

INSPECTION REPORT

HILLTOP SPECIAL SCHOOL

Maltby

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106972

Headteacher: Peter Leach

Reporting inspector: Charles Hackett
OIN 21081

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th June 2002

Inspection number: 250220

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Larch Road Maltby Rotherham
Postcode:	S66 8AZ
Telephone number:	01709 813386
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Amy Rushforth
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21081	C. Hackett	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical education	Summary of the report The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
19727	E. Langford	Lay inspector		How well the school works in partnership with parents How well does the school care for its pupils?
14691	J. Hall	Team inspector	Science Personal, social and health education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30071	J. Pearson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Special Educational Needs English as an additional language Post-16 provision
21666	A. Margerison	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
10781	R. Thompson	Team inspector	History Geography Religious education Design and technology	
29960	W. Hug	Team inspector	Art and design Music Modern foreign language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hilltop is a day special school for pupils with severe, complex or profound and multiple learning difficulties, and, unlike when it was previously inspected, pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. Currently there are 93 pupils on roll, aged between two and nineteen years; 18 per cent have autistic spectrum disorders. Nearly all pupils are of white U.K. heritage. Almost half of the pupils are entitled to a school meal free of charge. This is an above average proportion for a school of this type.

When pupils start at the school they have very low levels of learning ability, many with considerable difficulties in communication. Most pupils are admitted to the school early in their school life but there are a few who transfer at sixteen from other special schools. The Local Education Authority is currently undertaking a review of its special needs provision and this has had implications in that there are uncertainties as to the school's future role. The school has recently experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers, qualified and experienced in teaching pupils with special needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Hilltop is a very good school. The achievements of pupils with severe, complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties are very good; this is especially so in the development of their communication skills, numeracy and personal and social education. The achievements of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and of students in the post-16 department are good. The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good. The headteacher and senior staff lead the school very well. As a consequence of these strengths the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress, especially in improving their ability to communicate and their understanding of number. The progress of children in the nursery group is excellent and they are given an excellent start to their education.
- The quality of relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves is outstanding; this contributes to creating an atmosphere for very effective teaching and learning throughout the school.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher, who provides much appreciated support to staff and pupils. He is well supported by his deputy and other senior staff.
- Pupils enjoy attending school and their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal development is excellent.
- The partnership with parents is excellent and as a result they are very supportive of the work of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory. Classrooms in the older building are small, ventilation in the new part of the school is poor and the corridor is not suitable for wheelchairs. Outside play facilities are poor.
- Transport arrangements for pupils to arrive at school on time and to leave promptly at the end of school are poor.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in February 1998. Improvements since then have been very good. These have been achieved despite quite significant changes to the population of the school and uncertainties as to the school's future role. Considerable improvements have been made to the curriculum, which is now well planned. Other areas where significant improvements have been made

include staff development, art, pupils' individual education targets, methods of checking pupils' progress, the role of the governors, the school development planning process and ways in which support staff are used. Although improvements have been made to the accommodation it still remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The achievements and progress of pupils with severe, complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties are very good. For those with autistic spectrum disorders and students in the post-16 department they are good. There is no difference in the achievements of boys and girls and the few pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as others. Since 1999 the school has been setting challenging targets for pupils' achievements. Data collected shows that pupils have met these targets and, as a result, progressed in all areas as they have moved through the school. Records show achievements in mathematics have increased more rapidly.

Children in the Foundation Stage (*nursery and reception years*) make very good progress in developing their communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development. They achieve well and make good progress in other areas of their learning. In Years 1 to 11 pupils achieve very well making very good progress in speaking and listening, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. With the exception of learning a modern foreign language, pupils make good progress in all other subjects. Although for many pupils learning another language is not appropriate, there are pupils in the school who could achieve more in developing their language skills in another language, such as French.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic to learn, responding well to lessons and visits out of school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils consistently behave very well in lessons, around school and when out on visits.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are very sociable, relating equally well to adults, visitors and their friends. Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy taking on responsibilities.
Attendance	Good. Ten percent of the school's population have understandable

	absences for medical reasons. The rate of attendance for all other pupils is very good.
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In lessons pupils listen very carefully to staff and are very positive in their attempts to communicate. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show clearly that they enjoy activities and the support they receive from staff. Those pupils with autism respond positively to the structures that staff provide for them. Pupils with severe learning difficulties relish opportunities to take on responsibilities and challenges set for them both in and out of school. An example of this includes the café organised by the post-16 students. These students thoroughly enjoy serving and greeting other pupils in the school. The pupils visiting the café demonstrate real enjoyment from the experience.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and in mathematics, personal and social education and physical education. For science and reading and writing the quality of teaching is good. The quality of teaching in all other subjects, with the exception of a modern foreign language, is good.

Teaching successfully meets the needs of all pupils, regardless of their special needs. Teachers' planning is very good. Lessons are well organised and there are clear expectations for what each pupil should achieve. Individual targets are regularly reviewed and pupils' success in meeting these demonstrate the progress they have made. Teachers work very well with the support assistants. In most classes they operate very effectively together.

A significant strength in teachers' planning is the way in which work and topics are planned to be taught in such a way that all pupils, irrespective of their special needs, can take an active part. During the week of inspection there were many outstanding lessons observed. Teachers are very successful at creating an atmosphere in their classrooms, which encourages pupils to learn and achieve their very best. They bring their teaching alive through the use of a range of resources, many of which have been developed by staff themselves. Teachers' very positive relationships with pupils inspire them to learn.

Where teaching observed was not of this high standard, sometimes as a result of lack of experience of teaching pupils with special educational needs, teachers failed to challenge pupils and they were not kept as busy in the lessons as they might have been.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The quality of learning experiences is good throughout the school, with a very good emphasis placed on developing pupils' communication skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very Good. Pupils are fully integrated into the school and make similar progress to all other pupils.
Provision for pupils'	Very Good. The emphasis on developing pupils' spirituality permeates

personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	throughout the school and every opportunity is taken to support pupils' personal, social and moral development. Cultural development is well considered in art and music lessons, and in the displays around the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school places considerable emphasis on ensuring that the care needs of pupils are met. The procedures for monitoring and promoting their academic and personal development are very good and as a result are effective in raising pupils' achievements throughout the school.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Parents consider the school to be excellent and are very supportive of its work.

The curriculum ensures that opportunities for pupils to learn are provided in a range of imaginative ways. Pupils respond very well to the visits out of school. These are all well planned and effectively challenge pupils in a range of situations. After school clubs are well attended by pupils and provide valuable extended learning opportunities. The school places considerable emphasis on treating all pupils as individuals and ensuring that they do their very best for each one. This is apparent in everything that happens in the daily life of the school. There are a few links with other schools and colleges but these are not as fully developed as they could be and, as a result, pupils have limited opportunities to learn alongside their mainstream peers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher leads the school very well and is very well supported by his deputy and other staff with responsibilities for aspects of the school's work.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school and supports the headteacher very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has established procedures that involve all staff in helping set priorities for development and evaluating the progress made. This is particularly so in procedures set up to analyse the progress pupils have made.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes very good use of the grants it receives. There are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the pupils and considerable work has been put in to developing the expertise of staff to deal with the increasingly complex special needs of pupils being admitted to the school. Learning resources are at least good for all aspects, with the exception of those to assist in the teaching of a modern foreign language.

The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The older part of the school has small teaching areas and this restricts the activities, which pupils can engage in. The floor in the new part of the school is unsuitable for wheelchair use and sections of this part of the building are unusable because of the unsatisfactory design of the building which means areas are very hot in summer or very cold in winter.

The headteacher has shown commendable expertise and commitment in leading the staff in their work. His deputy sets very high standards in the quality of her planning for many aspects of the work of the

school. The school is constantly seeking to provide the very best for pupils and has made effective use of the money allocated to it by the LEA. As a consequence, the school applies the principles of best value very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievements and progress pupils make. • The development of their self-confidence. • The many challenges the school sets for pupils including the nature of the visits out of school. • The way the school responds to parents and offers positive support to them. • The ease with which they can approach the headteacher and other members of staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both in the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting there were no aspects of the work of the school that parents wished to see improved.

The inspection team supports the very positive views of the school put forward by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils achieve very well and are making very good progress. Students in the post-16 groups make good progress. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when progress of all pupils and students over time was described as being satisfactory except in the areas of information technology and art, which were unsatisfactory. Progress for children under 5 was described as good and progress for these children is now excellent.
2. Pupils are able to do so well because the quality of teaching is very good and all staff have a positive commitment to ensure that pupils achieve as much as possible whatever their special needs may be. The school set challenging targets in English, mathematics and personal and social development for pupils to achieve by the end of the school year 2000 to 2001. These targets were met by most pupils and in the case of mathematics, they were exceeded for the majority of pupils. They were not quite achieved by those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, evidence suggests that the reason for this lay in the school being unfamiliar in setting realistic targets for this group. These pupils, from the evidence gained in the inspection, clearly make as much progress as other pupils. Those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress because of the school's commitment to develop its expertise in working with these pupils. Children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well and make excellent progress. They are particularly successful in developing their language skills and in their personal and social development. The quality of the work with these children is very impressive and as a consequence each individual pupil is making very good progress.
3. In developing their communication skills nursery children are showing a very good understanding of routines and expectations. Examples of this were seen in the way in which pupils are able to use switches and touch screens to make choices and effect changes. In years 1 to 11 pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in speaking and listening, mathematics, physical education and their personal and social development. This is largely because of the very good planning by staff to meet the individual needs of each child. Whilst progress for those pupils who are able to read and write is still good, there are some missed opportunities to extend skills in these areas. This is the case for pupils of a higher ability level within those with severe learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders. However, there are individual examples of pupils making excellent progress; an example being a year 8 autistic pupil previously unable to write, writing his name without any adult assistance. The school has very effectively implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and this has had a significant impact on pupils' achievements.
4. The achievements of students in the post-16 department are good. This is particularly so in relation to their personal development and in activities such as taking part in sports at the local sports centre. However, changes to the accommodation they use and staffing have recently slowed their rate of progress and the school is seeking to develop further the level of age appropriate provision for these students.
5. Achievement and progress in physical education are very good. The school has been awarded a Sportsmark award for its work in this area. Pupils demonstrate very good confidence in the swimming pool and in undertaking activities such as athletics and

gymnastics. Pupils clearly benefit from an exciting and well-organised curriculum. Their achievements in personal, social and health education are equally very good, although there is a weakness in their knowledge of sex and drugs education, which are not as well covered within the curriculum as they might be. With the exception of work in a modern foreign language, pupils' achievements in every other subject are good. Whilst developing language skills in another language is not a practical option for many pupils, there are pupils who could develop their skills in a modern foreign language. This was a weakness reported in the previous report and despite improvements this remains an area for the school to develop further.

6. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties make very good progress. Their curriculum is very appropriate and ensures that they are fully involved and can achieve as well as possible. Their special programmes, such as sessions in the hydro-therapy pool, give them excellent experiences. In these sessions pupils become able to explore the world around them and react to sensory inputs, such as music and slide shows.
7. The school has reacted very positively to the increased number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. As a result these pupils are making good progress and there is no significant aspect of the school that these pupils achieve at a lower level than other pupils. This is particularly so in communication skills where these pupils are able to demonstrate their choices in a range of activities.
8. The achievements and progress of the small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups are the same as those of all other pupils. They are fully included and involved in all activities. Likewise there are no differences in the achievements of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this contributes significantly to the quality of their learning and achievements. They show great pleasure when they arrive each morning. Parents are unanimous in reporting that their children are keen to attend school. As an example, one parent commented to inspectors that she felt her child coped well with a four hour plane journey back from holiday because she was looking forward so much to returning to school. Pupils' behaviour is also very good. They are very courteous towards each other and towards adults. Their personal development and relationships with each other and adults are excellent. These judgements are an improvement from the previous inspection report when pupils' attitudes, values and personal development were described as being good.
10. When pupils arrive each day they are keen to greet staff and, because they understand the very well established routines, they soon settle. They are very proud when they do well and succeed. There were many instances during the inspection week of pupils becoming excited at their achievements. In physical education, for example, pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class were genuinely pleased for one of their friends when he reached the target of swimming a length of the swimming pool. Pupils' enjoyment of activities was clearly illustrated by a group of Year 1 and 2 pupils who, when watching a video of a visit out of school, celebrated the day's events and applauded each other for their contribution to the day.
11. The obvious pleasure at being in school was shown by pupils with all types of special educational need. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were excited by their experiences within the hydro-pool. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders showed considerable pleasure when involved in a physical education lesson

using a parachute. A feature of many lessons is the way in which pupils listen carefully to staff and concentrate very hard to achieve their best. This was the case in a post-16 session looking at current affairs. Despite the session being long pupils concentrated and listened carefully to each other, showing genuine interest. Pupils in Year 3 in a literacy lesson, looking at letter sounds, were very responsive and enthusiastic, working hard to achieve success. Again this group showed genuine warmth and pleasure when one pupil achieved success.

12. Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good whether they are in lessons, around school or out on school visits. They relate very well to each other and excellently towards staff. This level of behaviour shows they understand how they should behave. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders respond very well to the clear and firm guidelines given to them. This was clearly shown in the physical education lesson with a parachute, when pupils understood when it was time to stop what they had been asked to do. The youngest pupils respond to staff guidance, for example in how to walk around the school. During the inspection there were no incidents observed of pupils behaving badly towards each other. Even when individual pupils with severe autism were displaying challenging behaviour other pupils responded in a very positive way. For example, in a geography lesson for Years 1 to 2 pupils, the rest of the class group behaved extremely well when one of the other pupils was engaged in disturbing behaviour for a short period of time.
13. Out of school, either on visits or taking part in activities at the sports centre, pupils' behaviour was exemplary. An example of this was the Year 7, 8 and 9 group who went on a visit to a garden centre. They showed a high level of independence and social skills, particularly when using the public café. Pupils were very well behaved, sat at the table, went up to the counter to chose their drink and returned to their table with smiling faces. The high quality of their behaviour led this event to be an exceptionally beneficial experience for their personal development. During the inspection there were no incidents of oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism witnessed and the school has not had any occasion to issue either temporary or permanent exclusions to pupils.
14. Pupils' personal development is excellent. They show a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Examples of this were seen when pupils were assisting other pupils with more physical difficulties either to walk around the school or to move within the classroom situation. Pupils completed these tasks willingly and in a very supportive manner. They show considerable respect for each other whatever their level of special needs may be. They also show a trust of staff, which has a significant impact on their capacity to learn.
15. Pupils' ability to show initiative and take on personal responsibilities is excellent. There were many examples shown during the week; the best of these perhaps was the post-16 café where a group of post-16 students prepared a morning snack and served in turn each class group and visitors to the school with coffee, tea, toast, biscuits and cakes. Pupils took orders, prepared the food and served. They took on these responsibilities with pleasure and showed considerable maturity. To reach these standards in post-16 the school seeks to develop these qualities right from the early days pupils are in school. They are given responsibilities either in the classroom or to take registers or notes along to the office. They are encouraged to take on responsibility for their learning. This is a very positive feature of the work of the school.
16. Given the high absence levels of a number of pupils with serious health conditions, the attendance at school of the majority of pupils is good. The school is rightly proud of three pupils who achieved 100% attendance during the reporting year and of the very

low level of unauthorised absence recorded in school. During the inspection a number of pupils regularly arrived after the start of the school day and experienced delayed departures times at the end of the school day, all due to the late arrival of their transport vehicles at school. This is unsatisfactory and makes it difficult for staff to start the first lesson on time. However, once in school pupils are punctual to lessons, which means that all other lessons can start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The overall quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection nearly a third of lessons were graded as very good or excellent. This represents a significant improvement on the previous inspection when one in ten lessons were deemed to be unsatisfactory. The school accepted the comments made about teaching made in the previous report and has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. There is now a core group of staff whose quality of teaching is outstanding and as a consequence the rate of progress of pupils in their lessons has been excellent. Since the previous inspection the school now takes a greater percentage of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and whilst the teaching of these pupils is good, it is not yet quite at the same level as the teaching of those pupils with severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple difficulties. This is understandable and the school is very receptive to advice and support to develop their skills in working with these pupils.
18. One of the key elements evident in the quality of teaching throughout the school is the emphasis all staff place on developing pupils' communication skills. From the moment they arrive in school staff encourage them to communicate and in all lessons staff seek to support pupils to communicate. There is a consistent approach from staff to challenge pupils to achieve as much as they can. For example, during the inspection in a Year 10 science lesson, a higher attaining pupil was being encouraged to speak in a full sentence when he described a frog catching its food in its mouth. Whereas a pupil with very limited vocabulary was being encouraged to say the word 'frog' when she was given a picture of a frog to look at.
19. Teachers have very clear expectations of what they want pupils to learn and do in lessons. Planning for many aspects is exceptional. Pupils are set individual tasks which are challenging and lessons are very well organised. This was the case in a design and technology lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The higher attaining pupils in the class were set challenging tasks; they had to choose symbols and then find the objects in the kitchen. They were able to find the bread and orange drinks and understand the difference between salt and sugar. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and a pupil with autistic spectrum disorders both joined in touching and smelling the dough and then rolling out the pastry and with help, cut out shapes. As in many other lessons, resources were very well planned and prepared prior to the start of the lesson. This had a significant impact on the level of support that staff could then give to pupils as they explored what had been prepared for them. In a science lesson for Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were able to stir, smear and pat and mix water and custard powder. They experienced the change from powder to mixture.
20. Staff know the pupils very well. This helps them set appropriate targets for lessons. This was the case for a number of physical education sessions where pupils were encouraged to achieve an individual target for the activity. Year 6 and 7 pupils were very committed to achieving their individual targets in a swimming session. The teacher and support assistants were excellent at supporting and encouraging pupils to achieve their very best.

21. Teachers and support assistants work together very effectively as a team. Support assistants are very clear about the level of support each individual pupil requires and are careful to allow pupils to be as independent as possible. This was the case in a music session for pupils in a Year 4, 5 and 6, class. The teacher teaching this large group split them into three smaller groups and the use of the additional teacher and support staff enabled pupils to experiment and explore the different music they could make with a wide variety of objects that were provided for them. Support assistants were very careful to enable the pupils to test and experiment safely. Similarly when given the opportunity to use instruments, very effective support enabled pupils to successfully make musical sounds. This particular lesson was similar to many others in the very positive and successful use of humour. At the end of the lesson one of the teachers blew a 'didgeridoo', which caused great excitement amongst pupils and gave a very positive fun element to the learning process.
22. All pupils, whatever their specific special needs, are actively included in all lessons. A religious education lesson for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 was an excellent example of this. The lesson was planned to involve all pupils and as a consequence all took an active part. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and pupils with severe learning difficulties actively made candles and drew pictures and developed their skills in art. Whereas pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were able to react to lights and to feel objects, all of which gave them an insight into the festival of Divali.
23. There were many examples during the week where staff successfully created a very positive learning environment. This was always the case for work undertaken in the hydro-therapy pool whether sessions were taken by teachers or the physiotherapist. Teachers work hard to bring their lessons alive. Often they will use facilities in the local community such as when a group of pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9 visited a garden centre. The planning for the visit was meticulous and was successful in ensuring that key ideas put forward were reinforced. Pupils in a Year 3 to 6 group were very enthusiastic to learn when engaged in a taxi game designed to develop their number skills. Pupils who visited the post-16 café, benefited enormously from the way staff used the opportunity to reinforce pupils' communication and social skills, as well as number skills, when ordering drinks and biscuits. Staff ensured that pupils were as independent as possible. They were asked to order their drinks if they were able to. Other pupils were given choices, for example a few were not allowed to eat or drink until they had actively selected the symbol for either a biscuit or a drink.
24. Modern technology is used well in a few lessons. This is the case in post-16 where an inter-active white board is used very effectively both for science, such as when looking at the human skeleton, and in practical mathematics sessions using commercial interactive programmes. Pupils are, also, very highly motivated when their activities are recorded on video. For example, when they returned from a visit out of school, pupils were able to recall what they had seen and the activities they had taken part in through the very effective use of a video recording of their visit. A technician provides a very helpful service, resolving problems with computers, making resources and installing software. However, computers are not used well in every classroom and there are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' learning through their use.
25. In the small number of lessons where teaching isn't up to the standards elsewhere, one of the key factors is that they are not sufficiently planned to challenge all pupils. This is when the work is aimed more at the middle range of ability within the group. As a consequence higher attaining pupils are not always being challenged by the work they are being asked to do. This was the case in a Year 10 English lesson where

opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills were missed. On occasions the pace of lessons was slow and pupils were not kept sufficiently busy. In a very small number of lessons, such as a lesson with Year 10 pupils in science, resources were very limited and as a consequence pupils had to work hard to maintain their interest. In two modern foreign lessons seen, planning didn't focus sufficiently on getting the higher ability pupils to develop their skills in using a different language.

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

26. The curriculum offered to pupils is good. Pupils across the school have good quality learning experiences that are well matched to their learning needs. There is a very strong and relevant emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills through speaking and listening, using signs and symbols, picture exchange schemes, and communication aids like switches and electronic talkers. As a result of this focus, pupils make very good progress from an early age. Opportunities to develop reading and writing skills are not so well planned as they are for speaking and listening.
27. There is a good length to the teaching week and learning is extended and enriched through an improved programme of visits, clubs, and residential experiences. This term, for example, pupils attend after school clubs for drama, athletics and outdoor activities, cooking and healthy eating. They spend time on the trampoline for rebound therapy. The school continues to provide an extensive programme of visits into the local community and invites visitors into school to make contributions in lessons, on healthy eating, and in music and art, for example. Visits are now closely tied to the aims of lessons and this is an improvement from the previous inspection.
28. The curriculum has undergone complete revision since the last inspection and the improvements are good. Provision for mathematics and physical education is very good. In most other subjects the provision is good. The amount of time for science has improved and this subject is now firmly established throughout the school. Planning for religious education is good and follows the locally agreed syllabus. Planning for pupils to learn a modern foreign language focuses too much on the customs, foods, music and places of interest of other countries rather than on the language. The use of visiting dancers and musicians enhances the music curriculum.
29. Central to the aims of the school is the belief that all pupils have an equal right to learn. The school promotes access to the curriculum well. Each pupil has an education plan, regularly updated, to meet his or her particular needs. Where appropriate pupils join other classes to provide a better match of activities to their particular stages of development. The school, though, has not forged many links with other schools for pupils to learn and play in other settings. When such links are made, as in the case of a Year 6 boy learning in a mainstream primary school for two days a week, the provision is very successful.
30. In the foundation stage (nursery and reception classes) there is good planning overall to meet the Early Learning Goals* (personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical; physical, and creative development; and knowledge and understanding of the world). In the nursery, excellent planning of daily routines provides stability and familiarity with school life enabling children to feel happy, confident, secure and able to learn. The staff and children eat together in the nursery at lunchtime and this is an important social occasion. There is not enough space in the nursery, inside or out, to provide a broad enough programme

for physical and creative development, nor for energetic and social play. This is a weakness because these activities are important for the development of basic skills that pupils need to do things for themselves, like feeding and dressing. The nursery provision does promote these skills very well but could do so even more effectively with better accommodation.

31. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are taught successfully in a range of groupings, using all aspects of the National Curriculum, organised as half-termly topics. The infant curriculum builds well on the communication, mathematical and personal and social education begun in the nursery by extending the skills of, for example, sharing, using good manners, taking turns, making choices, sitting at the table to eat and drink, developing personal hygiene and appropriate social skills.
32. Coverage of the National Curriculum is well established for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The development of communication, personal and social skills remains an important focus. Very good use is made of regrouping the pupils across these years, for English and mathematics, for example, to improve the match of pupils' work to their different stages of development. This arrangement works especially well in the class for Years 1 and 2 where higher attaining pupils make very good progress in speaking in whole sentences. The National Curriculum is also mainly well planned in Years 11 to 14, except for the teaching of a modern foreign language. In Years 14 to 16, curriculum planning builds well on the published scheme used in earlier years. An important addition to the timetable is the opportunity to gain external accreditation through a Youth Award scheme, the 'Transition Challenge'. The curriculum for students post-16 also builds effectively on the 14-16 curriculum with the introduction of the next stage of the Youth Award scheme, 'Towards Independence'. However, the level of challenge provided for higher attaining pupils is not always as high as it could be. There is no provision in school, nor through links with other schools for students with moderate learning difficulties to gain external accreditation beyond the Youth Award scheme.
33. The use of published schemes to plan distinct programmes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and for pupils with severe learning difficulties works well. Pupils with autism have well planned individual programmes that are primarily based on the programmes for pupils with severe learning difficulties. When the distractions of their own classrooms get in the way of their learning, they go to work stations, and use individual workboxes, in a separate room where distractions are kept to a minimum.
34. The school promotes pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) very well. Good use is made of national schemes for this subject and pupils make very good progress. The youngest pupils in the nursery, and in Years 1 and 2, are taught about personal care, dressing and undressing. As they get older pupils progress to learning about their bodies, the family, people who help in the community, feelings, making choices and sharing. They are taught very well how to find things in the kitchen, how to make a sandwich, and how to be sociable at snack times. Older pupils learn about healthy eating. The development of personal and social skills features in lessons. From Year 7, pupils have a PSHE lesson each week. By Years 10 and 11 pupils have lessons about sex education, and post-16 students learn about the use and misuse of drugs. However, provision for sex education and drugs education is not as well planned as the rest of the PSHE programme. As preparation for leaving school, older students work with staff and adults at a day centre on a mailing project. The PSHE programme helps pupils to gain confidence in speaking up in a group. Pupils are taught the qualities of being a good friend. Citizenship lessons for older pupils cover

current affairs, the reliability of the news they read in newspapers or hear on television. They visit a re-cycling plant and learn about the treatment of waste.

35. Well-organised arrival and departure routines help pupils to cope with change. Those who can take responsibility for collecting registers, taking messages, and counting numbers for lunch, for example. Pupils have feeding and personal and social targets at lunch and break times. In the dining hall, the learning support staff and lunchtime assistants help pupils to practise these targets. Unlike in the nursery, however, there is a missed opportunity to make lunch in the dining hall a social family occasion because none of the teaching staff eats with the pupils, although this time in the dining hall is counted as taught time. There are other social occasions in classrooms, however, when pupils help prepare snacks and drinks, clear away their plates and beakers, communicate their choices, and socialise with teachers and learning assistants.
36. A strong partnership between the school and the local careers service has led to good provision for careers and vocational education. Opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work are well matched to pupils' ages and stages of development. The statutory requirement for careers education and guidance is well established. From Year 9, careers officers participate in pupils' annual reviews and in their transition programmes. By the time they enter post-16 provision, students have personal careers advisors. This works well. Work experience placements for post-16 students are all based in school. Students participate in mini enterprise activities. External placements with local employers, though, are not provided to help students prepare for leaving school. This is an area for development. Every effort is taken to provide students post-16 with an opportunity to attend link courses at college. This is an important preparation for leaving school and transferring to college at the age of 19. It is very unfortunate, therefore, that having provided very relevant 16-19 link courses for the students, one of the colleges used for placements is now not able to accept the students after they leave school.
37. Aiding the personal development of pupils in all its different aspects is an important strength of the school. Supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stands at the centre of Hilltop School's endeavors. The provision for all these elements is very good. Pupils benefit greatly from the whole school approach taken; they grow in confidence, learn to act independently and are guided to become sensitive and caring individuals.
38. The school uses every opportunity to support pupils' spiritual development. Teachers are skilled to catch spontaneous moments of wonder and delight in pupils. Assemblies are often moving experiences of togetherness for the whole school community. Achievements are celebrated in singing, clapping and dancing. Even pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, who find it difficult to relate with others during lessons, are visibly moved on such occasions. At times they act mesmerized. During prayers pupils behave in a respectful manner and they share moments of quietness. In classrooms and assemblies, fellow pupils who are absent due to illness are remembered by sounding a chime coupled with a moment of quiet contemplation.
39. Pupils learn to tell right from wrong and are constantly reminded of the importance of moral values. Their behaviour is very good throughout the school, which is a reflection of their respect for the staff and fellow pupils. Pupils are always ready to help one another, developing empathy and understanding for those who might find some activities more challenging. At the age of 16 many are confident, outgoing individuals who can explain why it is wrong to hurt or harm others. In the post-16 provision moral

dilemmas are posed, although this needs to be extended to create a more age appropriate focus for the students.

40. The school starts early with the younger age groups on an extensive programme of educational visits and participation in community events. These occasions are carefully recorded – often by using a digital camera. Pictures and video footage are used in lessons to develop pupils’ social learning. Frequently social behaviours such as greeting one another, asking questions appropriately, relating to unknown outsiders are rehearsed at school. Pupils are given choices and are encouraged to confidently make decisions. Through all these experiences older pupils grow visibly in confidence and behave appropriately with visitors to the school.
41. The appreciation of the pupils’ own and other cultures is promoted through attractive displays, the appreciation of music from different ethnic backgrounds, the celebration of festivals from many diverse traditions, the cultural component of Modern Foreign Language teaching and trips abroad. Pupils can talk about their own cultural identity, refer to the Queen’s Golden Jubilee, name favourite public figures, point to musicians and sports personalities and are aware of cultural events and celebrations. Equally they can name and describe with respect traditions from other countries and those from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds in Britain.

**Early learning goals-these are the achievements pupils are expected to reach before starting school.*

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is very good and a strength of the school. This represents an area of significant improvement since the previous inspection. Procedures for monitoring and promoting academic and personal development are very good and effective in raising pupils’ achievements throughout the school. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has reviewed its procedures, and these are now consistently applied throughout the school.
43. Methods of checking pupils’ progress and personal development are very good; it is assisted by the equally good assessment procedures. Individual education plans (IEPs) have improved and now have a consistent format across the school. Targets are set for two years. They are reviewed termly for one year and then the two-year target to be achieved is formally reviewed and amended if necessary. Each individual pupil has targets set for actual performance and these are aggregated to forecast a class target and school targets. However, although IEP targets set are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed, many contain over 18 targets. Taking into account the new Code of Practice, which recommends fewer targets for each individual, the school is reviewing the situation and taking advice on the number of targets set for each pupil, the number of areas to be covered in targets, and how manageable they are. Records of pupils’ and students’ achievements are well maintained and presented and show considerable effort to keep them easily accessible and up-to-date.
44. The very good and well-established behaviour management routines help to enhance and promote the self-image of pupils and contribute greatly to pupils’ very good attitudes to learning. The school operates a number of incentives to encourage and reward pupils’ good work and behaviour, both in and around the school. The comprehensive behaviour policy is regularly reviewed to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance to the changing population of pupils joining the school. Risk assessment is an integral feature of these reviews and has been successfully

used to develop positive handling strategies in the behaviour management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The school has a philosophy of zero tolerance towards bullying and racism and has developed an excellent approach to promoting a culture of “be kind to others” that pervades the whole school.

45. Very good child protection procedures are in place, which are well understood and acted upon by staff in the best interests of the pupils. The headteacher is the named person for child protection and has established very good working relationships with the various external support agencies. All staff are familiar with the child protection procedures and are aware of, and alert to, the need for vigilance in monitoring the well being and welfare of the pupils in their care.
46. Very good and effective strategies have been established to identify and support those pupils identified as having additional special educational needs and very good procedures are in place to support and monitor the progress of “looked after children” to ensure their ongoing development in liaison with their carers and social services.
47. The school has established very good health and safety procedures that embrace the whole spectrum of the pupils’ time in the school. Formal health and safety audits of the school are undertaken each term and outcomes and recommendations are reported for discussion at governor meetings. Day to day health and safety matters are effectively dealt with by the headteacher and school caretaker. Risk assessment techniques are well embedded into all school routines and the certificate requirements for annual inspections of resource equipment and electrical systems are fully addressed. Fire evacuation drills are undertaken on a regular basis and outcomes are reviewed to identify any areas for improvement.
48. All staff receive first-aid training and the school benefits from the presence of a fully trained school nurse based at the school. Very good arrangements are in place for the effective management and reporting of all pupil injuries that occur during the school day and for reporting such incidents to parents. Examples were seen during the inspection week of the high quality of care and attention given by the nurse and school staff and of the trust and reliance in them shown by the pupils receiving treatment. Secure and effective management arrangements are in place for the correct recording, storage and administration of prescribed medicines to pupils, in line with parents’ requests. The very good partnership arrangements that exist between teachers and the many visiting health and educational professionals ensure their specialist interaction with pupils are well planned to minimise any disruption to the pupils’ learning.
49. All members of staff receive training in the lifting and handling of pupils and external audits are regularly undertaken to ensure good practice is maintained across the school. Very good procedures are in place to ensure staff are familiar with the safe application of pupil physical restraint techniques and for the correct recording and reporting of incidents that occur. There is a very good practice for the ongoing review of additional staff training requirements arising from the differing care needs of pupils in the school to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully addressed. An example of this is training staff receive in working with diabetic children, prior to the return to school of a pupil who had been diagnosed as having a diabetic condition.
50. Excellent procedures are in place for recording, monitoring and reporting pupils’ attendance and incidents of pupil absence. The positive approach to “first morning telephone calls” ensures that the school has knowledge of the whereabouts of all pupils with no reason to be absent from school. Monthly attendance and absence reports are

