

INSPECTION REPORT

**ROYAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF
(MANCHESTER)**

Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106166

Headteacher: Mrs Hilary Ward

Reporting inspector: Mr M G Whitehead
21061

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th March 2003

Inspection number: 254002

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:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils and students:	6 to 19 years
Gender of pupils and students:	Mixed
School address:	Stanley Road Cheadle Hulme Cheadle Cheshire
Postcode:	SK8 6RQ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W S Warburton
Date of previous inspection:	March 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21061	M G Whitehead	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils and students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9417	E Owen	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils and students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
4989	L Lewis	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Design and technology</p>	
32055	G Davies	Team inspector	<p>Humanities</p> <p>Religious education</p>	
2512	B Emery	Team inspector	Art and design	Post-16 education
10676	M Sutton	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
32232	S Garland-Grimes	Team inspector	<p>Music</p> <p>Physical education</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17530	M Cureton	Team inspector	English Citizenship Personal, social and health education Information and communication technology Educational inclusion, including race equality English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Royal Schools for the Deaf, Manchester (RSDM), is made up of mixed day and residential provision for pupils and students with a wide range of complex needs, including severe communication difficulties, physical difficulties, severe learning difficulties, hearing difficulties, visual impairment and autistic spectrum disorders. A significant number of pupils and students also present challenging behaviour. It is a non-maintained school run by a charity. The school is under the management of a newly appointed chief executive, a new headteacher and a newly formed governing body. The school provides residential education for the majority of its pupils and students, which can be up to 52 weeks each year. The age of pupils and students ranges from 7 to 21 years. There are 65 on roll, comprising 41 boys and 24 girls, of these, 18 boys and 12 girls attend as day pupils and students. Of the 30 day pupils and students, 15 access some respite provision varying from one night per week up to three nights per week, including week-ends and holidays. There are nine pupils and students from a wide range of different ethnic minority groups but there are no pupils or students for whom English is an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, which provides pupils and students with a very high standard of teaching that helps them to make very good progress regardless of their age, ability or special educational needs. The strength of leadership and management, the very good use of resources and the very efficient management of finances also contribute greatly to the very high quality of education provided by the school. Taking account of these factors, and balancing them against the understandably high cost per pupil/student, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership of the headteacher, her deputy and her senior management team is very good. She is well supported by all staff, and the co-ordinators work collectively in support of all the pupils and students.
- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and across the wide range of subjects is very good overall.
- All pupils and students, whatever their individual special educational needs, receive the help they need in order to acquire a very good standard of education. There is very effective provision for meeting the needs of autistic pupils and students, and pupils and students with multi-sensory impairments, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical difficulties and hearing impairments.
- The residential provision is very good. The provision for pupils' and students' social development is excellent. All receive highly skilled support in communication development. This includes very good audiological assessment and support.
- The provision for students over the age of 16 is a strength of the school through its breadth of curriculum, the relevance of the studies, the high achievement of all students and the very high quality of teaching.

What could be improved

- Governors need to increase and strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils and students in order to become more effective and develop further their role in shaping the direction of the school.
- Curriculum co-ordinators need designated time to fulfil their present responsibilities and some need to become more efficient in the management of their subjects.
- Parents should have greater opportunities to be involved with the work of the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 2001. Since then, there has been very good improvement, all the key issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed fully and, in many cases, much further

development and progress have taken place. There has been a great improvement in the monitoring of teaching throughout the school. Consequently, there has been tremendous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. All teachers have fully embraced the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and have developed their own planning around these. There have been great advances in the ways in which all teachers meet the demands made by pupils and students who present challenging behaviour and/or have emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is now appropriate accommodation for the teaching of art and design, design and technology and science. Pupils and students in Years 10 and above take part in their annual review of statement and give personal presentations at these meetings. The school is in a strong position to improve even further.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	A	A	B	very good A
reading	A	A	B	good B
writing	B	B	B	satisfactory C
mathematics	A	A	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

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

It is inappropriate to compare the attainment of the pupils and students in the Royal Schools for the Deaf with that of pupils and students in mainstream schools. Throughout the school, pupils and students achieve very well. Each one makes very good progress towards their individual targets. These targets are reviewed regularly and changed to ensure that pupils and students get a clear indication of the progress that they are making. Pupils and students in Years 10 and above follow a variety of accredited courses and have been very successful.

Number of awards	Award level	Courses
39	Level A	Transition and pre-vocational
15	Level B	Transition and pre-vocational
9	First Grade	Communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT)
1	Second Grade	Numeracy
1	Third Grade	ICT
6	Level 1	Signing

PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are generally very good. Occasionally, pupils and students

	present difficult behaviour, because of their learning and communication difficulties, but this is well managed by the staff. Pupils and students are very positive about the school.
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Aspect	Comment
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils and students are very well behaved and keen to learn.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are a particular strength of the school. Personal development is nurtured very effectively by the consistent approach of staff in both the school and the residential setting.
Attendance	Very good.

One of the school's many strengths is that it promotes very good relationships between pupils, students and their peers, as well as between pupils, students and the adults with whom they work. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and it is clear that these are extremely successful.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils and students in:	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is consistently very good. Teaching in science is very good, and often excellent. Teaching in personal, social and health education is very good. Excellent teaching was seen in English, science, geography, ICT, personal, social and health education and religious education. Teachers plan their lessons with great care and make sure that the work is challenging for each pupil and student in order to keep them interested and involved. Activities are very carefully matched to the individual capabilities of different pupils and students. There is a great deal of variety that holds their interest. The teaching methods enable pupils and students to learn difficult concepts, thanks to the teachers' high expectations. All teachers are very successful in their teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers go to great lengths to ensure that the individual special educational needs of pupils and students are being considered, and that their needs are being met very effectively. During the inspection, 100 per cent of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better and 56.3 per cent was very good or better. It is very clear that the overall quality of teaching in the school is very good and is a major strength. Consequently, all pupils and students in the school make very good progress in most areas and learn very well indeed. There are no significant weaknesses in the teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for the pupils up to Year 11 is good and offers a wide range of learning opportunities where pupils' communication skills are developed and they become more independent. Students in the post-16 groups benefit from a very good curriculum.
Provision for pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for pupils' and students social development is a particular strength of the school.

