play, songs, and information communication technology, and the introduction of routines at the start of lessons, which give pupils the opportunity to consolidate, through repetition, vocabulary such as greetings, responses, numbers, and days of the week.

122. The co-ordinator is the principal teacher of French, with one other teacher working with pupils with complex learning difficulties. The subject is managed satisfactorily. Teaching is not monitored, but lesson plans and evaluations, from the other class, are evaluated by the co-ordinator.

MUSIC

123. Achievement in music is very good by the end of Year 6 and all pupils up to this age are making very good progress because of the high quality of teaching they receive. Beyond this stage and up to the end of Year 9, while pupils are achieving satisfactorily they are making less progress than at the time of the last inspection. Whilst the plans for what will be taught over a three year cycle are good, pupils, when they are older, will eventually revisit the same topics and these are not developed sufficiently to ensure challenging learning opportunities are maintained and new learning introduced. For example, two classes of differing ages and abilities were given the same activity, marching around their classrooms in time to recorded music.

124. By the end of Year 2, lower attaining pupils are able to select and grasp percussion instruments and produce a sound with the support of a member of staff. Higher attaining pupils are able to choose instruments using symbols and use their chosen instruments appropriately by shaking, rattling or hitting them.

125. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made very good progress. Higher attaining pupils can sign “up” and “down” at the appropriate points of a nursery rhyme, identify a familiar nursery rhyme when the tune is clapped and play an instrument at the appropriate point as part of a class musical story. Lower attaining pupils can use percussion instruments to play loudly or softly with prompts from classroom staff and can experiment playing a number of chime bars in a different order.

126. By the end of Year 9 records indicate that the highest attaining pupils are able to conduct other pupils in playing percussion instruments, have helped compose a group piece of music and represented the school in a choir at the local cathedral. However records also indicate that some lower attaining pupils do not attend class music lessons, as they are swimming and have only had an opportunity to listen to music at break-times.

127. The overall quality of teaching and learning of music is good, although it was very good at the time of the last inspection. Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge and up to the end of Year 6 they plan each lesson very well to include pupils of all abilities. Teachers manage pupils’ behaviour very effectively and use a range of strategies that gains high levels of attention from pupils. As a result pupils are able to concentrate well for extended periods, lessons continue at a very good pace and learning is very good. Pupils greatly enjoy their music lessons, are keen to learn and relationships between pupils and staff are consistently positive. The creative use of visual aids, such as symbols with song titles, flash cards with musical instruments and white boards are a significant part of the best teaching seen during the inspection.

128. The recently appointed curriculum co-ordinator has a clear and appropriate view of the need for future development in the subject. The school have clearly identified the need to further develop the curriculum for secondary aged pupils. Learning opportunities for music make a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development. The use of a range of recorded music from different countries is an integral part of lesson planning. The improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. At that time, for example, pupils attending concerts and the use of visiting musicians made a significant contribution to music provision and pupils' achievements. These opportunities are now less frequent. Overall, the quality of provision for music is not as high as it was at the last inspection and is no longer the strength it was.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. The achievements of pupils up to the end of Year 6 are very good because they are taught effectively and there is very good assessment of what pupils have learnt. By the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and it is unsatisfactory by the end of Year 11 and for students over the age of 16. The plans for what should be taught to pupils of different ages are arranged according to individual year groups and are not easily related to the mixed age grouping in each class. This has the most adverse effect upon older pupils and students where successful teaching is more dependent on sufficient expertise and detailed planning. Whilst the very newly appointed curriculum co-ordinator has recognised this deficiency, there are currently inadequate curricular plans to support the subject beyond Year 6. As a result pupils' achievements are better where teaching is better.

130. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils have improved their standing balance, are able to walk in the school's hydrotherapy pool with armbands and the support of a teaching assistant. Lower attaining pupils are able to lie prone, float in the pool with floatation aids and kick their arms and legs supports in the pool and will tolerate gentle stretches.

131. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress in their physical skills. Higher attaining pupils can climb, balance and jump with adult support. They show good competitive spirit in team games and can swim on their front and backs, using floatation aids at the local swimming pool. Lower attaining pupils show an increased sense of balance when walking along benches. All pupils have been introduced to a broader range of activities including dancing and horse riding. The most able pupils are able to lead other pupils over a simple assault course, crawling along a bench, dancing on a mat, climbing a set of steps and using a slide with ease.

132. By the end of Year 9, lower attaining pupils have experienced physical education lessons in the gym of a nearby secondary school. They are able to throw and catch a ball with adult support and hit a ball with an indoor hockey stick. Using tennis rackets with both hands they can hit a tennis ball. Pupils with additional physical disabilities are able to follow simple directions, such as rolling back and stretching out flat on a mat. Higher attaining pupils are able to catch balls at different heights, hit a tennis ball with reasonable accuracy and have represented the school in the past in boccia, swimming and athletics events.

133. By the end of Year 11, pupils are able to follow a simple warm-up routine at the beginning of physical education lessons. Higher attaining pupils can throw and roll balls to knock over skittles with good levels of accuracy. Lower attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress and teachers' records contain little or no records of pupil attainment. This is particularly evident where pupils are taught together with students over the age of 16.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but is highly variable for pupils of different ages. Teaching and learning is very good up to the end of Year 2 where lessons are

planned exceptionally well and the deployment of staff makes an extremely significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teaching for pupils up to the end of Year 6 is good and all pupils are provided with an appropriate range of experiences and challenges related to their individual needs resulting in good learning. Beyond Year 6, teaching is at best satisfactory and but also unsatisfactory where the activities are poorly matched to the abilities of the pupils. Here the pace of the lesson is slow and opportunities for on-going assessment are missed. Other shortcomings in teaching for these pupils include low expectations of their performance and the ineffective use of teaching assistants.

135. Resources for physical education are satisfactory overall, but the school's hydrotherapy pool is a very good resource, particularly because of the recent installation of excellent lighting and multi-sensory equipment, which is used very well to help relax and stimulate pupils. The school's accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory. In spite of the very good provision of a large pool for hydrotherapy, the school hall is too small and only suitable for activities with the youngest pupils. However, the school has arranged access to additional off-site facilities to support its provision for physical education. The recent building extension to the main school building has severely reduced the outside space available for physical education lessons.

136. Although the curriculum co-ordinator has recently observed a number of other teachers, this was focused on his induction rather than systematically monitoring the quality of physical education teaching. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The profile of how well pupils across the school are achieving is not as good. It was seen the curriculum needed to be developed further and this has not happened to a sufficient extent.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137. Due to time table arrangements, only two lessons were observed during the week of the inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to make an overall judgement on the standard of teaching although those seen were at least satisfactory. Little evidence is available to indicate the progress which pupils make, since many of the records refer to experiences rather than to progress. Pupils have opportunities to hear about the World's main religions. For example, younger pupils learn about festivals in different religions. Older pupils learn about rites of passage, looking at ceremonies such as baptism and weddings, often using role play to reinforce their learning. Lessons were introduced well. Information on the wedding ceremony in video format helped pupils to focus on the topic. Pupils with complex learning difficulties were included effectively by their teacher by the skilled use of pictorial symbols.

138. All pupils have a weekly religious education lesson. A scheme of work, based on the locally agreed syllabus, is being rewritten and reviewed and provides a useful basis for lesson planning. There is, as yet, no system for assessment in the subject. Visits are used to support the curriculum, for example, to the local church and a minister visits pupils at school. However, visits to other places of worship are limited by a lack of accessibility. There is a good range of books for teachers to use to assist in planning lessons, but other resources are very limited, particularly artefacts which could be used to help pupils' understanding of the different faiths.