

INSPECTION REPORT

MELDRETH MANOR SCHOOL

Meldreth, Royston

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 110920

Headteacher: Eric Nash

Reporting inspector: Adrian Simm
21138

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th March 2003

Inspection number: 253235

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:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	8 - 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Fenny Lane Meldreth Royston Cambridgeshire
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Telephone number:	01763 268000
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Appropriate authority:	SCOPE
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Christine Gilder
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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9039	Bernard Eyre	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31167	Sharon Jefferies	Team inspector	English Music	How well are pupils taught?
8212	Judith Jones	Team inspector	Science Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? 16 - 19 education
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship	How well is the school led and managed? Residential provision.
7994	Pam Weston	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Meldreth Manor School is an independent day and residential special school run by the organisation 'Scope'. It offers specialist educational provision for pupils aged between 8 and 19 years. The school operates Post 19 college provision, which is inspected separately. It is approved for 72 pupils and students overall. Currently on the school roll are 26 boys and 14 girls. Thirty-seven of these pupils are residential. Pupils come from a broad range of home backgrounds and are placed in the school by local education authorities. Pupils have profound and complex learning difficulties, including cerebral palsy. Pupils' attainment is well below what is expected of pupils of a similar age. Due to the nature of their needs, generally pupils have attended more than one other school before starting at Meldreth Manor. Curriculum targets and pupils' achievement are very individual. As such, it is inappropriate to report collectively on what pupils know, understand and do. Twelve per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds but no pupils have English as an additional language. The majority of pupils do not communicate verbally. Most pupils have statements of special educational needs, which require high staffing ratios for effective support. The school is subject to re-organisation in relation to raising the age of the pupils admitted. The school has difficulty recruiting care support staff and many working in the school are agency staff. The current senior management team came together in January 2001 and the governing body in its current form in September 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. It is led and managed well through good teamwork. Whilst detailed planning for the future is not a strength, effective involvement of a part-time consultant has helped the school to focus on improving teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. These are good. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Relationships between pupils and both school and residential staff are very good. A good variety of interesting and effective learning opportunities are provided. The school cannot separate out various running costs such as those for the school and college. It relies heavily on Scope to cover its annual debts. With this in mind, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well overall because of good teaching and learning. Music is a strength of the school where achievement and teaching and learning are very good;
- Provision for pupils in Years 12 to 14 is very good;
- The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development. This results in very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils' personal development is good;
- The school has very good links with local schools and makes very effective use of the community in lessons and in after-school and evening activities. This adds to the good way the school tailors learning to meet pupils' individual needs;
- Physiotherapy and speech and language staff work very closely and effectively with all school staff and are integral to the good individual programmes designed for pupils;
- The headteacher and senior management team ensures high morale amongst staff, which pays off in what is provided for the pupils.

What could be improved

- Working out just how well the school is improving in everything it does and then planning strategically to move the school on further;

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in May 1998 because pupils' achievement has improved as a result of the good quality of teaching and learning. Improvement has fluctuated over the last five years and is variable in different parts of school life. The school has come on well in the last two years. Most subjects have developed well, particularly music and information and communication technology (ICT); and pupils' moral and social development. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Only since September 2002, has the governing body really set out to take on the role expected of it in ensuring the quality of what is happening in the school. It is too early to judge the impact from this positive move. Plans for moving the school forward are still

insufficiently detailed and affected significantly by the school's uncertainties about its budget planning and what is expected of it by Scope. Strategic planning is still weak and is one of those areas for development from the last inspection, which are still outstanding. However, the current leadership has worked hard on those areas most in need of improvement and the school is appropriately placed to continue to move forward.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
Speaking and listening including communication	B	A	A	Very good A
Reading	C	C	C	Good B
Writing	C	C	C	Satisfactory C
Mathematics	C	B	B	Unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	A	Poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	*	*	*	

(*) IEPs are individual education plans for the pupils. Targets set in these are too broad to show progress.

Judgements in this report are based on the quality of pupils' learning during the inspection and comparisons made between pupils' general attainment on entry and current examples of what pupils know, understand and do at different ages. Some pupils have been on the same IEP targets for over twelve months because the targets are too broad to measure the progress being made. In addition to those subjects in the above table, pupils' achievement is very good in music. Overall, it is good in all other subjects apart from physical education, where it is satisfactory. Citizenship is appropriately linked to a range of subjects where achievement is generally good or better. Other than in reading and writing where it is satisfactory, students in Years 12 to 14 achieve very well in all parts of a curriculum based on improving their life skills, vocational skills, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Achievement here has been transformed since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to lessons and leisure time are good. Most pupils join in positively with activities and try their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and in the evenings. Occasional emotional outbursts are handled effectively by staff and do not overly affect other pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and all staff mean that pupils develop effectively as individuals. They frequently make choices both in lessons and about evening activities.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Absence is related to pupils' medical conditions.

Timekeeping at the start of the day and after lunchtimes is very slack. Pupils lose significant time with their teachers because of lateness by care staff bringing pupils to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5– 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 14
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Very good

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

Teaching and learning are very good in music. They are good in communication upon which the school rightly concentrates. They are satisfactory in reading and writing both in English and other subjects. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics including numeracy, PSHE, religious education and all other subjects. No judgement was made in physical education and design and technology because insufficient lessons were taught during the inspection. Examples of good and very good teaching and learning took place in each of the year groups in the school. These ranged across the subjects of drama, mathematics, PSHE, ICT, science, music and art. With pupils in Years 12 to 14, this included also teaching and learning in life skills and European studies. Where teaching is very good or excellent, teachers set out to ensure that all pupils regardless of their differing learning difficulties, gender or background have individual support and benefit from the individual programmes. They are often very successful in this. Teachers expect pupils to learn and they organise lessons to achieve the goals set out in their planning. Support staff are given constant advice to ensure they are effective. Pupils learn well overall, because they are helped successfully to interact with staff and other pupils. Pupils generally concentrate and work hard to complete what is asked of them. Staff have worked successfully on how to best match teaching to the preferred learning styles of different pupils. Where teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than better, the time taken to brief support staff on their role, particularly when support staff change over mid-lesson, interferes with the effectiveness of pupils' learning. Also, at times, too much discussion between staff is not directly related to the lesson and on occasions, lesson plans are not available to staff stepping in to take lessons at short notice.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provided is good. The school offers pupils a broad range of practical opportunities for learning which are linked very well with other schools and the local community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development and soundly for their spiritual and cultural development. Ensuring pupils sleep and learn in different buildings means they have to get to 'school' in a morning, which adds well to their personal development. The developments in 'citizenship' are strengthening provision even more.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is satisfactory overall. The school is a secure and safe environment in which to work and live. Staff know the pupils very well and they are given every encouragement in their activities. On occasions, there is a laxness to expectations for example, in getting pupils to school on time, placing pupils' coats over them rather than wearing them properly, keeping the place tidy or in some support staff being fully alert to what is needed in some lessons.

Overall, the school works well in partnership with parents and consults them about initiatives from time-to-time. Some pupils' statements expect the school to provide experience of foreign cultures or to receive occupational therapy, both of which are not currently provided by the school. Activities extra to

what happens in the classrooms are very good. Whilst this includes the broad selection of evening activities from which pupils can choose, IEPs and individual care plans (ICP)s, are not as closely linked as they could be in support of this work. Staff carry out detailed and effective multi-professional checks on pupils' needs before they start. However, improvements in the way in which teachers build on this by checking that pupils are progressing in their learning and experiences have not had time yet to be effective. The school is investigating ways of accrediting pupils' and students' learning by the end of Years 11 and 14. The lack of appropriate accreditation was pointed out at the last inspection and is long overdue.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is clear about how to move the school forward although this is not set out sufficiently in a way that governors can check on success clearly. Staffs' strengths are used well. A strong team spirit prevails. Senior managers and subject leaders are keen to improve provision.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	This is unsatisfactory because the improvements in how the governing body works, introduced since September 2002, have not yet had time to be effective. Current governors are clear about the school's obvious strengths and the major challenges faced. However, it is knowledge of the detail behind this and the means of checking on improvements that are still missing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is unsatisfactory. The school development plan and many subject development plans contain insufficient detail against which improvements can be assured. Improvements made to date have happened because they were very obvious and able to be addressed through the expertise of the consultant employed and individual staff. Ways of deciding whether these improvements came about as effectively as they might are not in place.
The strategic use of resources	This is poor because the school does not sufficiently break down costs for different parts of its work. As a result, it cannot plan to spend efficiently. The pupils do not suffer because of this lack of focus. Scope has cleared around £900,000 of deficit in the school's spending in the last three years. The school has started to improve its financial management but is unclear how it will match up to the financial expectations put on it by Scope.

Overall, the quality of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good. Improvements in accommodation are significant and have contributed to the overall improvement since the last inspection. Despite ensuring the school gets value for money in its resource buying and consulting with parents over a number of initiatives, the school's lack of clarity in the cost effectiveness of various parts of its work, which means that it does not meet satisfactorily, the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school; • The school expects children to do their best; • The ease with which they can approach the school with a question or problem; • The good teaching in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How closely the school works with parents and lets them know how well the children are getting on.

Inspectors agree with what pleases parents about the school. Also, inspectors noted that

- reports to parents are not as clear as they could be about the progress pupils are making;
- some parents feel short of information in carrying on the school's approaches to pupils' work and care during the holiday periods.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. All pupils in the school have profound and complex learning difficulties. Due to the nature and severity of these, they receive a broad range of learning experiences and therapies individually matched to their needs. Therefore, it is inappropriate to report on what groups of pupils in the school know, understand or do at particularly ages. Because the school has been slow in developing a system to show how well pupils progress over time, judgements are based on what pupils know, understand and do now compared with general information about their attainment in the past. Measured against this, pupils make good progress and achieve well. In some subjects this represents good improvement since the last inspection such as in English, mathematics, PSHE, science and the humanities. In ICT, design and technology and music, this shows very good improvement. Only in physical education are standards judged to have remained the same at satisfactory and this is mostly because of the minimal information available to make a judgement. Pupils' standards of work have come on well since the last inspection in 1998 when the school had serious weaknesses in its work. High staff morale and willingness to pull together for the benefit of the pupils, has seen the school successfully through a difficult time.
2. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls, higher and lower attaining pupils or those from different backgrounds. Teachers are conscious that they have to ensure all pupils are fully included in lessons. This works well and requires the high staffing levels provided. The school now has a good balance of teaching and support staff to meet the pupils' needs.
3. The school's core subjects are literacy, numeracy, PSHE and religious education. In literacy, the school focuses rightly on communication because of its importance to the pupils. The majority of pupils now entering the school at Year 5, start with poor communication skills and profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. All pupils listen well, for example, to sounds or stories. When listening to poems, such as in Year 6, higher attaining pupils sign and vocalise the rumbles of thunder whilst lower attaining pupils succeed in pressing electronic aids to resemble the howling wind. By Year 8, they press switches to turn the electronic page on an interactive white board and make their delight known in response to this whilst by Year 11, higher attaining pupils make effective progress in choosing a colour to communicate thoughts and feelings. This is good achievement.
4. In numeracy, pupils started at the school with a range of attainment from repeating actions in exploring their immediate environment to using yes or no signing to agree or not with the names of numbers or simple measurement questions. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils sort heavy and light articles into two groups. They count up to seven reliably and show this by using symbols and signing. Lower attaining pupils respond to the touch and sound of materials when for example exploring soft gold rustling material. They make choices and show by expression that they enjoy the experience. This is satisfactory achievement. Learning is at times pitched just that little bit too high for some pupils whilst at other times, time is lost in lessons when the teacher has to brief support staff who change over mid-lesson. However, further through school, achievement picks up well so that by Year 11, higher attaining pupils sort and count to ten. They use coloured cubes to match the correct number of spaces on a worksheet. Some pupils are beginning to understand the concept 'one

more'. With great concentration, lower attaining pupils return a ball rolled to them. They sort by one colour but find it difficult to sort by two.