well used to keep the headteacher and governors fully informed and involved in the review of whole school attendance profiles. Registers are correctly maintained and pupil registration practice in the school fully complies with statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents view the work of the school as excellent. All are very supportive of the school, hold the staff in the highest regard and believe their children receive the very best quality and standard of care and education during their time in school. Parents feel fully involved as partners in the education and development of their children and receive very good quality, regular information about their child's time and progress in school. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
52. Parents are always welcome in school and actively encouraged to be involved in their children's learning and development. They value highly the way teachers are always very willing to listen and talk with them about their children. Parents gave high praise for the constructive and sensitive way in which teachers respond to their queries and concerns and provided useful hints and tips about working with their children. Examples include, agreeing appropriate symbols for use in the home in support of the pupil's learning in the class and suggesting positive handling strategies for use by parents in the home that had proved successful in school. The school canvasses parents for their views on proposals for changing and improving the way the school operates and always seeks to gain parental agreement to decisions.
53. Well-established procedures provide for the full involvement of all parents in the discussion and review process of their child's individual education plans and helps to maximise the valuable contribution of parents to the very good progress being achieved by pupils. Of particular benefit to pupils' learning and progress is the voluntary contribution of a small number of parent and community helpers. Teachers appreciate greatly the valuable input and quality contribution of these volunteers who are able to provide a pre-planned weekly input and support to the pupils' learning. Many willingly volunteer to help out on an ad-hoc basis, to support the school with fund raising activities, working in the library and helping on out-of school visits, all of which helps to enhance pupils' development opportunities and learning experiences.
54. The school benefits from a small, but very active, parents and teachers association (PTA), which organises regular half-termly fund raising social events. All of these are well attended and provide informal opportunities for meetings and chats between teachers and parents. The PTA has contributed significant donations into school, for example helping to fund the colour lights for the hydro pool and a lower school classroom, and donating learning resources, such as library books. In addition the PTA also provides a valuable conduit for making parents' views known to the school.
55. Overall the quality and range of information provided to parents is very good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Of worthy note are the lower, middle and higher school handbooks, which provide parents and carers with more focused information about their child's time in school. Parents are kept well informed on a regular basis about all aspects of school life, organised events and pupil activities and progress. Information is always presented in very reader friendly language and a format that is easy to read and understand. Ways of informing parents include informal letters and telephone conversations between staff and parents, the daily home-school diary system, written formal reports and meetings organised to discuss the progress and attainment of pupils. The half-termly school newsletter and regular "Dear parent" correspondence ensure that parents are kept up to date on all aspects of their

children's time in school. The school prospectus and governors annual report are comprehensive publications and viewed by parents as valuable reference documents about all aspects of their child's time in school. However, the statutory requirement to include school attendance information is not complied with.

56. Parents spoken to during the inspection valued their attendance at workshops, organised to raise awareness and knowledge about Makaton and PECS. The school has plans to develop a series of other information giving workshops in the near future, which should be of great benefit in raising the knowledge levels of parents in support of their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The headteacher leads the school very well. He has provided a clear sense of direction for dealing with the key issues from the previous inspection as well as overseeing the development of other aspects of the school's work. He is very well supported by his deputy and other members of the senior management team. They share a clear vision for the school that has at its heart providing for all pupils the opportunities and experiences they need in order to achieve their best academically and personally. One of the school's aims is to help pupils develop the skills and interests they will need so that they will be accepted members of their own community after they leave school. By leading and supporting the staff and governors in making the very good improvements in the curriculum, teaching and management since the last inspection, the headteacher and senior team has helped the school make significant strides towards fully achieving these aims.
58. Teachers with responsibility for leading each subject area are effective. They have a good understanding of the strengths of their subjects and the aspects that need to be developed. The organisation of the staff into small teams works well; it provides them with the support of colleagues and helps them have a whole school view of their work. Allied to the school's system of setting priorities for development this helps them take appropriate action so that improvements to the school's work are effective. For example, the literacy co-ordinator has made significant improvements to the library and book stock in the school since the last inspection. The library is now a pleasant environment, well stocked with a broad range of catalogued books well used by staff and pupils.
59. The procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching are very good which is reflected in the very high standards of teaching seen in many lessons during the inspection. These procedures involve senior managers observing lessons and giving written and oral feedback to colleagues. Teachers' performance management is an integral part of school development, however support staff are not yet formally involved in this process.
60. The governing body effectively fulfils its responsibilities. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school. The well-established committee structure, written reports from the headteacher and presentations by subject leaders about progress towards the priorities in the school development plan ensure they are able to keep a close eye on school development at all levels. The chair of governors shares the headteacher's vision for the school, which helps to give a coherent direction to the management of the school. However, although a few governors spend time in classes, there is not a systematic approach among governors to check what is actually happening in school. This limits their ability to critically evaluate the effect of their decisions upon the quality of education provided for pupils and to fully appreciate the challenges faced by staff.

61. The co-ordination and management of special educational needs is very good. Reviews of pupils' individual plans are carried out three times each year. Outside agencies' advice is sought appropriately and teachers are given good guidance about to how they can support pupils. The co-ordinator is fully aware of the requirements of the new code of practice for special educational needs and has made a satisfactory start to adjusting the school's procedures to comply with the requirements of the new code. Procedures to ensure that statements of special educational needs are reviewed at appropriate times are good. The school also ensures it provides what is outlined in the statements.
62. The school has developed very good procedures for identifying areas for improvement and preparing its development plan. The school now has a long-term strategic development plan that forms the basis for improvements planned for each year. This is under constant review and enables the school to respond to challenges it faces, such as the recent change in the school population. A major strength in development planning is that all staff are involved in the process which helps to create the excellent vision and commitment shown by all staff.
63. The school manages its finances well. Due to the local authority's system of allocating money based on a notional number of places that is currently less than the number of pupils in the school, the school has been substantially under-funded. This has meant that long-term initiatives, such as planning to fund the replacement of the school minibus, have been adversely affected. Spending is carefully tracked by the school administrative officer, the headteacher and finance committee. The administrative officer plays a very important role in ensuring that the school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis and that the headteacher and governors are fully aware of the financial situation. New technology is used well in the office as the basis for accounting procedures.
64. There are sufficient teaching staff to enable the school to be organised effectively to meet the range of special needs pupils have. There is a very good number of support staff, including an ICT technician. Teachers' subject expertise is generally sound, but the lack of a specialist limits the progress pupils make in music. The arrangements to support new staff to the school and provide staff with opportunities to develop their skills have been improved since the last inspection. There is now a clear induction programme. Newly qualified teachers have a designated mentor and also benefit from meetings with the deputy headteacher. The staff handbook gives new staff clear guidance on the routines and organisation of the school.
65. Although the site manager is absent through long-term illness, the accommodation is well looked after by the caretaker and has been improved significantly since the previous inspection. In most of the school, teachers make good use of the facilities and resources available to them. The library has been well developed by the Literacy and Language Co-ordinator. It is a small room, but is adequate for the numbers of pupils who use it. The stock of books is now sufficient and a small information and communication technology suite has been installed next to it so the potential exists for this area to be an effective learning resources area for pupils of all ages. However, although it is now possible for all pupils to get to all classrooms, narrow doorways and corridors in the oldest part of the school make it difficult for many pupils, particularly those in large wheelchairs, to have easy access to areas such as the ICT suite. The double handles on doors, throughout the school, also restricts the movement of older and more able pupils around the school.

66. Facilities for swimming and older pupils have been vastly improved. A new swimming pool complex provides a modern environment that addresses all of the concerns in the previous inspection report. Lighting and sound systems enable staff to create a multi-sensory experience for pupils. The classrooms and other facilities in this new section of the school are large and appropriate for the older pupils but limitations in the design, such as the use of non-reflective glass in the covered areas that are exposed to the sun and the lack of switches to enable wheelchair users to open doors themselves, restrict the use and flexibility of these areas. The accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage continues to be a significant weakness. Classrooms are small and, although the school has tried to provide outside play areas, there is no outside area for children to use climbing equipment safely. Access to the outside play facilities for children in reception classes is limited.
67. Resources for teaching and learning are good in most subject areas except music and modern foreign languages where they are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. The governors and senior staff should liaise with the local education authority to:
- I. Make further improvements to the accommodation by:
 - creating more space for pupils in the nursery and older building
 - ensuring that all sections of the new building can be used whatever the external weather conditions may be
 - improving the floor surface in the new part of the school to enable pupils in wheelchairs to use the area. (paragraphs 30,66)
 - II. Improve transport arrangements by:
 - ensuring that pupils arrive punctually at the start of each day
 - collecting pupils promptly at the end of each school day. (paragraph 16)

OTHER ISSUES GOVERNORS SHOULD CONSIDER INCLUDING WITHIN ITS ACTION PLAN

- o Develop further the curriculum and approaches used to provide for post-16 students. (paragraphs 32,36)
- o Extend further the progress of pupils with severe learning difficulties in writing and pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in reading. (paragraphs 3, 84)
- o Re-establish the higher level of opportunities pupils previously had to work alongside mainstream pupils. (paragraph 29)
- o Ensure that computers are used consistently throughout the school. (paragraphs 24 ,121)
- o Improve the opportunities for more able pupils to learn a modern foreign language. (paragraph 25, 130)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	77
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	14	22	28	12	2		
Percentage	18	29	35	15	3		

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than 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	93
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11.86

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

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

Due to the small number of pupils at the end of each key stage it is inappropriate to publish SATS results.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	8

Education support staff: YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	618.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	1000256.9
Total expenditure	994579
Expenditure per pupil	10694.39
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1500
Balance carried forward to next year	2677.46

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	93
Number of questionnaires returned	33

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	17	3	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	60	36	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	33	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	30	12	6	3
The teaching is good.	77	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	15	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	6	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	15	0	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	70	30	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	23	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	27	9	3	6

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

69. The school's provision for children in the Foundation Stage is of the highest quality. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well and make outstanding progress in the six areas of the Early Learning Goals. This is because teaching is almost always excellent. It is characterised by detailed planning and assessment and very effective organisation and teamwork with classroom support assistants. This represents a good improvement even on the high standards noted in the previous inspection. It is most unlikely, because of the complex learning needs of the children, that they will reach the expected learning goals by the end of the reception class. They nevertheless, have made an impressive start and laid the foundation for later learning.
70. Children in the Foundation Stage are mainly in the nursery with a few in two other classes in Lower School where their individual needs are better met. There are ten in total. Good procedures are in place for inducting new children and their parents to the nursery unit. These include visits to the family home before children start, and in turn visits to the nursery by the children and parents. Attendance is flexible but at the time of the inspection all children were full-time placements. The very good partnership with parents continues through home/school diaries and their attendance at six monthly and annual reviews, and through more informal coffee mornings and telephone calls.
71. Assessment procedures are excellent and inform teaching and planning. Staff know the children well and this enables them to plan in great detail to meet their individual learning needs. Assessment details from their statement of special educational needs, and often from the Portage Service, plus the school's own baseline assessment on entry, form the basis for individual target setting and the planning, reporting and review process. A notable feature of all teaching is the individual learning objectives for each child and for each activity, which ensure that children are challenged at an appropriate level.
72. Accommodation in the nursery is unsatisfactory overall in size and space. The toilet area is totally inadequate in most aspects. The nursery unit moved to new premises in September 1997 just before the previous inspection. These consist of one classroom and a walk-through toilet area. Since then the staff have adapted the accommodation as best they can to meet the needs of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They have for example, divided the classroom into four main areas with half the room laid to carpet the other to linoleum. However, because the toilet area is so cramped children are changed in the classroom area on a rise and fall bed with a screen to provide privacy. Water and sand play is organised in the linoleum area, which also for health and safety reasons houses much of the ICT equipment. Both cannot go on at the same time, thereby limiting pupils' choice and teacher's planning of activities. In addition, there is a serious lack of storage space, exacerbated by children's wheelchairs, standing frames and special seating. Outside the school has levelled and resourced a hard core area but there are no safety surfaces. A small fenced grass area slopes too steeply to be suitable for any other activity than a picnic. Finally, the only area available to be blacked out, so visually impaired pupils can work as required occasionally in the dark is - in the toilets! By contrast, resources and equipment to support children's learning and physical needs are good. The nursery also makes good use of the school's resources such as the hydrotherapy pool and sensory room, and those of the local community, to broaden children's experience and interests.