5. Pupils in all year groups achieve well in PSHE. When they first started at the school, pupils accepted what was done for them, including positioning for the lower attaining pupils. Now, pupils show awareness and pleasure from their own movement and higher attaining pupils show co-operation and understanding that, for example, some things should not be touched. In all lessons, pupils are given choices to which they respond positively. Part of this is because much informal work goes on as part of general school routines both in school time and in the evenings. However, the separate strengths of both the daytime provision and the evening provision are not yet united to build on what is already a strong package. The subject has been extended to incorporate citizenship education introduced nationally since the last inspection. Citizenship is integrated into a broad range of subjects and features of citizenship are already covered in subjects such as geography, history, English, religious education as well as PSHE. Pupils' achievement reflects the extent of its current inclusion in these subjects and is currently good overall. The school council contributes to this significantly such as the decision making that went on in deciding on a new school tee shirt.
6. Staff have not been trained in the national literacy and numeracy strategies for schools with pupils covering Years 5 to 9. Whilst the school has made a start with the support of a consultant, in how to improve pupils' achievement, good quality provision in reading and writing in all appropriate subjects is not yet in place and as such, pupils achievement in literacy skills is still satisfactory. It is better in numeracy, where pupils develop their skills well in other subjects such as shape-related activities in art and measurement and time experiences in humanities.
7. Music is one of the subjects where achievement has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is partly because the subject is incorporated into all curriculum areas. Individual and group tuition in the sound beam studio provides pupils with the opportunity to become musicians by using whatever controlled movement they have to operate switches or break sound beams to activate a range of instruments. This they do very well. They further benefit for hearing competent professional musicians play at live concerts each term and taking part in musical celebrations annually. Much work has been put in on how to incorporate music, communication and a multi sensory approach with individual styles of teaching to match pupils' particular learning needs. This has been highly successful. Because teachers have been encouraged to incorporate music wherever possible into every lesson, this is raising standards. It gives pupils a wide range of experiences both live and recorded. Pupils who originally only showed response to sound and vibrations when they started now show what they like and dislike and take turns in a broad range of music making.
8. Progress and achievement for pupils in ICT across the school are good. This is another subject where very good improvement in achievement has been made since the last inspection when progress and achievement were judged to be unsatisfactory. Not only does one teacher now primarily teach ICT, but also staff are advised in the use of ICT in other subjects. ICT is used effectively to support learning, enhance pupils access to the curriculum and allow pupils to be more creative in their work. All pupils use ICT well to aid their communication. Pupils' good achievement comes from experiencing ICT in most subjects. From merely experiencing and responding to equipment when they start, such as switches, some pupils move on to controlling them. They know that their intended movements will produce an effect such as in a Year 11 lesson where pupils press their switch when they recognise their photograph

and the page of the story moves on. The use of ICT in different subjects is similar to how PSHE and music are taught; good provision in a broad range of subjects enhances pupils' achievement. This is what is missing to some extent in reading and writing.

9. Staff have put in much work on supporting pupils' achievement through ensuring their preferred learning styles are accommodated in lessons. This has been helped enormously by the school's good approach to managing the behaviour of those pupils where their actions sometimes interfere with their achievement and could affect the rest of the class.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Because of the complex and profound learning difficulties of the pupils, their attitudes, relationships and personal development relies heavily on the provision that is offered by the school. The attitudes of pupils to the school, their behaviour and personal development is good. It is made possible by a high level of teamwork that produces consistent guidance and support. Parents give unstinting praise for the improvements they have seen, especially over the past couple of years.
11. Very good relationships and support in the classrooms ensure that the behaviour of the pupils is good. Occasional emotional outbursts are handled skilfully. Adults are alert to the individual needs of each student. Consequently timely intervention, using agreed strategies, ensures that the progress in lessons continues. The classrooms occupied by the older students have easily understood rules on display. These fully reflect the standards of behaviour observed.
12. The personal development of the students has a high priority in the school. Individual education plans provide some guidance to teachers and support workers. The right balance has been struck to ensure that the development of independence is of high priority. Well staffed lessons do not get in the way of this. Numerous incidents were observed where pupils made their own choices, selected items to create junk sculptures, indicated preferences in touch and feel sessions and in a history lesson, students were invited to select sound making stimuli to re-awaken memories.
13. Attendance is very good, although punctuality at the commencement of lessons could be improved considerably. The late arrival of students to their classrooms extends the time taken to settle into a learning mode and this has a detrimental effect on their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. There are no significant differences across the school between pupils of different attainment or background and boys and girls. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. This has come about in the last two years due to the support of an external consultant who has checked on the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Shared observations with teachers have been introduced, which are fully evaluated and discussed with staff. At the last inspection, 15 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. All lessons are now satisfactory or better. Some lessons are excellent. The school is not yet self-sufficient or confident enough to securely monitor teachers' planning, skills, knowledge, understanding or effectiveness in lessons without this external support.

15. Since the last inspection, the population of the school has changed. At the last inspection, pupils had predominately, physical difficulties with a range of learning difficulties. Now, pupils have more profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. The school is coming to terms with this well. Much work has been put in on how to incorporate into teaching, a range of ways for pupils to communicate and a multi sensory approach. The highly skilled knowledge, support and experience of the speech and language therapists and the physiotherapists along with the staff training they provide, has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The developing understanding of visual impairment and the use of multi sensory environments to improve teaching and learning opportunities is making a significant impact on pupil progress.
16. The range of pupils' learning difficulties in any lesson is wide. Although the numbers of pupils in lessons is small and the number of adults in classes is high, teachers are still challenged to select tasks that meet the needs of the pupils. Where teaching is good, high expectations of what pupils will achieve and how they will behave generally means that lesson targets are successful. What is expected of support staff and their involvement with the pupils ensure pupils make progress. As a result, pupils frequently behave well in lessons, sustain concentration and persevere to complete tasks even when lessons are challenging.
17. Teachers and most support staff set good role models in class. Teachers give pupils sufficient time to use and demonstrate their intellectual, physical or creative skills and are usually quick to celebrate pupils' successes. Pupils' individual communication programmes in English and more generally numeracy skills are being incorporated successfully into other subjects across the curriculum. The use of a multi sensory approach is beginning to provide pupils with opportunities to experience literacy skills in many lessons. Some teachers skilfully incorporate music, drama and ICT to create a total learning experience for pupils.
18. All pupils have individual programmes designed to meet their special needs. Where all staff in lessons understand what is required, these work well and teaching and learning are good. For example,
- In a Year 6 ICT lesson, the teacher gave special attention to match the learning to the ability of the pupils, thus ensuring full participation by those children in turning the pages of their text about 'The Rainbow Fish' and creating music by pressing a switch;
 - In a mathematics lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher ensured that the learning support assistant was carefully positioned to give extra time for a pupil to move the die independently, pronounce the number rolled and provide support and encouragement only where necessary;
 - In a PHSE lesson with Year 10 pupils, a notice was put on the door 'This lesson is private, please knock and wait to come in' which ensured that every pupil experienced privacy and no unnecessary interruptions;
 - In a music lesson with Years 12 to 14, detailed lesson plans were shared with all staff. Particular roles and responsibilities were clearly assigned to an ICT technician, a speech and language therapist, a learning support assistant, support staff and volunteers. All knew and understood individual students well and supported them to enjoy the lesson and make small but significant progress.

19. It is when the expectations upon staff are not as clear or when support staff change over mid-lesson, that lessons are not as effective although they remain satisfactory. Here, staff sometimes take it upon themselves to do or not do what had been planned. Also, teacher time and focus are reduced for the pupils in having to update staff arrived newly into the room. Where staff are not used to the pupils, such as agency staff, this compounds the situation.
20. All pupils have individual education plans (IEPs) prepared from their annual reviews. These are reviewed termly. Targets in these are generally too broad and lack specific detail, which results in targets remaining unchanged over time. Pupil progress in lessons and over time is subsequently not recorded accurately and it is therefore not possible to track progress made in lessons. In very good lessons some pupils in Years 12 to 14 have their IEPs broken down into far smaller steps and targets. These are used as working documents and teachers check at the end of each lesson to see if and how targets are progressing. This is at a very early stage of development and not yet commonly applied.
21. The way in which pupils are taught to use their ICT skills in other subjects is good. This is clearly supported by the use of the multi sensory environments and broad approaches to communication For example,
- In all lessons some pupils use their personal switches to aid communication. Some communicate their needs and make choices by pressing switches manually. Others by moving their head to press switches which cause a voice response.
 - In Year 6, the sounds of a storm are used to create mood and expression as pupils operate switches to activate lights and wind sounds, which along with ultra violet lighting, fluorescent paints, torches and rainfall music, help to create a feeling of being in a storm.
 - In Year 9, pupils become explorers in a 'rainforest'. The multi sensory environment is created with bubble wrap, water sprays, feathers, rubber reptiles and pan pipe music. Pupils have light and dark areas to explore.
 - In Year 10, pupils become musicians and make music by simple but challenging individualised body movements to break sound beams or press switches.
22. At present, work that is provided for pupils to do out of lessons is unsatisfactory. It is rarely used to support pupils learning throughout their whole waking day. The school is not yet sufficiently active in ensuring that pupils who will benefit from homework receive it on a regular basis as a means of extending and improving their achievement.
23. Teaching and learning are good across school. They are very good with pupils in Years 12 to 14. In music, ICT, and modern foreign cultures some lessons are excellent. The main reasons for these excellent lessons are,
- The strength of the subject leaders' enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding of the subjects;
 - Their understanding of the special educational needs of their pupils and the combined and creative use of music, ICT and multi sensory experiences.
 - The multi disciplinary support provided by the speech and language therapists and physiotherapists ensure that every pupil has a voice and a stance and therefore become enthusiastic learners.
 - Therapists are enthusiastic and skilful advocates for promoting pupils' communication and physical independence.

24. An external consultant has begun to work with teachers to monitor their teaching and learning but this is still at a very early stage of development. The school should continue to develop and refine the internal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to include targeting improvement.

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

25. The curriculum of the school is good. It is planned to meet the needs and abilities of all students and reflects the schools' aims. This is very good improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum provision was unsatisfactory.
26. Since the last inspection the school has exercised the flexibility available through its independent status to refocus the curriculum. The school has chosen to base its schemes of work on a commercially produced curriculum that builds up to National Curriculum expectations. Core curriculum subjects are literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education and religious education. Other subjects alternate on a termly basis to boost pupils' learning opportunities in their knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. Learning objectives for pupils are identified in each lesson plan. Much work has been undertaken to incorporate total communication and a multi-sensory approach within lessons, to enable pupils to benefit more from the curriculum. The skilled knowledge of speech and language therapists and physiotherapists has made a valuable contribution to the quality of the curriculum. Practice is increasing for therapists to work alongside pupils and staff in the classroom. In some instances, pupils are withdrawn for therapy or other activities to support their individual needs. For example, this means for some pupils in Year 9, that they do not receive their entitlement to the school's core subject of religious education. This, combined with the late arrival of pupils for the first lesson of the morning and following breaks and lunchtimes, considerably reduces the amount of taught time.
27. Strategies for teaching literacy are satisfactory overall. They are strong in support of ways to help pupils to communicate better. Most staff provide good support for pupils' speaking and listening skills, which include the use of signs, symbols and speech. However, there is a lack of consistent support for some pupils' reading and writing. Numeracy is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils.
28. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, which enhances the curriculum. Topic-linked visits to places such as a zoo, garden centre, restaurants and the theatre, and visitors to school such as police and fire services, help to bring the curriculum to life. Pupils are fortunate to experience high quality musical performances by listening to internationally acclaimed musicians. There are numerous after school and weekend activities for pupils in residential accommodation, which meet a wide range of interests. Physical, musical, art related and life-skills activities are on offer as well as gardening, youth clubs and Sunday clubs. The school has a Scout Group. Very good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are fostered by these activities. They effectively aid independence and the exercise of choice for pupils. However, there are missed opportunities to bring together the educational and residential curriculum. A strong commitment to the 24-hour curriculum would consolidate and extend pupils' learning.

29. The school has very good links with the local community. Over 80 volunteers support the school in a variety of ways. They work in classrooms, help with horse riding and support maintenance of the site. The school has a number of special events throughout the year such as May Day, end of term celebrations, sports day, Christingle Service and summer and Christmas fairs. All events are well attended by families and friends of the school.
30. Links with other schools are very good. Two pupils attend a local primary school for one lesson a week. Pupils from a local primary and local middle school work alongside pupils in Years 5 to 9 on a regular basis. Links with local colleges are being developed for older pupils. Such collaboration helps to broaden experiences for all pupils. An excellent example of successful integration was observed when a group of pupils from a local middle school joined in a Year 8 and 9 science lesson. Pupils from both schools clearly enjoyed and benefited from the experience. It made a valuable contribution to their personal and social development. All pupils' concentration and focus on the activities were outstanding.
31. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, which is better than it was at the last inspection. There is no whole school policy to encourage teachers to develop this aspect of the provision fully or to plan for it. The school does not hold a collective act of worship regularly. Displays around the school do celebrate pupils work, but not all are displayed with care and attention. Some serve to remind and inform visitors of some events that pupils have taken part in, but are often small and cannot be easily seen by pupils as the boards are above most pupils' line of vision or digital photographs are not always printed clearly. Pupils are developing awareness of English culture, but not of England as a multi-cultural nation.
32. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are given opportunities to consider the beliefs of Christians and other major world faiths in religious education. The adults in school value pupils and their contributions. Pupils are encouraged and supported to listen to their peers and respect their views. The school provides pupils with opportunities to explore their own values and beliefs and those of their classmates in PSHE lessons and when discussing literature or music. Some pupils experience the splashing of a pebble in an art lesson and gasped at the coldness of the water. Others enjoy a multi sensory storm and startle at the unexpected thunder. The school is aware that opportunities are missed to develop the spiritual aspect of the pupils' development and recognises that there are too many missed opportunities to experience awe and wonder and consider the existence of a supreme being. There are also limited opportunities for quiet, reflective free time indoors or outside. There is no whole school assembly where pupils could be encouraged to listen to a prayer and reflect on their experiences.
33. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good overall. Teachers and their learning support assistants work well together and have good relationships with the pupils. They provide good role models and make it clear what is expected in lessons. Personal, social and health education lessons make explicit what is expected of pupils and help them to become clear about what is right and wrong. These lessons, which pupils have several times each week, create opportunities for pupils to explore moral concepts such as right and wrong and fairness. In many lessons pupils are given opportunities to value personal achievement and share that of others. Teachers recognise and praise pupils' efforts, interest and enthusiasm in class but this is not shared routinely with the whole school. Pupils are given opportunities to help others by collecting for a range of charities including national charity days. A schools council formed recently, holds meetings every two weeks. Pupils from the school wear a

yellow sash in the meeting to denote membership and a photo of each member is displayed across school. There is a mobile interactive notice board where pupils can listen to, and leave messages about council agendas and action. The council has influenced an agreed code of conduct for the 'Golden Rules' displayed in each classroom.

34. Social education is very good overall. All staff encourage pupils to collaborate and support each other. Pupils are encouraged to have respect for each other, as well as for themselves. For example, some older pupils demonstrated this working with residential staff to make a birthday card for a fellow student. Pupils learn to live together and take part in social activities, eating together in a friendly way and relaxing together well in the residential flats. There is very little friction between pupils. They show appreciation of each other's achievements. They are learning to become good citizens and valued members of society. They give polite consideration to visitors and welcome them into lessons in their own very individual ways. The school council provides a good means of involving pupils in the development of the school. The school is truly inclusive, where pupils from a range of backgrounds and abilities are supported to work together.
35. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are some good opportunities to learn about their own culture in music and English. Pupils learn about values and beliefs of other faiths in religious education. However, many opportunities are missed in other lessons. The school does not plan well enough across the curriculum to provide pupils with opportunities to be more aware of other cultures. Most teachers are now considering the impact of music from different cultures and planning for its use in lessons. During the week of inspection, pupils experienced music across the curriculum including Mexican, Chinese, Austrian and Indian. In one lesson Indian music was played to 'transport' pupils to another land. Some pupils looked at Aboriginal art as part of a study of Australia. The school has an annual musical celebration day and hosted a Caribbean Carnival.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The provision for the health, safety and welfare of the students is appropriate. Consequently the school is a safe place in which to learn. There are good procedures to support personal development although a very small number of parents are dissatisfied with

- the speed that medical requests are acted upon at times, and
- the regularity of review of equipment of pupils with physiotherapy care.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to record the attendance of the students who are above compulsory school age. The registers are used when fire evacuation procedures are practised.

37. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and personal development work very well. The emotional commitment teachers, carers and volunteers put into their various tasks is 'second to none'. Comprehensive induction provision ensures that the needs of each student are worked out. However those good intentions are hampered at times because of lapses in good practice. For example, the inappropriate use of brakes on wheelchairs, eye contact is not always established when relaying information to pupils or double gate locks are not always engaged at the top of stairs in some of the flats.

38. Good teamwork and relationships underpin a very well considered behaviour policy. Following recently published advice, the policy for physical restraint is being re-written. The parents say that their over-riding wish is that the school shall provide a safe, loving and supportive environment where self-esteem is promoted. They say that the school does this very well and the inspectors agree. Statutory responsibilities such as child protection and health and safety issues are managed suitably. Induction training in all procedures is provided for staff at the commencement of employment.
39. The school's care policy ensures that every student is linked to a named person and communications by letter, personal visits or telephone are frequent and valued by parents. This ensures that information about pastoral, medical and welfare matters is communicated to parents whenever a need to do so is perceived. However the school does not carry out any formal surveys to evaluate parents satisfaction or areas for improvement. Staff ask parents to comment about their level of satisfaction when they attend formal review meetings, and they feel that this is adequate. However this is not a reliable way to evaluate satisfaction because it would be a very brave parent who felt able to make adverse comments to people who have so much control of their child's learning and living environment. This approach does not currently support the principles of best value.
40. Before starting at the school pupils attend for four days. During this time their needs are carefully considered by a multi disciplinary team to work out the content of pupils' individual programmes and to make sure that the school can meet all of the pupils' needs. This process is carefully monitored. Subsequently, arrangements for measuring pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. This element of work is little further on since the last inspection. Due to the changes in the senior management of the school, good practices are emerging. However, these are still in the early stages of development and are not yet firmly established. There are effective practices based on nationally recognised measurements of pre-national curriculum attainment. These identify how well pupils are achieving in curriculum areas, including personal, social and health education. However they are relatively new to staff and as yet are not used sufficiently well to monitor progress and guide teaching. The school has information available in all subjects, which would enable trends and improvements in pupils' attainment to be monitored and also pupils' achievement and progress. However, there have been three changes in the last twelve months in the methods used to record this information. Because of this, analysis of attainment of individuals and different groups of pupils in the school is very difficult and is not taking place.
41. Information obtained for the pupils' statements of special education needs is used to formulate overall targets in individual education and care plans. The pupils' individual targets are addressed consistently by teachers and support staff. However on occasions, targets remain the same term after term and are too vague in terms of what the pupils will do. The targets are not sufficiently broken down into small steps so that achievement is measurable. For example 'to recognise numbers in familiar situations' is not specific enough. What does this mean and how is success to be measured?
42. Statements and reviews are up to date and the school successfully implements the provision outlined in the statement in most cases. However, at present the school is without an occupational therapist and so cannot fully meet these needs. Pupils, whose statement of need is to have full access to national curriculum subjects, do not between the ages of 12 and 14 receive provision in experiencing a modern foreign language. Neither are pupils disapplied from this in consultation with parents. Consequently their needs are not fully met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The parents have very good views of the school. With very few exceptions they believe that the school keeps them well informed about how their children are getting on. They value very highly the efforts the school makes to arrange formal review meetings at a time convenient to them. There is a strong volunteer and friends association network in the community and this compensates for the difficulty some parents have in travelling the long distances to the school.
44. The written information the school provides includes newsletters sent out each term, a governors' annual report and a report about each pupil, which is mainly about their wellbeing. Reports on pupils' work do not point out what has been learned or if progress has met expectations. Some parents who met the registered inspector said that they would like to have more precise information about the progress that their children have made. Also, some parents would welcome better guidance about work that could be done with pupils at home during the holidays and advice on how to look after their children so they can build on the school's success.
45. The school prospectus clearly explains the educational objectives that the school strives to promote and its mission statement confirms the importance it attaches to the provision of personally designed programmes for pupils. What is missing is anything about the care, safety and security arrangements. Such matters are ones that a parent needs to know if they are to feel fully assured that the school is a safe place to both live and learn. The provision of such information is good practice because it gives reassurance especially about child protection and security. The prospectus gives no information about the arrangements for formal complaints to be aired or how to seek redress if they are not satisfied with the response they receive from the school.
46. The friends association, together with the staff and volunteers organise social and fundraising events. These are highly successful. The summer fete is a highlight in the local calendar. Last year £6,000 was donated to school funds. Local residents say that they value the opportunities they have to support the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. Leadership and management in the school are good despite some of the issues from the last inspection being outstanding. In the two years since the current senior management team came together, they have moved the school forward well. They have gone about things in the right order. Improvements in pupils' achievement, personal development and the quality of teaching and learning were high on the agenda. The school has been successful with these with the support of a consultant brought in to lead developments. Staff morale is high. Teamwork is obvious within the school.
48. In the last two years, the most significant improvements have been in:
 - The quality of teaching and learning. Teamwork between teachers and support assistants has improved well. This has come about through support from a consultant including the videoing of very good lessons as exemplars, lesson observations in tandem between the consultant and another teacher in checking on the quality of practice in lessons and curriculum development;