73. The leadership of the teacher in charge of the Foundation Stage has a most positive impact on standards. She leads by example and has an unremitting concern for children's welfare and achievements. She provides excellent support and training for her colleagues. Among the initiatives she has appropriately introduced and implemented are the Equals (PMLD) Scheme of Work, in line with the national guidance for young children, and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). All documentation – records, assessments, reports, targets in children's individual learning targets and video evidence of their progress – are all of a high quality. Support assistants are well trained and are clear about their role. Their seamless teamwork with teachers makes a consistent and invaluable contribution to pupils' progress and achievements. The support and services of the physiotherapist, speech and language therapist and the school nurse, further enhance children's progress and target their specific individual needs. The nursery is attractively displayed with reading material and children's work in colour, shape and texture. This raises their self-esteem and contributes to a vibrant ethos.
74. The Foundation Stage gives high priority to pupils' personal, social and emotional development and it permeates every aspect of the curriculum. Teaching is excellent and as a result, all children make excellent progress. Staff provide most powerful role models in the kind considerate way they treat and respect the children and each other. Every opportunity during the day is exploited to provide learning opportunities. The emphasis is focused on encouraging children to be confident, co-operative and considerate. Independence and choice is encouraged. For example, teachers are patient and insistent that children choose whether to have crisps or biscuits, milk or a fruit juice at snack time. Co-operation is reinforced through activities with a large parachute when children roll the ball to one another or share the experience of hiding underneath. Children gain in confidence because staff are consistent and positive in their management. They quickly learn the routines of the day because the teachers share the timetable for that day in words, pictures and signing. Higher attaining pupils know where to take their coats in the morning and where to sit at lunch. Lower attaining children begin to respond consistently to familiar events, people and objects of reference.
75. All children make excellent progress in communication, language and literacy, because teaching is of the highest quality and teachers provide exciting opportunities and use words, gestures, body language, signing and pictures that encourage children to communicate. Teachers effectively use stories with repeated refrains supported by the appropriate props or action songs, which engage children's interest and attention. They take great care to welcome everyone to the class through the 'Hello Time' so everyone is made to feel valued. They provide a range of different resources that match children's needs, for example, a mirror or small coloured screens, so that children can see themselves and others in a different way. They use a microphone to encourage children to vocalise and children are amazed and delighted, and then try harder, when they hear their own sounds echoing around the classroom. Teachers use clear unambiguous language supported by consistent signing or pictures when giving instructions so that children understand what is expected of them. They are patient, positive and unhurried in waiting for children to respond and every response is celebrated. Higher attaining children follow the Oxford Reading Tree story of 'The Trainers'. They use the mouse to locate the correct button on the computer to turn the pages over. They follow the story and understand the plot and main characters. The teacher links the story and reinforces learning and number skills by introducing a collection of shoes jumbled up, which children have to match up in pairs. Lower attaining pupils learn to listen and attend through eye contact. They make sounds or gestures to express simple needs, likes or dislikes.

76. In mathematics, all pupils make excellent progress in acquiring the basic skills, knowledge and understanding of early numeracy because teaching is outstanding and pupils are presented with a range of challenging and interesting mathematical opportunities. At register time children count those present. Number songs and rhymes are used to develop understanding. In lessons with a mathematical focus, children stack bricks or look for the number of teddy bears in a sack. Children are involved in meaningful play with a variety of good resources and explore shape, size and colour. The good use of questioning, for example, "How many?" and "Which is the biggest?" consolidates their mathematical language. Higher attaining children touch objects in one-to-one correspondence and count to five. They colour match four basic colours and the common shapes of triangle, circle and square. Lower attaining children perform some actions using trial and error and show reactive responses, such as reaching and holding objects
77. A very good range of practical activities helps all children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make excellent progress because teaching is excellent and activities are very well planned and relevant. Children enjoy, for example, familiarising themselves with their own classrooms or going further afield to the school café, or to trips to the local park or shops. They are developing a growing awareness of themselves in various environments of home, school, local and the wider community. Through wet and dry play children begin to understand that materials change and through playing with common household objects, they develop an interest in how things work and what they are used for. Children play and explore a range of construction material and through trial and error they work out ways of joining and constructing. Staff support, prompt and encourage throughout and model appropriate language and behaviour. Children watch a video of a recent trip and enjoy seeing themselves using swings and a slide. They begin to appreciate the passage of time with the use of the language such as 'yesterday', 'past' and 'old'. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to maintain children's interest, improve their attention and support learning across the curriculum. Higher attaining children use a mouse competently to control programs. Lower attaining children press switches intermittently to cause images and sounds to change or to cause an electric fan to work.
78. All children make excellent progress in physical development because teaching is focused and very well planned and activities varied and physically challenging. One child has learnt to walk since starting the nursery. In swimming in the local pool or school hydrotherapy pool, children learn to relax and experience buoyancy. They gain in confidence because of the very good support in the water and because songs such as the 'Five Speckled Frogs' are used to encourage them jump up and down in the water. Very good attention is paid to all health and safety issues and appropriate emphasis is given to improving children's self-help skills of dressing and undressing. Outside, ambulant children develop their balance and co-ordination through play on the climbing frame, slide and tricycles and cars. Fine motor skills are developed through play with balls, small beanbags and hoops and through working with a range of brushes, pencils, chalks and collage material. Higher attaining children walk from one area to another independently. Lower attaining children lift their heads when required to do so or hold a spoon at lunchtimes.
79. All children make excellent progress in their creative development, because of the teacher's very good planning and their very good use of resources. This enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another, including music, art and role-play. In music, for example, children use a range of instruments to explore the sounds they make, expressing great pleasure in the noise created by beating drums or tinkling symbols. They listen and move to a variety of music and action songs, for example, 'Wheels on the Bus', and take on the role of the driver or conductor. Good resources also encourage them to dress up and become involved in

imaginative shop, house or hospital play. Learning is enhanced, because staff model the 'pretending' process, and become supporting partners in children's play. In art, the children have good opportunities to work with a wide range of sensory materials – paint, sand, dough, dried pasta, shiny and textured paper – which they explore by feel, smell and sight to get a sense of their properties. An attractive display of children's work in red, white and blue to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee is proudly displayed in the main school building. Higher attaining children share in simple turn taking and vocalisation with others. Lower attaining pupils tolerate and enjoy musical sounds, rhythms and initiate some movement in response.

80. Before every lunchtime, a short prayer is said to thank God for their health and food and to consider others less fortunate than themselves. While for many this has no meaning there is nevertheless, an awareness of being loved and valued and of staff's appreciation of their initiative and response. The Foundation Stage is a very significant strength of the school. It gives the children in its care a very good start on which to build.

ENGLISH

81. Throughout the school English is taught well and as a result pupils and students achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress in all aspects of English. All pupils progress very well in developing their speaking and listening skills. Progress for pupils and students after Year 2 in developing their reading and writing skills is good. This rate of progress represents an improvement since the previous inspection when achievements and teaching were deemed to be satisfactory.

Key strengths

- Pupils' speaking and listening is developed well because teachers and support staff constantly talk with pupils in all lessons and activities about what they are doing.
- In English lessons there is a good focus on teaching pupils basic skills in communication, reading and writing.
- Pupils' progress is monitored very well and this gives teachers and support staff very good guidance on what pupils need to be taught next.
- Teachers plan their lessons well, often using strategies adapted from the recommended structure of the National Literacy Strategy.
- The subject co-ordinator provides colleagues with good support, which has improved the quality of teaching, the range of resources and the accommodation very well since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The progress of pupils with severe learning difficulties in writing and pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in reading could be improved by:
- Ensuring that the independent activities in literacy lessons are consistently linked to pupils' individual targets.
- Providing more writing opportunities in lessons for pupils who have the ability to write down their own ideas and opinions.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to use computers in English lessons to help them record their work and ideas.
- Extending the opportunities for pupils to handle books.

82. Teachers teach pupils to use signs and symbols very effectively to communicate with others. In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to sign and combine vocal sounds or speech to make choices. For pupils with autistic spectrum disorders teachers use an established commercial scheme, 'PECs', effectively matching up written language to what they want to say. Additionally because staff know pupils very

well, they understand what pupils are trying to say by their reactions to different stimuli. By the time pupils leave school the majority are able to express their opinions and make choices. Higher attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties can hold a basic conversation and respond appropriately to questions from adults and other pupils. They initiate conversations with adults by asking questions and explaining what they have been doing, although their ability to converse with each other without adult support and prompting is less effective.

83. The teaching of reading is good and as a consequence most pupils achieve well and develop an interest in books and stories. By the time they leave school, they enjoy looking at books and other reading material. For example, students in post-16 on a shopping expedition to the local supermarket chose to buy magazines. Those pupils who are physically able turn pages carefully and can follow text with their finger. They learn to recognise their name, the names of their friends and basic everyday words. They know how to use pictures in books to find out what is happening in the story. The majority of pupils recognise familiar characters in stories and can match up names to pictures. Higher attaining pupils learn how to use letter sounds to work out new words effectively and read aloud confidently. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders learn a range of words. Pupils with more confidence read aloud and share their ideas.
84. Since the previous inspection, the National Literacy Strategy has been effectively adopted by the school, and now forms the basis for teaching English. However, the effectiveness of teachers' planning of lessons within the recommended framework is variable. Whole class parts of lessons are consistently good. In whole class reading sessions when the group is looking at a book or reading written texts together, teachers use PECs symbols alongside written words and pictures to help pupils read a simple story. Teachers ask questions of pupils and challenge their understanding well. Pupils are also managed very effectively and teachers' expectations of behaviour and performance are clear and explicit. Consequently, pupils try hard and behave well. In the best lessons, teachers direct questions to specific pupils that are matched to their level of understanding. This ensures that pupils have opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and to feel as if they have achieved. However, the effectiveness of the activities pupils are asked to complete on their own are less consistent. In the best lessons teachers provide each pupil with activities that build on their own skills derived directly from their individual targets. Teaching assistants have clear roles and support pupils very well and computers are used well to provide activities that reinforce the lesson. In a few lessons not enough emphasis is placed, by teachers on planning individual activities in this way and insufficient different approaches are used. In addition, few classrooms celebrate books and literacy with stimulating displays or book corners where pupils can sit and handle books and read to themselves. Similarly, although each class has a timetable slot, the library, is not used to its full potential as there are few opportunities for older and more able pupils to use the library independently to find books or to research topics they are studying.
85. In writing, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and profound and multiple difficulties achieve well. Teachers provide them with appropriate opportunities to develop their writing skills or to express their preference through making marks. Many pupils with autistic spectrum disorders write simple sentences, albeit with adult support prompts or by copy writing. They hold a pencil correctly and form legible letters and many can write their own name. Pupils with severe learning difficulties make sound progress in writing. Most pupils achieve similar skills to those groups referred to above, but few higher attaining pupils develop their skills to enable them to record their own ideas on their own. Pupils are taught basic skills of letter formation well, but do not have enough opportunities in lessons other than English to use these skills. In addition, computers

are not used enough as a tool for pupils of all abilities, to record their ideas and to present their work.

86. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator for language and literacy has led this area of the school's work well. She has been well supported by the governor for literacy who has been involved in training and classroom observation. The results of this leadership are the refurbished library, the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the development of very good procedures for gathering information on the progress pupils are making. This information is used very well to set targets in pupils' individual education plans. Priorities for further development are appropriate and, given the quality of teaching and the very positive attitude of pupils to learning, the school is well set to improve pupils' achievement in language and literacy further.

MATHEMATICS

87. Overall all pupils make very good progress in developing their mathematical skills. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when progress was deemed to be satisfactory. Teaching is very good and consistently so throughout the school.

Key strengths

- The very high quality and meticulous planning that ensures all pupils can make very good progress.
- Very good teaching which is based on developing each individual pupil's skills.
- The availability of a very good range of resources.
- The high quality of leadership of the subject by the co-ordinator.
- The way in which pupils are encouraged to develop mathematical skills in number, space, shape and money, whilst working in lessons for other subjects.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant aspects of the school's work in mathematics that need to be addressed.
88. The progress of all pupils as they move through the school is very good. By the end of Year 2 pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are developing an understanding of number. For example, most can count up to 5 and colour different shapes. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties focus on adults counting out boxes and pupils with severe learning difficulties can post different shapes and sort objects into groups of 2 or 3. At the end of Year 6 records show profound and multiple learning difficulties pupils have an awareness of a range of materials and objects and can manipulate them to effect change. Autistic pupils are beginning to join in number songs and counting games, whilst higher ability pupils are counting up to thirty and completing basic addition and subtraction tasks.
89. By Year 9 these pupils are independently recognising different shapes and coins. Tracking the progress of a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties shows that at the end of Year 2 he was stacking objects, in year 6 filling and emptying containers and now in Year 9 he is threading beads on to a string and building towers with objects. By Year 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties are using scales to weigh and developing an awareness of time. In a mathematics lesson seen for this age group one pupil was counting to 25, another was able to estimate which objects were light or heavy and a third used a stopwatch correctly to measure time it took to complete an activity. Post-16 students show very good understanding of money and most can complete simple addition and subtraction exercises on a computer program.

90. The very high quality of mathematics teaching is under-pinned by meticulous planning. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted and adapted very well. The co-ordinator has ensured that the school's approach to developing pupils' skills in mathematics is consistent throughout the school. This detailed planning gives teachers clear guidance on the best approaches to support the differing special needs of pupils within the school. The school is responding very positively to the recent increase in pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and adaptations are being made to how mathematics is taught and the resources required for these pupils.
91. All mathematics lessons have very clear learning objectives. This was the case in an excellent nursery lesson observed. Pupils worked individually and the tasks set challenged them to react to different situations. For example, two children were set tasks that involved having to focus on a computer screen to track and change objects. Each task matched the targets set for them and had an aim to improve on what they had achieved previously. This level of planning is evident throughout the school. Students in the post-16 group when operating their café were involved in a number of practical mathematical activities which included setting up the resources, counting out the knives and table mats, numbering the tables and using their calculators to work out the cost of basic items such as tea, biscuits and squash. Pupils who visited the café also developed their mathematical skills. For example, a group of pupils in a Year 3 to 6 group practised their skills in a number of ways. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties responded to the challenge of choosing between two objects. Those of a slightly higher ability were encouraged to match the symbol for a biscuit with a biscuit.
92. Staff are very clear as to the expectations they have of pupils. This has a very positive impact on the rate of progress that pupils make. Mathematics throughout the school has been very well planned by the co-ordinator. There have been regular meetings with representatives from each area of the school. Records show the considerable levels of detail that staff have gone into to ensure that the planning is developed around pupils' skills as they move through the school. This is particularly so in number and the evidence of their success in this is demonstrated by the way in which pupils are confident to count and recognise coins. It is impressive how the school has looked specifically at their teaching strategies in dealing with the different special needs within the school. For example there is detailed documentation about how to work effectively with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This has proved very effective and these pupils are making significant progress.
93. Mathematics' skills are reinforced well across the curriculum. One of the reasons why pupils make such progress with number is that teachers frequently take the opportunity to reinforce pupils' skills when they are engaging in other activities. For example, in science in a lesson for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 8 and 9, the teacher deliberately counts out objects. The same occurred for more able pupils in Years 8 and 9 when they were involved in swimming when regular opportunities were used to encourage pupils to count out a range of sequences.

SCIENCE

94. The quality of science teaching is good, assistants make an important contribution to learning, and pupils enjoy their science lessons. As a result pupils make good

progress and achieve well. There is still no specialist accommodation but this does not hold back the progress of pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and science is now firmly established on the timetable. to the outside play facilities

Key strengths

- Teaching is consistently of good quality; it is often excellent for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Good quality learning opportunities are well supported by very good use of visits to farms, zoos, garden centres, science museums, pet shops, music shops, an animal sanctuary, shopping centres, and the seaside.
- Very good assessment and recording procedures to track pupils' progress.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Extend opportunities to read, write, and use computers and number skills in science lessons.
- Provide sufficiently challenging external accreditation for the highest attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16.

95. Pupils make good progress in science and achieve well. Although, no science teaching in Years 1 and 2 was observed there are extensive planning documents for when science is taught in Years 1 and 2 and good quality reports to parents, based on very good assessment procedures, provide plenty of detail about good progress in science. This term infant pupils are linking science and geography through a visit to a farm; and to the sea to explore seaside materials like sand, pebbles, water, and shells. In previous weeks they have visited a music shop to hear all the instruments for a topic on sound.

96. The quality of teaching in science is good overall. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. The best teaching in science is characterised by excellent use of science resources, communication aids, provision of sensory experiences, very secure management and organisation of lessons, excellent relationships and effective deployment of learning assistants. In a science lesson where three classes in Years 3 to 6 learn together in the hall, pupils enjoy an imaginary visit to the seaside. It is a wonderful sensory experience with the sound of the sea and sea gulls. Pupils touch and explore sand, pebbles and shells. They hold models of sea animals, and make model fish and octopus. They feel sprays of water on their faces and pretend to sail in a boat and travel on a surf board. In this lesson, pupils with profound learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and pupils with autism all successfully learn together. Work in smaller groups is, however, generally better matched to individual learning needs than work in larger groups. A small group of pupils with profound learning difficulties in Years 7, 8 and 9, for example, make excellent progress exploring the way that materials change when water is added to custard powder. They thoroughly enjoy the sensory experience of smearing the dry powder on their hands and faces and clothes. Eyes light up when the colour of the powder changes to yellow when water is added. Very tentatively pupils begin to stir and pat the wet custard powder with their fingers. They feel and taste differences between warm and cold custard and indicate their preferences. In another science lesson to identify and sort mammals, birds and fish, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 with autism, severe, and profound learning difficulties, the teacher and assistants use a wide range of resources that are matched very well to learning needs. The highest attaining girl, for example, completes an animal jigsaw, whilst one of the lower attaining girls experiences fur and feathers on her skin. An autistic boy in Year 9 sorts animals into groups using a computer. He is encouraged to say that fish live in the sea. He is

making very good progress with his drawings of people. He can identify the sounds of a car and a bell, and enjoys turning a prism to bend a beam of light.

97. Pupils across the full range of learning needs continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with severe learning difficulties learn to label a drawing of a frog, identify electrical equipment found in the home, understand how the body grows, and how it is affected by alcohol and smoking. They use an interactive white board to point to different parts of the human skeleton. Pupils with profound learning needs in Year 10 use switches and eye pointing, and control a computer program, to hear the sounds of animals and match pictures to these sounds.
98. In Years 13 and 14, students have good quality science lessons because the teacher's knowledge of science is very good, and resources are used creatively to support learning. Students learn how materials like water change from a solid, to a liquid and a gas. Students with moderate learning difficulties understand the reason for a fair test, and know that water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. Students draw column graphs to record the number of different materials in their classroom. The Youth Award accreditation includes science projects. Unfortunately no separate science examination is provided for the highest attainers in Year 11 and post-16.
99. Pupils learn equally well about plants, animals, materials, and physical processes such as forces, light, sound and electricity, because the science curriculum is well balanced. For higher attaining pupils, who are accessing National Curriculum attainment levels, learning about the full range of scientific enquiry skills is not sufficiently developed. There is plenty of practical work in science, but in general, not enough use of computers, writing and reading.

ART AND DESIGN

100. The teaching of art has undergone major improvements since the last inspection. The quality of teaching, and pupils' achievements are now good for all age and ability groups. The products of art lessons enhance the interior of the school building and make it into an attractive space for the whole school community.

Key strengths

- Pupils experience many different artistic techniques and media in art lessons including painting, drawing, printing, carving, sculpture, ceramics, textiles and mask making.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders derive particular benefits from expressing themselves in pictures and artistic products.
- Lessons are well planned and carefully taught by teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computer-aided design in art is underdeveloped.

101. In art lessons pupils are taught to use a carefully planned variety of artistic techniques. By Year 6 many can mix colours, use a paintbrush and coloured pencils, draw and colour-in with reasonable accuracy. They can use a variety of materials for producing collages, cut with scissors and create 3D shapes. By Year 11 many can, in addition, form simple objects and pieces of sculpture using clay, wood, card, paper and wire. For many pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties, the limitations of their fine motor skills represent considerable challenges when engaged in art activities. They are, however, helped by staff to progress and expand their skills. Often staff give individual pupils long and concentrated attention in

lessons. On one occasion a teacher repeatedly guided and helped a pupil to wet a piece of gummed paper and stick it flat onto card. It was extremely difficult for the pupil to co-ordinate the hand movements and the exercise had to be repeated over and over again until a reasonable result was achieved. The benefit of this intensive help is seen in the progress pupils have made over time. Pupils are rightly proud of their pictures, masks and sculptures, which are prominently displayed around the school.

102. Pupils learn in lessons to appreciate the importance of major artists and are guided to imitate aspects of their themes and artistic techniques. By comparing their own work with that of famous artists they expand their skills and gain knowledge of different artistic styles and traditions.
103. Resources in the specialist art and craft room include a computer dedicated to design tasks. This facility is not used sufficiently. Many pupils would benefit from greater access to computers for art activities.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. Teaching is good in design and technology, in both resistant materials and food technology. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well. This is good improvement since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- Pupils are offered good practical learning opportunities in design and technology, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 7, 8 and 9 in working with 'fabrics'.
- Autistic spectrum disorder pupils in Year 1 make particularly good progress in food technology.
- There is good planning to link pupils' learning with what they do in other subjects, for example in mathematics and communication skills.
- The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator.

Areas for improvement

- More use of the digital camera to record pupils' achievements.