- Training for all staff relevant to the development of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This included work on better ways to check how pupils are progressing in lessons with IEPs and ICPs. This still has some way to go;
 - The restructuring of the senior management team for greater effectiveness;
 - The reorganisation of where pupils live and work so they have a distinct feel of the difference between 'home' and school;
 - Citizenship education has been introduced well into the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum;
49. Since September 2002, a new chair of governors is now in place, who is clear about building on the governors' strengths and introducing ways of working to improve the governing body's role in checking on how well the school is doing. Sub-committees of the governing body have already been introduced with clear aims and responsibilities. Some governors visit the school during the working day to see what is happening at first hand. Two trustees from Scope have been co-opted onto the governing body to observe meetings. This is good practice. The cumulative effect of these improvements is good and has come about by teamwork. The headteacher's approach to improving the school is to use staff's strengths and supplement these with support from outside of the school where necessary. From a low ebb in January 2001, morale has risen and successes are now celebrated with warmth and affection, for example, for one pupil who achieved a national scouting award.
50. Since the last inspection, the effectiveness of the governing body has not been satisfactory. There was a lack of strategic planning because of uncertainties they had about their income and what is expected of them by Scope, for example, in the age range of pupils to be taught. This inhibited leadership and management in the school. As a result, the school development plan only forecasts for one year ahead. Many key issues are not detailed enough. Time elements are not precise and no costings are prepared. Staff training is not included in the plan or links with subject action plans. Whilst the day-to-day finances of the school are well controlled, the strategic use of resources is poor because the school does not sufficiently break down costs for different parts of its work. As a result, it cannot plan to spend efficiently. This is beginning to happen although at this stage, informally. Scope is working with the school to improve financial management to overcome increasing over-spends in budget such as £200,000 in 2001/2002 and £403,000 predicted for 2002/2003. The pupils do not suffer because of this lack of focus. Scope clears deficits in its schools' spending and Meldreth Manor is no exception. The school has started to improve its financial management but is still unclear how it will match up to the financial expectations put on it by Scope, particularly in the percentage of income expected to be contributed to Scope's central funds. The school's uncertainties about its planned income and expenditure and its lack of information about the success of its internal development planning and pupils' progress means that it cannot yet meet the principles of best value. It does not have the information it needs to challenge itself as to how well it is doing and at what cost.
51. Checking on how well staff are doing by appraising their work has continued since the last inspection and is working satisfactorily. Introducing the next stage in this of performance management has been agreed in principle between the school and Scope but is still embryonic. This system would also generate information to monitor, evaluate and develop the quality of teaching giving the management the opportunity to diagnose its strengths and weakness as well as taking action to secure improvement. There are insufficiently clear links between the results of staff appraisal and planning for improvement.

52. Self-evaluation within the school is weak. Most development work is planned verbally or informally and is not structured and formalised sufficiently to know if in fact, developments could be moving along any quicker. This way of working leaves the governing body short of the information they need to oversee the effectiveness of the school. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, mainly led by the external consultant, is a recent development and is working well. More needs to be done to enable the school to be sufficiently confident to monitor and analyse their own performance accurately.
53. The way in which parents are invited into school annually to discuss how well their children are progressing is well organised. In arranging dates for these meetings, the school gives priority to parents' availability before inviting other participants. This works well. This process is organised well by the deputy headteacher and leads to almost all parents attending, which is very good considering the distance some have to travel. The school also ensures that where there is a need for a six monthly 'care' review, the date coincides with the annual educational review thus saving parents the need to attend the school more than once. This way of working is appreciated by parents.
54. There is a good sufficiency of teachers and support staff to meet pupils' individual needs within the curriculum. A major strength is the way in which most staff work very closely together as a whole team. Many teachers have additional qualifications and much experience in teaching pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties. Generally the subjects are satisfactorily managed and co-ordinated. Information communication technology and PSHE are well led. Music is very well led and managed. At the moment there are no designated co-ordinators for science and the humanities, which is impinging on the effectiveness of improvements. As a separate department within the school, provision for students in Years 12 to 14 is very well led and organised. The head of department is very clear on how the students should be taught and checks to see that it happens.
55. The school employs a good number of therapists and support assistants who work both inside and outside the classroom. This group of staff offers high quality educational support and work very much as part of 'the team'. The number of teaching and non-teaching staff the school employs results in the adult pupil ratio being high in classes. This is extremely beneficial in terms of ensuring that all pupils are well supported in personal, social, physical, health and academic development.
56. Significant building refurbishment has improved the accommodation well since the last inspection. Overall, it is good. Developments include amongst others,
- The hydrotherapy pool has been renovated including storage space and a new shower for pupils to use before and after therapy.
 - There are a good number of therapy rooms, which offer flexibility in working with pupils in the classroom or in a more private area away from other pupils.
 - The ICT rooms have improved and there are now 'sound beam' facilities, which are used well.
 - The sensory and light rooms are an asset in the school and well used.
 - Portable and fixed hoists throughout the school allow staff to move and handle pupils safely and to protect pupils' privacy and dignity when being changed.
 - The food technology room is very good with flexible height furniture and fittings, thus allowing pupils with different needs to use the room effectively.
 - The science room has been renovated and equipped with a fume cupboard.

57. However, storage within the school remains a problem for pupils' equipment. At times, circulation areas around the school appear untidy. At the moment one small hall is used as a storage facility not allowing it to be used for educational purposes. Also, whilst the school grounds are impressive and used for cycling and horse riding, the exciting 'Learning Curve' adventure play activity and the sensory garden are in need of attention before pupils can take full advantage of them.
58. Overall, the quality and quantity of learning resources are good, and support the effective teaching of the curriculum. In English, science, geography and PSHE they are satisfactory. In mathematics, design and technology, ICT, history, physical education and religious education they are good. This helps lessons to be brought alive for the pupils. In music, resources are very good, which contributes to the subject's success in the school. The range of ICT equipment to enhance communication and allow pupils access to the curriculum is very good and used well.

RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

59. Overall, the residential provision is well led and managed and contributes effectively to the positive ethos of the school. Both the head of care and head of social care are taking externally recognised qualifications in pursuit of excellence. The foundation of the good provision for pupils is the very good relationships built between pupils and care staff, which supports the complex range of needs of pupils in residence. Also, many support workers are involved closely with pupils in lessons, which generally works well. However, on occasions, practice is slack, for example, in timekeeping in getting pupils to lessons on time, in using the brakes on pupils wheelchairs or in dressing pupils fully in their coats for their journey to lessons. Checking on practice is not as effective as it should be. This reduces the overall effectiveness of provision.
60. The residential provision is organised to provide for pupils in three houses, each containing two flats under the control of a manager. The quality of care and opportunities provided for pupils enhances their personal and social development. One of the main benefits of the system, reorganised since the last inspection, is that pupils now experience the difference between 'home' and 'school'. They are not taught in the same building as they live. They 'travel' to school.
61. Staff are involved well in pupils' annual reviews, care plans and decisions concerning programmes after school. There is a good range of appropriate activities for pupils in the evening both on and off the school site. Activities are tracked and recorded which feeds into pupils' reviews. Each pupil has an individual care plan and an identified 'key worker'. The school has made efforts to provide an effective 'independent listener' for pupils but unfortunately this has not been achieved due to the profound and complex nature of learning difficulties of the children and their lack of communication ability. The school continues to search for appropriate people for this vital role. Many after school activities take place off site. This necessitates use of the school minibuses. Whilst drivers take school organised training, this is not yet on a nationally recognised course.
62. Social events, such as breakfast, lunch and evening meals, take place in individual flats. At this time many pupils require hygiene and health support. This is done sensitively. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to make snacks with little adult support. Staff communicate effectively to see what pupils would like. Pupils

demonstrate increasing progress in their relationships with each other and staff. As a result of such good relationships, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Visitors find higher attaining pupils keen to communicate, polite and helpful. They occupy themselves in many activities expected of their age range, such as playing videos, CDs or DVDs of their favourite pop stars, computer games and playing music on electric keyboards. During the week of the inspection, staff and pupils went out to a local centre to celebrate the birthdays of two pupils.

63. The ethos of the flats is supportive of pupils' needs during lessons. Pupils' lesson needs and their out-of-school needs are beginning to be integrated more. One example was when pupils searched their flats to find kinds of paper that would be recyclable, which was homework set by the PSHE teacher and supported by care workers. This worked well and could be further developed to encompass many more PSHE aims in a real environment, such as hygiene, sex education and drugs awareness. Hand-over procedures between teachers and care staff are effectively structured across all flats at the beginning and end of the teaching day. Medication is securely locked in proper trolleys and recorded and signed for when administered by appropriate staff. Staff receive advice from a consultant pharmacist in the administration of medicine.
64. Staffing levels are appropriate for the number and complex difficulty of pupils. There is an adequate number of staff on duty through the night. Induction of all staff is now formal and training is available and encouraged for all staff. Many are pursuing recognised qualifications. New staff receive a comprehensive school handbook giving them an overview of the work of the school. They benefit from access to good levels of training, support and guidance. Staff show appropriate knowledge and training in child protection. They work hard to increase their knowledge and understanding of the range of pupils' difficulties.
65. All residential staff establish and maintain good links and contacts with parents and carers. For example, care staff ensure that pupils who communicate are next to the telephone when their parents ring. Staff interpret the call by signing so that the children are fully involved. Parents indicated to inspectors the way in which their lives have been positively enhanced since their child started at Meldreth and how they had developed in many ways, such as socially and in self-esteem and confidence.
66. Management and administration is effective. Accommodation has been upgraded and is now good in protecting pupils' privacy and dignity. Sleeping arrangements for pupils have been reorganised so that almost all flats are now single sex. Bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms and changing areas have been upgraded and are now satisfactory. Hoists are available where necessary and training for staff is available in handling and moving pupils. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their personal and shared facilities. They personalise their rooms with posters, toys, games and pictures.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build on the improvements made since the last inspection, the school should;
Put in place methods of checking how well the school is doing that include;

- tracking of pupils' progress from information collected from lessons;
(Paragraphs 1, 40, 80 and 90)
- tracking of pupils' progress from more detailed and measurable IEP's that are more closely linked to ICPS; (Paragraphs 20, 41, 48 and 75)
- ensuring the balance of the content of pupils' individual programmes are as well monitored in Years 5 to 11 as they are in Years 12 to 14;
(Paragraphs 26, 124 and 135)
- school staff checking on the quality of teaching and learning that does not eventually need the support of a consultant;
(Paragraphs 14, 52 and 129)
- more detailed and effective school development planning that projects targets for completion for more than just the year ahead and includes subject development targets as well as wider school issues; (*)
(Paragraphs 50 and 107)
- provide information readily and regularly to the governing body that allows governors' terms of reference to be met particularly in checking on the effectiveness of the school including meeting the principles of best value; (*)
(Paragraphs 50, 52 and 75)

(*) These issues will require the school to work very closely with SCOPE in planning for the future, including financial planning.

In addition to the development points above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school action plan:

- Ensure timekeeping at the start of lessons in the morning and after lunchtime is checked on and improved; (Paragraphs 13, 26, 59 and 82)
- Develop even closer links with parents to help those who want more advice on how to work with and care for their children during school holidays;
(Paragraph 44)
- Ensure the requirements of all pupils' statements of special educational need are fully met.
(Paragraph 42)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	13	20	14			
Percentage	8	26	39	27			

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 around 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	40
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6*

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0*

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

* The percentages quoted are only for day pupils; figures for residential pupils are not collected by the school.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
35		
1		
1		
1		
2		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.8
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y5 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	315

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,843,877
Total expenditure	4,043,925
Expenditure per pupil	66,294
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/A*
Balance carried forward to next year	N/A*

* SCOPE central funds balance the budget each year.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	40
Number of questionnaires returned	21

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	20			
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	6		
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	26	6		
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	36	18		18
The teaching is good.	65	30			5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	20	25		
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	25			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28			
The school works closely with parents.	60	15	25		
The school is well led and managed.	65	20	10	5	
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	50			
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	22		5	5

Some parents found the questionnaire difficult to complete on behalf of pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties.

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

ENGLISH

67. Overall, teaching and learning in English, including literacy, are good because of the school's strengths in communication. Pupils' achievement in communication throughout the school is good. This compensates somewhat for pupils' satisfactory achievement in reading and writing because of the importance to pupils of being able to communicate. This picture is better than it was at the last inspection. However, there is a lack of consistent support for some pupils' reading and writing needs through the use of signing, symbols and objects of reference. This has started to happen with the introduction of 'total communication' and improved ICT knowledge and resources. The highly skilled knowledge, support and experience of the speech and language therapists and physiotherapists along with the staff training they provide have made a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning in English. The developing understanding of visual impairment by staff and the impact of the use of multi sensory environments to improve teaching and learning opportunities are making a significant impact on pupils' progress.
68. The quality of teaching and learning in the past was affected by the inadequacy of use of ICT, a small under resourced library trolley and a lack of understanding of how to match learning needs to the maturity level of the pupils. Most of the progress in English since the last inspection has happened during the past two years. This has been the consequence of a partnership between the English, music, ICT, and multi sensory co-ordinators in the school who along with the deputy head and speech and language therapists have worked with an external consultant to address the development needs of the curriculum. Whilst teaching and learning is good overall, some very good examples were observed during the inspection. In these lessons with pupils of all ages, pupils had personal communication files or switches, which were used well to help pupils make choices in all lessons. In these lessons teachers' knew their pupils well and regardless of age or ability, pupils' learning was exactly at the right level for them. This helps to motivate pupils. They responded by working hard and really enjoyed the work. In the best lessons, teachers and support assistants manage pupils' individual needs very well, partly because of the very good relationship built with pupils.
69. The majority of pupils now entering the school start with poor communication skills and profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. To support this, the school has organised speech and language therapy, which involves specialist advice and specific programmes for staff to use with the pupils, as well as specialised support in lessons. All teachers and most staff support pupils' speaking skills very well, which include the use of signs, symbols, body language, electronic aids and speech. Where staff are consistent and regularly support pupils in class, strong support for communication is developing.
70. During a Year 6 multi sensory literacy lesson where pupils listened to the poem of 'The Storm', higher attaining pupils signed and vocalised the growls of thunder and lower attaining pupils succeeded in pressing electronic aids to show the howling wind as well as pushing the clouds away. Although signing by all support staff was not

evident in all lessons during the inspection, teachers encourage its use and remind support staff which key signs are to be used.

71. Pupils in Year 8 are currently making good progress with their speaking and listening. They press a switch once to turn the page on the computer screen in reading a story about 'The Rainbow Fish'. Pupils were delighted as the fish 'flew' around the interactive white board. Excellent teaching, the creative use of music and drama, the very good use of ICT and talking books enthuse pupils to engage with the text.
72. By Year 11, pupils still continue to receive good language support. Higher attaining pupils make effective progress working with a teacher or learning support assistant, for example, in choosing a colour to communicate thoughts and feelings. Teachers do not always know how many staff will be available in class to support lessons, which means that some pupils only receive partial encouragement to communicate either verbally, with signing or using electronic aids.
73. In reading and writing, pupils arrive in school with few skills. They begin to develop an understanding that print conveys meaning, but few develop writing skills. Staff discuss with pupils the relevant aspects of pictures in storybooks and read words to support pupils to gain an understanding of what is happening. Staff use work sheets, which use symbols and text, to write for pupils, but are less confident in finding means to support pupils to make independent marks to convey their own feelings. ICT is not as fully in use as it could be to help pupils become more confident with their writing skills.
74. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to introduce an appropriate curriculum which is age appropriate and multi sensory. A permanent library base is now in use. A good range of resources, including talking books, is being built up in conjunction with the ICT co-ordinator. The speech and language therapists and the co-ordinator have worked hard over the past two years to identify the means by which pupils can make choices and communicate effectively. This clear focus on developing independent communication skills with pupils and providing them with the means to have a voice has been successful. The co-ordinator recognises that further training in the National Literacy Strategy and opportunities to observe good practise in other schools, has yet to be built sufficiently into the school's planning.
75. Since last September the co-ordinator has introduced library sessions where pupils may choose books to improve their skills in some lessons. This is working well and is having some impact on standards. There are plans to support a pupil to act as a library assistant. This worked well in a Year 9 geography lesson. However the variety of reading materials available for the older pupils is narrow. The new co-ordinator is tackling this and additional resources are being sought. Broadening pupils' experiences such as visits to the local library is at an early stage of development. Visiting poets or travelling theatre companies do not yet enrich pupils' literacy experience. The co-ordinator does not yet check how the subject is developing in the school. There are plans to monitor teaching and learning across all classes and subjects but this is yet to happen. More needs to be done to match education plans to care plans to make the 'twenty-four hour curriculum' effective. Individual education and care plans are too general and not detailed enough to ensure that progress can be accurately recorded and tracked over time in school and in the residential flats.

MATHEMATICS

76. Overall standards of achievement in mathematics is good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve satisfactorily. All other pupils achieve well. There is no difference in the progress made by boys or girls. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when progress was judged to be satisfactory overall. The main strengths of the subject are the new scheme of work, the knowledge that teachers have of the pupils and the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
77. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils sort heavy and light articles into two groups. They know for example that a tin of beans is heavier than a sponge ball. They count up to seven reliably and show this by using symbols and signing. Lower attaining pupils respond to the touch and sound of materials when for example exploring soft gold rustling material. Here they make choices and show by expression that they enjoy the experience. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils count dots on a die when playing board games. They recognise the names of some colours and because of the rules of the game, they are beginning to understand the need to take turns. Lower attainers develop their skills by reaching out, grasping and gripping articles as they search and examine items hidden in the sand. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils sort and count to ten. They use coloured cubes to match the correct number of spaces on a worksheet. Some pupils are beginning to understand the concept 'one more'. With great concentration, lower attaining pupils return a ball rolled to them. They sort by one colour but find it difficult to sort by two.
78. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. This is similar to the previous inspection. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory, very good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The main strengths of the very good mathematics teaching are the very good match of work to the needs of the pupils and the challenging nature of work, which encourages group participation. A very good example of this was when a small group took part in a game of snakes and ladders. Here the encouragement of the teachers and support staff ensured all pupils remained interested in the game and tried very hard. This was achieved despite one pupils' obvious discomfort and pain. His success in using the die was a moving moment for everyone. When teaching is only satisfactory this is often because pupils and support staff are late into lessons. This can result in support staff being not sufficiently well briefed before the lesson and not knowing what is expected of them. On occasions work is too difficult for pupils and has not been broken down into small enough stages. An example of this was when one pupil was asked to sort by two colours. He was given too many items to sort and became tired. When the activity was simplified the pupil join in again successfully. Learning is reinforced at the end of lessons when staff discuss individually with the pupils what they have achieved and sometimes, what they have found difficult.
79. Morning 'Hello' sessions are used well to reinforce mathematical understanding for example, when pupils concentrate on the order of their names on the register or the order of the days of the week. There is good use of ICT when pupils use their switch to access speech. On one occasion a pupil returning from a weekend at home, persistently used her switch to access a message from her mother, which caused her great delight. The pupils' IEPs are available to care staff and because of this, staff are able to support the pupils targets. A good example is the development of their understanding of mathematical language, which is encouraged when pupils play games.

80. The subject is satisfactorily managed. There has been some disruption in the management due to illness of a member of staff. However a new co-ordinator has now been identified and will be taking over the management of the subject. Despite the upheaval, the subject shows good improvement since the last inspection. A new scheme of work has been introduced and is being successfully used. Significant input from a consultant has supported teachers effectively in lessons. There has been some checking on the quality of teaching and learning through direct observation of lessons. However this has only recently been introduced and is an area for further development. Teachers do not yet collect sufficiently detailed information about what pupils know and do to establish the extent of the progress that they make over time.