105. In design and technology lessons, both when working with materials such as wood and metal, and in cookery, lessons are planned in great detail. Learning support assistants are used very effectively to support pupils with most need. For example, in a practical lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 7, 8 and 9 were given very good opportunities to learn about different fabric materials. A very good range of learning resources was well organised in advance to allow pupils to hold and draw through their fingers different textures, rough and smooth fabrics. Pupils responded well by holding onto the ones they liked, and letting others be drawn through their fingers so they could feel the differences in the fabrics.
106. In lessons well-timed changes of activity are planned, which ensures that pupils are motivated and stay on task. This was very evident in a lesson for Years 4 and 5 pupils when they planned to make a dessert. The planning ensured that each small step was taken carefully. Pupils were communicated with at all times, either verbally or with sign and symbols. This helped reinforce pupils' basic literacy. Numeracy skills were also tested as pupils were required to count the spoons and bowls they needed. Very good questioning challenged pupils and helped them understand what was happening to them and what was happening to the materials they were using such as, strawberries, raspberries, yogurt and meringue. The finished product was a great success and eaten and enjoyed by all.

107. In a Year 1 food technology lesson for autistic pupils and those with severe learning difficulties, the teacher ensured they carried out simple hygiene rules before the lesson started. They washed their hands and wiped down the table they were using. Pupils tasted and made choices from three cheeses. They made their likes and dislikes known clearly, by sign, by facial expressions, or utterances. Pupils then proceeded to make a sandwich by first identifying the ingredients they needed, finding the bread, buttering each slice and putting in the filling of their choice. There were very good relationships in class, as a result, pupils worked hard, behaved very well and followed instructions carefully.
108. Design and technology is well led and managed. Pupils, across the school, are offered a good curriculum that ensures pupils have a good range of different experiences. Teaching, planning and pupils' work are checked regularly. As a result, the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress and achievement have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Learning resources have improved and are now good. Rise and fall adjustable tables have been purchased for the design room, and are an asset when pupils in wheelchairs need to be close to the tables.
109. Greater use of the digital camera would enhance recording of pupils' work. In the very good lesson when pupils from Year 1 made a sandwich, an opportunity was missed to use the camera to create a record of their work, which could in future have been presented as a 'sequence' of their work.

HUMANITIES (History and geography)

110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. As a result, pupils make very good progress and achieve well. This is good improvement since the previous inspection.

Key Strengths

- Pupils are offered a good curriculum and many practical opportunities.
- Teachers have high expectations of the work they expect pupils to achieve.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good, and their attitudes towards humanities are very positive.
- Humanities work is well led and managed.

Area for improvement

- Greater use of ICT, including the digital camera.

111. Humanities work is well led and managed. The co-ordinator leads a strong team of teachers representing class groups throughout the school. Pupils, across the school, are offered a good curriculum with good learning opportunities. The co-ordinator monitors planning and the quality of teaching in the subject well. As a result, the quality of teaching, and pupils' progress and achievements have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Learning resources have improved and are now good.
112. Lessons are planned well, and teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. For example, in a Year 5 geography lesson pupils planned to carry out a traffic survey. It was made clear in the classroom that all pupils would have to be on their best behaviour and work really well as part of the lesson was to be carried out next to the main road just outside the school. Safety was stressed and pupils responded very positively, behaved really well and showed a very positive attitude to their work. A Year 10 geography class including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) visited a local sports centre to investigate 'buildings and their uses'. Their behaviour and attitudes were exemplary.

113. During a Year 1 geography lesson, pupils on the autistic disorder spectrum (ASD) identify and find features in the classroom. From pictures they identify areas and objects in the classroom such as the blackboard. They recognise the blackboard from a photograph, find the blackboard in the room, touch the board and write their names on it. The response of the pupils is one of amazement as they realise the marking on the board represents their names. They show great pride in their work. In a Year 2 history lesson, ASD pupils and pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) showed a very good understanding of the passage of time. They recalled their visit to the school cafe and who was there. Pupils indicated that 'after lunch we had PE'. They celebrated 'today's' events and applauded each other's achievements. They made very good progress, using information and communications technology (ICT) during the lesson, using an inter-active computer program to tell the story of the 'wheels on the bus'. Pupils, with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), in Year 10 made good progress in their investigation of 'buildings and their use'.
114. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the ASDAN Transition scheme, and students at post-16 follow the ASDAN Towards Independence modules. These are good courses, well used, containing appropriate history and geography modules. Very good learning opportunities are offered to pupils. For example, in a geography lesson for SLD pupils, their topic was 'deserts'. The lesson was very well planned and offered pupils tactile experiences of working with different sands to make a desert and play dough to make model palm trees and animals. Pupils made a three-dimensional map, plotting desert features and animals such as mountains, oasis, camels and snakes. They then used a 'roamer', (a computer robot) and directed the roamer forwards and backwards to different features. In the space of 90 minutes, pupils were given planned opportunities to work in art, science, English, communications, mathematics, history, design and technology, geography and ICT. This was good, and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils, who made good progress and achieved well.
115. In the Year 5 traffic survey lesson good use was made of the class tape recorder to play traffic sounds and get the pupils to identify them before they went out onto the road to collect their data. Two PMLD pupils took with them their little-Mac recorders so that when a car passed them, they could press the button, hear the sound of a car and put into their box a picture of a car. This was good practice. However, an opportunity to record this good work on digital or video camera was missed. The teacher and co-ordinator recognise this and plan to use the cameras more in future to record evidence of pupils' work for their assessments, records and portfolios of achievement, as well as searching for more inter-active CD programs to use on their computers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

116. The teaching of information and communication skills is good but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to then use and apply these skills to help them learn in their other lessons. As a result of this, pupils' progress has only been satisfactory. All classes, except those for the youngest pupils and those who have the most severe special educational needs, have lessons on their weekly timetables set aside specifically for the teaching of computer skills. This is a good improvement on the situation at the last inspection, when such lessons were not on the timetable at all.

Key strengths

- Teachers are good at teaching pupils about computers and how to use them. When they use computers to help pupils to learn in other lessons, they do it well.

- Good use is made of a wide range of equipment that helps pupils who have the most severe special educational needs to become better at communicating and interacting with the world around them.
- Many lessons and school life generally are enhanced by the use of video and digital photography to record activities and events.

Areas for development:

- Pupils should make more use of their information and communication technology skills to help them learn in all subjects of the curriculum.
 - The curriculum for information and communication technology needs to provide more challenging opportunities, especially for the higher attaining pupils.
 - Training in information and communication technology skills needs to be extended to all staff.
117. Pupils are helped to learn how to use computers by teaching that is good and sometimes, as in two lessons seen during the inspection, very good or excellent. In particular, lessons are well planned and complex skills are made easier for pupils to understand by the teachers' use of clear explanations and instructions. Teachers are good at matching tasks to the abilities of individual pupils.
118. Within the scope of specific information and communication technology lessons, pupils make good individual progress towards developing their skills. They work through a satisfactory range of learning experiences planned according to a nationally recognised curriculum for pupils who have severe learning difficulties, which breaks down learning into fine steps. They start by learning how to use simple switched devices and progress gradually to the use of more sophisticated equipment such as cameras, video players and computers.
119. Pupils in Year 5, for example, learn about everyday things that can be controlled to carry out useful actions when they are switched on, such as radios, toasters etc. They search the school to make a list of all such items they can find, and then search in catalogues for some more. Year 1 pupils select the correct pictures and shapes displayed on a computer screen by touching the screen with their fingers. By Year 6, pupils find objects displayed on the computer screen using a mouse and select them by clicking the mouse button. Lower attaining pupils are helped to learn the correct responses by adults, who initially move their hands for them until they have acquired the skill for themselves. Post-16 students are able to set up computers, start up a chosen programme and, for example, use a word processor to write their names. Higher attaining students are able to write simple sentences, correcting their mistakes as they go.
120. Although the curriculum that pupils follow is satisfactory, it places its emphasis on the lower attaining pupils and presents limited challenge for the higher attaining pupils, particularly in the changing world of technology, when pupils often acquire skills, for example with computers, more easily than many adults.
121. Although pupils make good progress towards developing information and communication technology skills in their specialist lessons, this is reduced to satisfactory progress in the wider context of the subject, because they are provided with limited opportunities to then use and apply the skills they have learned, especially their computing skills, in other lessons. This is especially the case in the 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science, where opportunities are missed both for the development of those subject skills and for the further development of information and communication technology skills by applying them to a broader range of situations. This

general use of information and communication technology as a learning tool in all subjects has not become fully established as the accepted practice in the school. This is because teachers do not integrate the use of information and communication technology into their planning for their topics and lessons. Currently, it tends to be included by those teachers who feel the most comfortable with computer and other technology themselves.

122. In those instances when teachers do make use of information and communication technology as a tool to assist and support other learning, it is successful. In a post-16 class, for example, apart from using word processors to help with their writing, students succeed in searching the Internet, with help, to obtain information for their current affairs projects. In a geography lesson, Year 8 pupils successfully programme an electronic “roamer” to move across a plan on the floor in certain directions to help them with their mapping skills.
123. The use of information and communication technology to help those pupils who have the most severe special educational needs is more established. Very good use is made of simple switches and “talking” devices to help pupils communicate, and of light and sound making devices to stimulate their senses and promote interaction with the environment. Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders are helped to become familiar with their surroundings by good use of photographs, mostly produced using a digital camera.
124. In the nursery class the use of information and communication technology is planned as an integral part of each lesson, so skills are applied continuously as pupils acquire them. The teaching is of a very high standard and pupils make very good progress in developing information and communication technology skills.
125. The school is benefiting greatly from the introduction of digital and video photography. This enables displays of activities and events to be created immediately, helps with the production of worksheets and other classroom assignments and allows pupils to share their experiences, e.g. of an out of school activity, with their classmates. The use of sound and projection facilities in assemblies is a good example of this sharing, which reinforces the community spirit and ethos of the school.
126. The examples described above illustrate that the school has a foundation of good practice that it can build upon to further develop its provision for and use of information and communication technology. Considerable investment has been made recently on resources and equipment and the newly appointed subject coordinator has good plans for ensuring that these are used to improve the pupils’ learning in all curriculum subjects. There is a good level of interest among the staff in further developing the use of information and communication technology in the school and a major staff training initiative is about to begin.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

127. Modern Foreign language teaching at Hilltop School is unsatisfactory. Pupils’ achievements are satisfactory for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders but they are unsatisfactory for those with a higher level of language development. This represents little improvement since the previous inspection.

Key strengths

- The multi-sensory approach to learning taken with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The strong emphasis on extending pupils' understanding of different cultures.

Areas for improvement

- There is no clear planning for teaching the subject.
- In lessons little use is made of speaking the language and this limits what higher attaining pupils can achieve.
- The introduction of elements from several different languages leads to confusion and limits pupils' achievements.
- There are insufficient, relevant resources in the school to stimulate language learning.

128. All 11 to 16 year old pupils at the school have weekly modern foreign language lessons. In conjunction with these lessons, the school has in the past undertaken residential trips to France and Holland. Visitors from a Dutch college visit annually. In addition, words from an African language are taught in some lessons. The concentration on so many different languages leads to a situation where none is taught appropriately. There are hardly any resources devoted to language teaching and the presence of language lessons is not evident in any displays or presentations at the school.

129. Language teaching is satisfactory for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They are encouraged to hear music, see and feel material representative of a foreign culture and hear greetings in the language of that country. They respond to the sounds and a few attempt to beat an African drum. They show visible reactions to the teacher and the resources.