SCIENCE

81. Pupils achieve well in a range of science topics. This represents an improvement in standards since the last inspection. From a point where they started knowing that certain actions produce a predictable result, higher attaining pupils in Year 6 work out ways to push and pull objects. They demonstrate an understanding of the difference between the two forces. Year 8 and 9 pupils make choices and express preferences from a range of materials, which vary in colour and texture. They particularly enjoy the feel of wet and dry materials such as sand, sawdust and rice and the sound of 'crinkly' paper. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are continuing to extend their scientific knowledge and vocabulary, reinforced by the use of signing and symbols. Year 10 pupils understand that animals have fur and that birds are covered with feathers. By Year 11, pupils develop an understanding of the difference between light and dark. They conduct experiments on the impact of light on transparent, translucent and opaque materials and make a silhouette of their own face profile. This shows good progress from when they started in the school.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is an improvement from the last inspection when teaching was judged to be generally satisfactory. There is good emphasis on developing communication and a very good use of multi sensory experiences. As a result pupils are actively involved in lessons. Staff have a good understanding of individual needs, which they use effectively to extend pupils' learning experiences. Staff have very good relationships with pupils so that they feel confident and secure to make choices and to respond to questions. Teachers give careful consideration to the preparation of good resources and use them to enliven pupils' learning. This made a significant contribution in the excellent integration of a group of pupils from a local middle school. The extensive range of resources enabled them to interact effectively with Meldreth pupils in offering them a choice of materials to decorate a bookmark. In another good lesson, the teacher brought a dog into the classroom, to reinforce pupils understanding that dogs are an animal that is covered with fur. Pupils are told how well they are doing in lessons, which encourages them. The pace of learning in most lessons is good. Pupils listen carefully to what staff are saying and concentrate well. However, in some lessons teachers divert pupils' attention from the main focus of the lesson by over lengthy explanations. In several lessons, some pupils arrived late, so pupils' learning time for science was reduced.
83. The new scheme of work introduced since the last inspection, supported by training for staff in its implementation, has had a positive impact on progress and achievement in science. However, since September 2001, the school has not had a science co-ordinator or specialist science teacher. The science room is not used for teaching. Leadership and management are therefore unsatisfactory. The school recognises the need to address these issues in order to sustain standards and ensure continual improvements in the subject.

ART AND DESIGN

84. The achievement of boys and girls is good overall. This is good improvement since the last inspection when achievement was judged overall to be satisfactory. The improvement is largely based on
- the new scheme of work, which is giving teachers guidelines from which to work;
 - the enthusiasm and subject knowledge of the specialist teacher;
 - smaller numbers of pupils in classes;
 - improved accommodation.
85. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils know the colours green, blue and yellow and are able to draw attention to the fact that they have not been given any red paint to work with. They explore the effects of thickening paint with substances such as flour, sand and washing powder. They make marks on paper with brushes and there is great excitement when a roller is used successfully. They enjoy experimenting and transfer paint to paper using one finger and when challenged, with two. Pupils are consistently encouraged to make their own choices. They join in well. Lower attaining pupils with support to guide their hands, use a sponge to make marks on paper. They show by gesture and facial expression their choice of colour and thickener to add to the paint. Pupils with visual impairment use fluorescent paper to work with.
86. By Year 9, pupils explore a variety of textures. They extend their understanding by the use of colour and develop their senses to explore different processes and materials. Higher attaining pupils point to a preferred colour when mixing paints with water. They add liquid soap and use a plastic pump, with support, to push the plunger to create bubbles in the water. They make a response to options and choices through gestures and actions. In one lesson, all pupils explored the touch of warm water before they added colouring to the water. They reinforced their vocabulary as the teacher used words such as 'feel' and 'smooth'. They smelt the liquid soap or food colouring and decided which they preferred. Lower attaining pupils accept this sensory experience of touching the water with their hands with some interest, and although at first reluctant to put their feet into the water, they enjoy the experience.
87. By Year 11, pupils focus on looking at the work of famous artists from a range of cultures. In one lesson the work of David Hockney was used very effectively as a starting point to illustrate 'a big splash'. This was further reinforced when pupils were provided with a bucket of water and a choice of items to drop into the water. Much excitement occurred when one pupil dropped in a large stone and produced a 'big splash'. Pupils explore materials, some with support to guide their hands, to decide whether they wish to work with paper or paint. Higher achieving pupils reach out for materials, use a roller, glue stick and with guidance, they cut out independently. Other pupils put their hands in wet paint and feel the texture. With support they transfer the paint to paper. All 'check-out' each other's work at the end of the lesson with a degree of interest. The pupils work together in small groups, with a support assistant, completing three-dimensional projects.
88. Art makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development and very good opportunities are provided for the pupils to learn through their senses. During a drinks time, Chinese music was used to 'set the scene' for the break. The teacher challenged the pupils "who will be the first to finish" so that all pupils have their drinks finished on time. All tried their best to compete. Older pupils

are shown the work of artists such as Matisse and Kandinsky and make good attempts, with support, using paint, tissue and charcoal to create work in the style of these artists.

89. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. For pupils in Years 5 and 6, it is satisfactory; good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and very good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In very good lessons, the teacher used a magnifier attached to the television, which magnified the pupils' work and enabled them to look more closely at the pattern and materials used. The teacher had clear objectives, challenged all whilst ensuring that the methods used enabled all to participate fully and enjoy the experience. A good example of this was when pupils were encouraged to make choices. One pupil with tunnel vision was provided with small photographs of all the pupils in the class to help him decide whom he wished to share his work with. All activities were very successfully linked to the pupils' individual educational programmes of work. Pupils have very good opportunities to experience a range of materials through using their senses. Support assistants were fully briefed and are competent in signing successfully as necessary. As a result of this very good teaching, the pupils had a sense of purposefulness and a sense of belonging to the group. All tried really hard and welcomed others into the group as they returned from swimming or horse riding. Because of the teacher's very successful planning, the continual coming and going of the pupils did not cause any disruption to the lesson. When teaching is only satisfactory this is because overall management of the lesson has not been planned sufficiently well. Support staff have not been given clear instructions and there is too much general conversation between staff, which does not include the pupils.
90. Art is well managed and there is good improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator is in the process of looking at very small steps for learning, which will help staff to more easily check on how well pupils are achieving. The new scheme of work is in the process of being adapted further so that it more effectively meets the specific needs of the pupils in the school. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop tracking of pupils' progress over time and this is an area for development. Every effort is made to broaden pupils' experiences further by visits to exhibitions and art galleries.

CITIZENSHIP (incorporating PSHE)

91. Pupils' achievement in personal, social, health education and citizenship (PSHE), including sex education and drugs awareness, is consistently good across the school. This is a direct result of high quality teaching and learning in lessons. No judgement was made about PSHE in the previous report, which inhibits a comparison now being made.
92. The school works out what pupils know and can do as they start at the school. For example, for those pupils in Years 5 and 6, lower attaining pupils will tolerate passive movement, such as placing objects in their hand or when supported in touching objects. Higher attaining pupils show pleasure from movement and co-operation when working with adults. Pupils learn well because lessons are well prepared and made relevant to the needs of individual pupils. Because of this, pupils respond positively and enjoy the tasks set. There are very good relationships in lessons, consequently pupils concentrate well, try hard to please staff, persevere when tasks get difficult and behave very well.
93. By the end of Year 7, pupils are beginning to be aware of their bodies by studying the topic 'ourselves'. With one-to-one support, pupils greet each other, in their own way. During lessons there is good support from speech and language therapists. They

prepare programmes for pupils. Some pupils they teach individually and others are taught by teaching and support staff under the direction of the therapists. This works well. Lower attaining pupils lie on mats on the floor. They are carefully positioned so that they can be aware of others on the floor and touch and greet them. Different sounds are used to encourage pupils to interact with each other. Higher attaining pupils respond well to the sounds and reach out in an effort to touch their friends.

94. By the end of Year 9, pupils are fully involved in a citizenship project on 'recyclable rubbish' and 'the environment'. Key words, signs and symbols are introduced. Pupils have good recall of last week's lessons and some join in the 'recycle song'. Lower attaining pupils reach out and touch a range of different materials. With adult help they try to sort materials into two groups, materials that can be recycled and those that cannot. Higher attaining pupils select paper items and identify which container they should be put into. All pupils brought in materials in boxes, which they collected in their residential flats for 'homework'. Much praise and encouragement is given to pupils who work very hard on their project. Because of very good relationships in class, pupils respond very positively. They are very enthusiastic, try hard at all times and behave very well.
95. By the end of Year 11, pupils learn about their bodies in sex and relationships lessons. Before the lesson started the teacher very sensitively asked each pupil in turn if they minded a visitor, the inspector, remaining in the room while they had their lesson. They were thanked for giving their permission. At this point a 'Private, Do Not Disturb' notice was pinned on the outside of the door and the lesson began. Lower attainers used male and female models to identify the correct under-clothing, which would be worn by each. They used switches to make choices. This worked well. One higher attaining pupil used his 'voice pal' speech machine, to confirm his choices and show his good understanding of how body parts change during puberty.
96. The curriculum policy document is clear and gives an appropriate structure to teaching and learning. Learning resources are good with many made 'in-house' to match the needs of the pupils. Opportunities for pupils to develop their PSHE skills abound. For example, there are a wide range of educational visits and out-of-school experiences, including residential experiences in this country and attending each other's birthday parties at times organised in local clubs. Leadership of the subject is good. Citizenship is an integral part of PSHE lessons but is insufficiently developed in other subjects. With pupils of such profound learning and complex disabilities, digital cameras are used well to record pupils' work and achievements. By such recording, progress can be measured over time.
97. Meldreth School has been recognised for its work in 'managing bereavement'. This work is documented in a Cambridgeshire County Council brochure, which is designed for schools to use as a reference in the event of an expected or unexpected death within the school community. This work supports not only the children but also the staff who may have to deal with a child's expression of grief on a day-to-day basis. The school is well supported by the Cambridgeshire PSHE service, the Health Promoting Schools Initiative and a termly special school PSHE network. This allows schools to share good practice and expertise to their mutual benefit.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. The achievement of boys and girls is good overall. This is good improvement since the last inspection when on limited evidence, achievement was judged to be unsatisfactory. The improvement is largely due to the new scheme of work, which is

providing teachers with good guidelines to plan lessons. Also, improved teaching resources, which include a very good food technology room.

99. Due to the school's timetable arrangements the subject was not taught during the inspection. Consequently it was not possible to make a judgement on teaching and learning. Other judgements are based on discussion with the subject co-ordinator, photographic evidence, a video recording and work on display. Because of the emphasis on sensory development, design technology is used well to reinforce the pupils' achievement in other areas of learning, for example art and design and mathematics. All pupils are given many opportunities to investigate a range of materials. They are encouraged to make choices, for example, to decide whether materials are rough or smooth, soft or hard.
100. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils use a range of simple tools such as scissors and glue sticks and with support for example, they make crispy cakes. Pupils use body movements and facial expressions to show their pleasure when making and tasting the crunchy cakes. They respond well when asked to be very quiet so that they can listen carefully to the crackling of the cake as the teacher tastes one. Pupils have worked with pupils from the primary school to make musical instruments; there is good photographic evidence of this. There are a good variety of instruments made from junk materials, which have been decorated by the pupils using black paper and fluorescent paint.
101. By Year 11, pupils collaborate in small groups using junk materials to make models of for example, a robot dog. Pupils make their own choices, the colours that they will use and the materials they will work with. They make bread and feel, smell and taste the ingredients. With support they help to mix and knead the dough. Pupils help to measure the ingredients and have a tasting session to decide which type of bread they prefer. Pupils work with the support of staff to make their own colourful papier-mâché trays. They gradually build up layers of paper before finally using a layer of coloured tissue paper, which is then brushed with diluted glue. The finished trays on display are examples of work to be proud of. Pupils are encouraged to make comment on their finished work.
102. There are satisfactory links with the staff in the residential flats. Care staff often encourage and support the pupils to enable them to use the food technology room to bake or prepare for special celebration events. They also work with the pupils to design and make models using junk materials. There has been good progress made in raising the profile of the subject following the previous inspection. A good policy document and scheme of work are in place. Whilst the curriculum and pupils' individual educational programmes are intertwined well, these need further refining so that achievement can more easily be detected and measured. Resources to teach multi sensory areas have been improved, in particular, with the provision of the 'Light Room'. The new food technology room provides a very good environment with very good resources to hand. There are no systems in place to track individual pupils progress over time. This is basically because much of the improvement since the last inspection has taken place over the last two years and assessment has only recently been specifically targeted.

HUMANITIES (Geography and history)

103. Achievement in geography and history is good. This judgement is based mostly on the quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection because information about pupils' progress over time is weak. Whilst different ways of checking on how

well pupils are progressing have been discussed and tried, the school has only just settled on an agreed way. This has not been in place long enough for the school to know how well pupils are progressing over time. This was an issue from the last inspection, which has not been developed far enough yet. The good improvement in achievement since the last inspection has come about because teaching and the quality of the curriculum have improved well and are now good. Pupils are given far more opportunity to interact with each other and staff to make choices than was the case previously. Relationships are very good. Pupils work at their own level, supported invariably, one-to-one, with an adult. Learning support staff work 'as one' with the teacher; care staff are generally aware of what is required of them and work appropriately as part of the team. The improvement in teaching and learning is as a result of the targeted support in the last two years by a consultant employed by the school. This support was not particular to geography and history and has shown improvement in a broad range of subjects. However, because the school still cannot check on pupils' progress over time, overall improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory.

104. Lower attaining pupils who start at the school in Years 5 and 6, generally show some awareness of their environment and respond with movement, perhaps eye movement, to historic stimuli. Higher attaining pupils recognise features of the building beyond their immediate classroom or bedroom and recognise some patterns or routines in life such as their timetable set out in their symbol file. This is regularly built on in lessons so that by the end of Year 6, higher attainers point to and choose the correct day from a choice of three or four symbols. This works well because lessons are planned for each pupil and are lively and interesting. Pupils take delight in using 'switches' to play appropriate messages, which supports their spiritual and social development appropriately.
105. This work is built on well so that by Year 9, pupils investigate their immediate surroundings more and develop curiosity in investigating objects. This shows good progress. In visiting the school library, higher attaining pupils showed some recollection of their previous visits. Once involved in one-to-one communication with a support assistant, concentration and response to storytelling from a favourite book were good for one pupil. Lower attaining pupils were engaged and excited by the teacher's lively style of story-telling, which involved good signing and use of voice tone to create atmosphere. All pupils at Year 9 are still very much involved in general learning opportunities, which are the framework for more subject-based learning later in the school.
106. By Year 11, in geography, pupils investigate the school grounds, which are used well as a good source of learning. For example, some pupils made their way to the riding stables in their wheelchairs with adult support. Higher attainers made choices on the way as to which direction to take. Lower attainers experienced and showed awareness of sounds different from those inside the school such as the traffic passing by. Another group went to a part of the gardens where they had previously planted herbs and with adult help, experience a broad range of scents. Pupils are correctly advised as to which way they are turning in their wheel chairs by a 'tap' on the appropriate shoulder. Generally, pupils are involved and consulted at every stage of the lesson, which is good. Constant and consistent signing by the teacher and experienced support assistants was effective. Back in the classroom, the lesson was rounded-off well both for the class as a whole and then individually for each pupil. Those who could make choices from symbols to record their work did so.

107. Humanities does not currently have a co-ordinator as a result of re-organisation in the school between school and college staff. The deputy headteacher is overseeing the subject in the short term. The subject is lacking a detailed development plan in which improvement targets are prioritised, costed and with time expectations. Subject plans do not feature in the school's development planning as they should. Assessment procedures have started but have not been in place long enough yet to be of significant use in tracking pupils' progress. Communication skills are used well in lessons, as are more specific literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils do have good opportunities to interact with photographs, pictures, symbols and stories and to respond to touch and simple yes/no signing in relation to direction and distance. Citizenship expectations are present in lessons informally but have yet to be built-in to ensure humanities plays its full part in the citizenship curriculum. History resources are good as a basis for pupils to experience a range of artefacts for touching. Geography resources are sufficient for the work planned but supplemented well by use of the school building and grounds for learning, for example, related to distance, direction and weather.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Achievement by pupils in ICT is good. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory. There is an increased emphasis on ICT by the school and a consistently high quality of teaching and learning. The subject is used effectively to support learning, enhance pupils access to the curriculum by, for example, the use of switches and allow pupils to be more creative in their work. All pupils use ICT well to aid their communication. On entry to the school, lower attaining pupils use switches for stimuli whilst higher attainers use switches to produce a desired effect.
109. In a lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8, each pupil was on an individual plan. Lower attainers concentrated on breaking a 'sound beam' to activate a switch, which in turn played a musical instrument. 'Sound beam' is equipment that detects movement, thus emitting sounds. This means that pupils play notes or music by simply moving a part of their body. Each pupil was asked in turn, where they wanted the beam placed so that they could most easily move a limb or body part to break the beam. This was sensitively done. Each pupil was moved and positioned very carefully to ensure full participation. Pupils responded to the music they produced. Their success was obvious by facial expressions, body language or utterances such as squeals of delight or giggles. Higher attainers pressed big switches or broke beams and could play on request. They played high or low notes, short or long and could play quickly or slowly. They could even hold down the switches to produce long notes on request. With great effort one pupil maintained arm movement to continually break the beam to produce continuous music. The teacher who visits the school as a 'sound beam' expert showed a great sense of humour by his choice of music for pupils, for example, 'Assessment Time and Ofsted Inspection Blues'.
110. By the end of Year 9, pupils use their switching skills to present an interactive ICT story 'The rainbow Fish'. There were gasps as the computer was switched on and images were projected onto a large screen. Anticipation and excitement was rife as they were told of the story they were about to join in with. To activate the story, graphics, text and sound, pupils activated their personal switches connected to the computer. Lower attaining pupils have large 'Big Mac' switches and individual support from an adult. Higher attaining pupils have smaller switches or in some cases small multiple switches and less adult support. Through good teaching, praise and encouragement pupils perform to their best. They participate as fully as possible

always trying to please and persevering even when activities get difficult for them. As they complete their ICT story, this is repeated and reinforced by the pupils acting out the story as a drama.

111. By the end of Year 11, pupils are more competent at presenting interactive ICT stories and understanding the use of cause and effect, which means when they press their switches intentionally to make something happen, such as moving on the story. Their work is reinforced by the use of keywords, symbols and cards, all of which have a particular meaning known to many of the pupils. As a prompt to press their switch at the appropriate time, individual pupil's photographs appear on the screen. In this way the story of 'Beowulf the Danish King' is presented. Lower attaining pupils require adult support and verbal prompting. Some hardly have the strength to press the very sensitive switches that need only the slightest touch. Higher attaining pupils respond to the visual prompt with less support, activate their switches promptly and keep the story moving at speed.
112. The good progress made by pupils is directly related to the high quality teaching. The co-ordinator teaches all of the ICT lessons in the school. Lessons are well prepared to ensure each pupil is fully involved, consequently pupils are very interested in what they do, they concentrate well and work hard. Because of this, pupils' behaviour is very good. There are a good range of appropriate specialist ICT resources such as switches and beams allowing pupils to express themselves and be creative in lessons.
113. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. He is a qualified trainer of ICT and given the opportunity could develop staff knowledge and understanding by providing in-service for all staff within the school. Digital cameras are used effectively throughout the school as a means of retaining evidence of pupils' work and achievement. This is recorded and used to help measure progress over time. ICT plays an important part in enhancing communication for pupils and is significant in helping their spiritual, social and moral development. The co-ordinator makes the use of ICT relevant to the needs of the pupils. Through this approach he allows pupils to develop their creativity in his lessons. This is appreciated by pupils who respond very well, show great enthusiasm and enjoyment in lessons.

MUSIC

114. The provision for pupils in music is very good overall. The subject is built into every curriculum area. Pupils benefit from a very skilled co-ordinator who has very good subject knowledge and knows the pupils' needs well. Overall, the subject has developed very well since the last inspection. Achievement is very good. In recent years, the population of the school has changed from predominately pupils with physical difficulties and a range of learning difficulties to pupils with more profound, multiple and complex learning difficulties. Much work has been put in on how to incorporate music, 'total communication', and a multi sensory approach to match pupils' particular learning needs. This has been highly successful.
115. All teachers incorporate music wherever possible into every lesson and this is raising standards. This gives pupils a wide range of experiences both live and recorded. The older pupils perform in a band using the switch and sound beam technology and perform on instruments such as the piano, guitars, and drums. Members of staff accompany them at times. Pupils' response to music is very good and they put everything they have into making music. They are enthusiastic learners. In Year 6, pupils activate switches or break sound beams to create music. They perform in a

band playing along with a professional musician. A higher attaining pupil moves his head to make the drums beat and another uses her voice and a microphone to provide the vocals.

116. By Year 11, pupils learn about the orchestra, the role of the conductor in stopping and starting the musicians and how to play quietly and loudly. Higher attaining pupils conduct using a baton. They direct their classmates to play. During their break times, they listen frequently to music, which on one occasion during the inspection was the Der Zigeunerbaron overture by Strauss.
117. Teachers challenge and excite pupils by music in all lessons. Pupils gain a good understanding of composition, performing, listening and appraising. In excellent lessons, detailed and specific teaching plans are shared with all support staff and therapists whose roles and responsibilities are clearly known. The creative use made of ICT is excellent. Pupils have fun and make small but significant progress.
118. During the week of inspection pupils listened to and made music with 'Live Music Now', a duo playing harp and flute. They listened to a range of musical compositions to include 'Andante variations' by Gioachino Rossini. Where staff supported pupils well and attended to their individual needs everyone made music and benefited from the opportunity. However, some support staff failed to support some pupils appropriately, which prevented them from joining in effectively.
119. Leadership in the subject is very good. The co-ordinator plans and works effectively with colleagues in school and the visiting specialists. Her enthusiasm and commitment is infectious. The subject now benefits from a good range of musical instruments that are used very well in lessons. What pupils know, understand or do in the subject is not regularly assessed and recorded. As such, appropriate targets for development cannot be set.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

120. At the time of the inspection, due to timetabling arrangements, it was only possible to observe one lesson. Judgements are based on discussions with the subject co-ordinator, analysis of the physical education policy, schemes of work and pupils' records.
121. Achievement in physical education is satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils in Year 6 show increasing levels of relaxation and carry out stretching movements for increasing lengths of time. Higher attaining pupils enjoy joining in games such as curling. By the end of Year 6, pupils experience an increasing number of simple games. Higher attainers show an awareness of 'cause and effect' when knocking down skittles. With some support they use their fingers or full hand to push a large ball down a slope towards the skittles. Pupils enjoy being part of a team. They show an awareness of other pupils' participation by cheering for their team. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 gain pleasure from horse riding. For one pupil, his ride was the first time he had been fully co-operative with staff and held his head upright. He was pleased about this as well as the staff. In horse riding pupils develop their balance, increase eye contact and hold the reins for extended periods of time. In Year 11, lower attaining pupils increase their body movements. Sitting on a beanbag, they enjoy going from side to side. With assistance, they touch their head and knees with both arms. Higher attainers progress from using both hands to using one, to push a ball away from their body. Preferred hand dominance is developing.