130. In French lessons for Year 7 to 9 pupils, higher attainers are rarely encouraged to respond in French. Even though many pupils would be able to learn a limited number of French words, they are not asked to do so. Lessons are not planned properly, lack a differentiated approach and are taught in a way, which suits the learning needs of low attaining pupils. Pupils make little progress in these lessons. Pupils can barely repeat a French greeting and are not asked to respond to questions the language being taught.

MUSIC

131. Music teaching at Hilltop School is good and pupils make good progress in lessons. The teaching of Music is enhanced through regular drama productions and an ongoing theatre project where acting and music are combined. These judgements represent an improvement since the previous inspection when music was described as satisfactory.

Key strengths

- The sound of recorded music and singing permeates the school; it is heard daily in classes and around the school.
- Through weekly music lessons pupils develop a sense of pitch, rhythm and tempo.
- Pupil visits to other schools to try out a range of musical instruments and performances by visiting musicians not only broaden the range of musical experiences but also aid pupils' social learning.
- The concentration on the use of percussion instruments is of particular benefit to pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

Areas for improvement

- The absence of a music specialist amongst the staff and the lack of regular visits from peripatetic specialists limits the range of musical activities available to pupils.
- The use of computers and electronic instruments in music lessons is underdeveloped.

132. Throughout the school recorded music features strongly in a variety of lessons, assemblies and other activities. Through it pupils learn an appreciation of sound, melody and rhythm and are able to recognize the spiritual quality of musical harmony. In addition they explore the diversity of their own and other cultures through the medium of music.
133. Through the regular use of percussion instruments in lessons, many pupils can, by the end of year 9, clap a variety of rhythms and play instruments in harmony with their teachers and peers. These skills are used and demonstrated extensively in whole school assemblies and drama productions. They are proud of their achievements and show delight in the sounds they can produce. This is particularly visible in pupils with the most severe learning difficulties who often show spontaneous expressions of joy, surprise and inspiration when they manage to produce pleasing sounds with an instrument.
134. The range of musical instruments available in school is limited. Acoustic and electronic instruments other than percussion are rarely used. This has a detrimental effect on the pupils' achievements in areas such as appreciating harmonies and combining a variety of diverse sounds.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. Pupils' progress and achievements in physical education are very good. The activities and the quality of teaching are also very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was judged as being good overall and very good in swimming.

Key Strengths

- Pupils' achievements in a wide range of physical activities; the quality of these is such that the school received national recognition, namely a 'Sportsmark' Award.
- The approach to teaching, which ensures that all pupils take part and achieve.
- The hydrotherapy pool and the range of resources built up by the school.
- Links with the work undertaken by the physiotherapist attached to the school.

Areas for improvement

- The unsatisfactory outside facilities at the school restrict the opportunities pupils have to take part in physical activities.
136. Pupils throughout the school show considerable progress when engaged in physical activities. This was the case for those in the reception class and Years 1 and 2 in a swimming session where pupils were very enthusiastic and interested and tried very hard the water. Pupils of higher physical ability level in a Year 8 and 9 group have developed confidence to swim and have fun in the pool. They all follow very closely the instructions of their teacher and, whether working individually trying to reach the targets set for them or when engaged in a fun activity with their friends, they make excellent progress in developing their water skills. An examination of pupils' records shows that similar progress has been made in gymnastics, trampolining and athletics.
137. Post-16 students were observed engaging in athletic events whilst at the local sports centre. Two of these students showed improved technique in the long jump. They had learnt to take off from one foot; similarly they showed an understanding of the best way to propel a shot put to achieve a good distance.

138. The quality of teaching is very good. The co-ordinator of the subject has supported other staff in ensuring that their approach to the teaching of physical education is consistent. Lessons start with a warm up, involve pupils being physically active, include opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and have fun elements. This was the case in a lesson for pupils in Year 3 to 6. The level of planning was such that each individual pupil was challenged by the activities. All were able to be involved in an exercise using a parachute. They were able to wait their turn to go into the centre and all were able to sit there and feel the effects of the parachute being moved by other pupils and staff. This was particularly effective for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. These pupils occasionally, with staff support, fully understood where they were required to go or what they were required to do to increase the waving of the parachute.
139. A common feature in all physical education lessons is the very positive and definite support given to pupils by staff. Pupils are constantly being encouraged and challenged to take part in activities; even those whose special needs meant that they were not overenthusiastic to take part in practical activities were successfully encouraged to take part and join in the activities. The level of planning is very good. Staff have used units of work from the Equals Curriculum. Many of these aspects have been adapted to suit the needs of the pupils within the school. This was the case in athletics where pupils are able to choose a range of activities that includes running, jumping and throwing. These are then developed to enable pupils to achieve awards within a commercial scheme. Pupils' progress was clearly demonstrated by their success in taking part in a recent 'disport' athletics event. Video clips of this event showed a range of pupils with different special needs successfully taking part and achieving success. One of these included a Year 7 boy who had difficulties walking, running a short distance on the athletics track. His pleasure at receiving a medal for his efforts was a clear demonstration of how well he had achieved.
140. Physical education benefits from a good range of resources, which have been developed by the subject co-ordinator. One of the best of these is the trampoline which is used both for gymnastic type activities, as well as the school physiotherapist for Rebound Therapy. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties particularly benefit from this resource which enables them to experience different movements in a safe environment. These positive links with the school physiotherapist are of great benefit to pupils with physical difficulties. The physiotherapist works very closely with teachers and this is a very positive feature of the physical development of these pupils.
141. The school is hampered by having very restrictive outside facilities. The playground is small and has a difficult surface for pupils to explore and become very physically active. Equally, the sports field, although it has been recently cordoned off, is on a slope which makes it unsuitable for pupils either in wheelchairs or with difficulties with their balance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Pupils' achievements in religious education are very good. Pupils benefit from high quality teaching and as a result they make very good progress and increase their understanding of religions and the beliefs of others. This is good improvement since the last inspection.

Key Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress in their studies and achieve a good understanding about different religions, faiths, ceremonies, artefacts traditions and celebrations.

- Very good quality teaching throughout the school is based on the principle that everyone has a right to their own faith and to be respected for it.
- Pupils' learning is enhanced by very good use of learning resources and artefacts.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for development

- Further development of the use of information and communication in the teaching of the subject.

143. Religious education is well led and managed. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator leads a strong team of teachers representing the subject at all key stages across the school. Pupils and students across the school are offered the locally agreed syllabus, modified to meet pupils' needs. This is a good curriculum with good learning opportunities. As well as planning and outcomes being monitored, the co-ordinator monitors the quality of teaching in the subject. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupil progress and achievement have improved significantly since the last inspection. Learning resources have improved and are now good.
144. In an ambitious lesson for Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils worked together in the school hall where they shared music and stories. The lesson covered different faiths, such as Christian and Hindu ceremonies, tradition and celebrations. Pupils divided into groups and the work was organised to match the needs, aptitude and ability of pupils. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties worked together with expert teaching and support, investigating 'light' and 'fire'. They showed a good understanding of how light is used in many celebrations, such as 'Diwali'. Pupils with severe learning difficulties made 'candles' from the inner tube of a toilet roll and coloured papers and drew action pictures of 'fire'. Higher achievers completed worksheets, indicating a good understanding of the subject. The quality of teaching in the lesson was excellent. This was because of excellent preparation, the great care taken in the organisation of the wide range of learning resources and real artefacts available for pupils to feel, touch and smell.
145. Year 1 and 2 pupils, with a wide range of learning difficulties took a tactile approach looking at the wonders of natural elements such as water. They touched and smelt flowers, showing great care and attention. They played and listened to musical instruments. Several pupils responded with great astonishment and a sense of wonder and amazement when they played and listened to wind chimes and a rain stick.
146. Post-16 students are given high quality teaching about different faiths. They compare Christian traditions with those of Buddhism. Explanations are clear and as a result, students are very interested and ask pertinent questions, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subject.
147. The school is fortunate to have a member of staff who is a Muslim. She has a wealth of artefacts, resources and experience, which she freely brings into school for the pupils. She has great knowledge and understanding of customs, clothing, celebrations and food. Many of the artefacts used in lessons are genuine, and much appreciated by staff and pupils.
148. Pupils use taped music in religious education lessons. This is effective in setting a calm atmosphere when it is time for a prayer or for reflection. However, there is a lack of the use of computers and other technological aids generally in lessons. The subject co-ordinator is well aware of this and is searching for better and appropriate software programs that are age appropriate.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)

149. Achievements in PSHE are good. Teaching is very good; there is no significant variation in the quality of teaching across the years. Pupils make very good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills in this area of the curriculum. Pupils gain in confidence and responsibility and make the most of their abilities. Overall improvement in PSHE since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Key strengths

- Pupils make very good progress in the acquisition of personal and social skills.
- Very good promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Good development of number skills, especially using money and telling the time.
- Very good leadership and management by the subject co-ordinator.
- Teaching plans that are well matched to the learning needs of pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Very good assessment and recording procedures to track progress in personal and social development.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of computers to help pupils access lessons and older students find information and advice.
- Improved planning and teaching of sex and drugs education
- Opportunities for older pupils and students to take part in external work experience

150. Pupils at all stages from nursery through to post-16 make very good progress in PSHE. The development of pupils' social and play skills in the nursery, however, is limited by the small size, inside and out, of the nursery accommodation. The progress made by the highest attaining pupils (those with moderate and severe learning difficulties) across the school in developing personal and social skills is very good. This is very apparent in the 'green' class of boys and girls in Years 3 to 6; in Years 7 to 9; and in post-16 classes. In all these classes, pupils have well developed communication skills to support development of their social skills. As they progress through the school, pupils improve their knowledge and understanding about, for example, dressing and undressing, their bodies, personal hygiene and safety, healthy eating, jobs, current affairs, relationships, feelings and emotions. At snack and lunchtimes, pupils learn to socialise and make choices. The weekly 'feeling proud' whole school assembly makes a very important contribution to pupils feeling positive about themselves.

151. There is excellent progress in a class of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 7 to 9; this is demonstrated when they hand out cutlery and clear up their plates and cups at snack time. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 with severe learning difficulties and autism, have their morning break in the café of a local garden centre, with members of the public. Planning of individual targets for this visit is exemplary, the management of pupils and relationships in the class are excellent, and behaviour is excellent in a public setting. In both these examples, it is the highly effective use of signing and picture exchange systems (PECs) to aid communication, and excellent relationships, that contribute to the success of these lessons. Indeed, from the nursery onwards, pupils are encouraged to communicate and socialise through speech, signing and PECs. In this way they learn to share, take turns, make choices and decisions. They have good opportunities to work in different groupings. This helps pupils develop good relationships and respect for others. They have very few opportunities, however, to work and play with mainstream pupils, but such provision works very well when it is provided.

152. Progress is not so good in sex education. Planning for this subject is not well developed. In a sex education lesson in Years 10 and 11, the teaching methods used did not take full account of the different learning needs of the boys and girls present.
153. Work experience placements in school for post -16 students are very well organised. There is an excellent response from the students who run the school café. They do the shopping, baking cakes, making toast, setting tables, taking orders, and serving members of the public and pupils from other classes. The school does not provide external work experience placements. This is a weakness in the preparation of students for leaving school. Post-16 students learn about current affairs by watching television, looking in newspapers and discussion. They run a mini-enterprise venture buying and selling vegetables. They have good opportunities to study on 'links' courses at college in Years 12 to 14.