122. Pupils are offered a good range of learning activities appropriate for their age and abilities. These include dance, games, gymnastics, swimming, athletics, trampolining and outdoor activities. Rebound therapy on the trampoline is offered as part of the curriculum. The school has imaginatively adapted a number of games to meet the needs of pupils. Sports Day is on one of the highlights of the school year. For four consecutive years the school has sent a team to the National Table Tennis Competition for Special Schools. The school makes good use of its grounds for cycling, athletics and the on-site riding school provides an excellent facility.
123. The school has made good progress in addressing the majority of issues identified in the last inspection. The policy for physical education has been re-written to include recommendations for the minimum time for lessons. Clear distinctions are now made between the teaching of physical education and the use of therapies. Currently the co-ordinator does not observe lessons or formally check on teachers' planning and pupil records. This is an important area for development. However, overall, progress since the last inspection is good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

124. Achievement by pupils in religious education is good for the majority. Despite religious education being a core subject for the school, a significant number of the Year 9 pupils miss their one lesson a week regularly to attend ICT lessons or go horse riding. Whilst these activities contain a range of spiritual, moral and social learning opportunities that contribute to pupils religious education, their planned absence from their religious education lessons had not been fully recognised by the senior management team. The practice is to be reviewed. However, most pupils do well. This judgement is based mostly on the quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection, the improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection and evidence of teachers' planning. The school is still not able to check on pupils' progress over time because methods to do this have only just been agreed by staff. This has taken a long time to introduce; it was an issue from the last inspection. When balanced out, the improvements slightly outweigh what has not been done and as such, improvement is satisfactory.
125. Teaching and learning in religious education is appropriately rooted in the school's approaches for spiritual, moral and social development rather than as a totally separate subject. Lower attaining pupils who start at the school in Years 5 and 6 react significantly to genuine and caring support from adults. Soothing music has the desired effect and at times, such as in a very good PSHE lesson with Year 6 pupils, absolute silence following a crescendo of sound encouraged movement and communication in response. Higher attaining pupils show more of their feelings and at times, show wonder and joy in response to activities such as their horse riding or in religious education lessons when a special atmosphere is created to celebrate the Chinese New Year using paper dragons, lanterns, mirrors, mobiles and musical instruments.
126. This work is built on well for some pupils so that by Year 9, pupils begin to develop an awareness of different ways of celebrating birthdays. Good planning ensures that pupils have brought with them from their bedrooms, a favourite birthday present from the past. This links well with history lessons. With the higher attaining pupils out of the classroom at other activities, lower attaining pupils concentrate on and watch closely a range of birthday cards and show their like or dislike for some highly coloured textured paper. One highly excitable pupil concentrated well. This shows good progress. All pupils at Year 9 are still very much involved in general learning

opportunities, which are the framework for more subject-based learning later in the school.

127. Due to timetabling, teaching and learning were not observed during the inspection with Years 10 and 11. However, because of the strength of moral and social development throughout the school, the good examples of spirituality in other lessons such as a Year 11 geography lesson and teachers' planning, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are judged good. It was clear that after returning from a visit to the herb garden, one pupil had reflected very well on the plants and the weather at the time. In response to the teachers' summary activity of checking with pupils about what they had done or remembered, one pupil blew gently at the teacher to signify the wind had been blowing outside. This amazed everyone. This type of response stems from the very good relationships built up by staff with pupils, their knowledge of pupils' ways of responding and planning that allows pupils show individually what they can do.
128. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is supported well through the subject. Opportunities are provided to reflect upon a range of stimuli and visits are made to places of worship. Throughout the school, pupils have the opportunity to sense what is right and wrong. Work in all the major world religions promotes opportunities to become immersed in their own and other people's cultures.
129. The co-ordinator has done a sound job in moving the subject forward since the last inspection; good improvement has taken place in the last eighteen months. With the support of a consultant, the co-ordinator has started to check on how well lessons are going although more needs to be done before the co-ordinator is successful in this without the extra help and guidance. This has coincided with checking on other teachers' planning to make sure they are following what is expected of them. The co-ordinator has plans for improving the subject for example, encouraging leaders in a broad range of faiths to come into the school to celebrate their religions. Also, more detailed planning to link the subject even more closely with PSHE and citizenship. All of these ideas are good although not set out in a way, which will ensure success. Planning is short of timescales, costings and success criteria. Subject plans do not link in with the school's overall development planning as they should. Assessment procedures have started but have not been in place long enough to be of significant use in tracking pupils' progress. The need for further development of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in religious education has been identified but is not included as it should be in the subject's strategic planning.

EDUCATION OF PUPILS IN YEARS 12 – 14.

130. Provision for students in Years 12 to 14 is a strength of the school. Students achieve very well. This is because the curriculum is very relevant to their age and special educational needs. The curriculum is the framework for very good teaching and learning. Provision now shows very good improvement since the last inspection when achievement was satisfactory overall and the curriculum was unsatisfactory.
131. Students' achievements vary considerably according to their abilities. On entry to Year 12, some lower attaining students have very limited communication and mobility. They require maximum assistance with all aspects of personal care. By Year 14, they use switches effectively as a means of communication, exercise an influence on their

own personal care and develop friendships with increased confidence. Higher attaining students extend their ability to listen for longer periods of time. They take an increased interest in what other students are doing and initiate conversation with their friends. By the end of Year 14, they demonstrate a good understanding of concepts such as, time, distance and space.

132. In around nine out of every ten lessons, teaching and learning are good or better. They are very good or excellent in just over half of lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and learners are well motivated. Lessons offer a range of stimulating activities, which have the right level of challenge. Individual learners' needs are taken into account fully. Skilful teaching and support ensures that all students respond and progress. Students are keen and interested in lessons and as a result, they work hard and concentrate for longer than would generally be expected. Speech and language therapists and physiotherapists make an important contribution to planning. This combined with their support in some lessons, ensures students take part in as many as possible aspects of the curriculum.
133. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a new curriculum based upon a commercially produced scheme. This provides a broad and relevant curriculum that is distinct from the rest of the school. It builds effectively upon work done when students were younger. The curriculum has three main sections: life skills, vocational studies and knowledge and understanding of the world. Personal, social and health education is taught as a separate subject. A number of additional subjects are offered as 'choices'. In September, a student chooses two subjects to follow for the forthcoming year. Key skills such as problem solving, communication and improving their own learning and performance are effectively taught across many curriculum areas. Provision offers an appropriate transition between school and more independent living. Whilst students are offered a good range of activities in the residential setting, there are insufficient formal curriculum links between the activities in and out of school time. The cohesion between personal homework packages and individualised education and care plans are not yet as obvious as it should be.
134. At the end of each lesson, students are assessed against what was expected of them. The quality of recording this is inconsistent. Comments frequently describe a student's response, or describe work covered, rather than detailing what a student knows, understands and does. Consequently, individual pupil recording sheets do not provide clear evidence of students' progress over time. Currently students' work is not put forward for external accreditation. The school recognises the need to do this and is considering the most appropriate options. This was an issue at the last inspection and has taken longer than it should to resolve.
135. The department for Years 12 to 14 is very well led and managed. Regular monitoring of lessons, teachers' planning and students' records ensures effective and consistent planning and teaching in the department. The co-ordinator provides clear direction and support for staff, which enables them to have a good understanding of how to provide the most appropriate learning opportunities for students.

LIFE SKILLS

136. The curriculum provides students with very good opportunities to develop their skills in leisure and recreational activities, home management and citizenship. Very effective planning, organisation and superb teamwork in a physical education lesson enabled students to move effectively between a number of activities. They develop balance

and movement on the trampoline and reach out for objects when bouncing. Students improve hand manipulation skills and hand-eye co-ordination using tactile balls, beanbags and by pulling and stretching a 'co-opo' band. They apply tremendous physical effort and concentration to push a ball towards skittles in ten-pin bowling. Good links are made between different areas of the curriculum. For example, in a meal preparation lesson, students prepared Mexican food, linking to their study of Mexico in foreign culture lessons. A lively start to the lesson, against a background of Mexican music, immediately engaged students' interest. Higher attaining students carefully scooped out the flesh of an avocado, mashed it with a fork and added chilli and spice to make 'Spicy Avocado'. Lower attaining students showed an interest in food preparation and expressed preferences through smell and taste. All students are supported very well to take part in each stage of the food preparation process.

VOCATIONAL SKILLS

137. Vocational skills reflect the world of work within the school as only a very few students actually undertake work experience outside of the school. A strong feature of vocational studies is mini-enterprise projects. Last term, students learned about the Hope and Homes for Children Charity. They found out about the charity's work in Romania and decided they would like to raise money. They agreed to hold a Christmas Market. Students made items to sell and organised a number of games and money raising activities. Members of the school and local community were invited. Students raised over five hundred pounds through this project and have now moved on to support another national fundraising event. Students organise all of the charitable activities themselves.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

138. The planning and learning activities for this part of the curriculum are very good and successfully broaden and develop students' learning. Enthusiastic, lively teaching supported by careful selection of stimulating resources, gain and sustain students' interest. These features were exemplified in a foreign cultures lesson about Mexico. Higher attaining students used picture symbols to identify the key physical and climatic features such as desert, mountains, sea and wind. Lower attaining students enjoy listening to the Mexican music and took turns to wear a sombrero and poncho. They explored a range of relevant artefacts and responded very well to different textures and sounds. In a science lesson, students moved between eight different experiments to help them to understand 'What makes things work'. For example, they used a pump to blow up a balloon, a switch to turn on a hairdryer to blow a toy boat across a bowl of water and flapped newspaper to move a tissue paper fish. Staff are positive and encouraging and as a result students try hard to solve problems set for them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

139. Lessons are well planned to develop pupils' understanding. Good use is made of role-play. For example, in a lesson focussing upon 'no chair for Donna', students took turns to play different characters. Through the use of signs, picture symbols and switches, they discussed how they felt about being left out of friendships. In another lesson each student developed a 'rap' tune and performed to their group. They discussed how they felt about being part of a group.
140. Personal, social and health education is reinforced and promoted in all lessons, during breaks lunchtimes and in the residential setting. Frequent opportunities are

taken for students to take turns and to share resources. Staff provide good role models through their polite attitudes to students and in the care and respect they show for students' welfare.