Aspect	Comment
How well the school cares for its pupils and students	Very good overall, particularly in behaviour support and management. There is very good provision and monitoring of pupils' and students' personal development. Arrangements for assessment of pupils' and students' attainment and progress are very good. Procedures for monitoring of the curriculum and monitoring the progress of pupils and students are very good and applied consistently. There are very good support services, including therapy, which are available to pupils and students and these make a very positive contribution to the standards that pupils and students achieve.

The school works well with parents, and this is valued greatly. Personal, social and health education are particular strengths of the curriculum and meet the diverse needs of the pupils and students, ensuring that all have equality of opportunity and access to all areas of the curriculum. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent, and this is clearly reflected throughout the school. Some of the school documents are written from the pupils' and students' perspective and are tailor-made to meet the needs of individual pupils and students. They are then consistently applied by all the staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher, her deputy and senior management team provide very strong leadership and direction. They are well supported by the co-ordinators and other staff with management responsibilities.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Procedures are applied effectively by the newly formed governing body.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team play vital roles, which are effective in their evaluation of the school's performance. The governing body has yet to develop fully its role in these areas.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are very well managed; they are carefully regulated and monitored by the school's bursar. Particularly good use is made of resources for the teaching of science, which have recently been introduced into the school.

The overall levels of staffing and the quality of resources are good. However, the accommodation, whilst maintained in good condition, was never designed to meet the wide range of difficulties that these pupils and students present. This is particularly so when considering the individual needs of non- ambulant pupils and students and those with profound difficulties.

The overall management of the school is strong. There has been considerable change in the school management structure since the time of the last inspection, and there are now clearly defined roles for all education staff. The headteacher and her deputy work very effectively with the senior management team in managing and promoting a very high quality of education. They are very well supported by the chief executive, and the recently appointed governing body is effective in its support. The school's professional development centre provides a very good range of courses for all staff in order to help them in meeting the needs of the pupils and students. The governing body has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities but has yet to gain its full strength and effectiveness in fulfilling these. The

bursar works very efficiently in conducting operations concerning the school's finances and ensures that the school is prudent in every aspect of its spending. The school is very effective in applying 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 school. • The teaching is good. • The school helps their children to become more mature and responsible. • Their children are making good progress. • The staff expect the children to work hard and do their best. • The school is approachable and works well with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents raised no significant points for development.

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by the parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements

1. It is not appropriate to compare the levels of attainment of the pupils and students in the Royal Schools for the Deaf with those of pupils and students in mainstream schools. In the Royal Schools for the Deaf, the learning difficulties, which are wide, profound and often very severe, mean that the pupils' and students' levels of attainment are low. However, this does not in any way devalue the very good progress and the impressive achievement that are made by pupils and students throughout the school. Within this report judgements will be made on the progress that pupils and students make as far as their individual gains in knowledge and understanding are concerned.
2. Pupils' and students' achievements in literacy and numeracy are very good. They make very good progress in reading and in speaking and listening. There are many pupils and students who have great difficulty in speaking, or hearing. For these pupils and students, their progress is measured through the ways in which they gain alternative communication skills. Pupils and students learn to sign and to communicate through exchanging pictures or symbols. Many pupils and students are able to communicate successfully in a variety of different ways, even though they are unable to speak or hear. Pupils and students make good progress in their writing skills although, for many, these are very limited.
3. The students in the post-16 groups are making good progress in all areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. They also make good progress in mathematics. Within these groups of students, there are many who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is very commendable, therefore, that they are able to make good progress in all of these areas.
4. Pupils and students also make very good progress in science, personal, social and health education, ICT and geography. They make good progress in citizenship, design and technology, music and physical education. Pupils and students learn about the ways in which the planets of the solar system move around the sun and cast shadows on each other. They learn that it is for these reasons that we see the moon in its different phases as it follows its orbit. During personal, social and health education lessons, pupils and students achieve tremendously well. They strive hard to communicate with each other and with the staff. They use facial expressions and hand or head movements to indicate a positive or negative answer. The most able pupils and students manage to make some simple verbal response, which is applauded and appreciated by all.
5. In geography lessons, it is clear that pupils and students have achieved very well. They have learned to recognise and identify different countries of the world. They also appreciate the different climates and weather conditions that prevail in different parts of the world. They also make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of local geography, even as close as their way around the school site. This important development in their education is highly valued by all pupils and students.
6. Very good progress is made by pupils and students across the school in ICT. The application of their skills and knowledge is clearly demonstrated in many areas of study and in areas of recreation. Pupils and students develop skills to produce the written word using computers with touch screens or concept keyboards. This then widens their

horizons as far as communication is concerned. ICT is used widely throughout the school to help pupils, students and staff to communicate with each other and gain a clearer understanding of the wishes and feelings of each other.

7. Displays of work around the school are impressive. There is some very good artwork, which clearly enhances the appearance of the corridors in classrooms and shows off the achievements of the pupils and students. There are also displays of written work that the pupils and students have done, and these show that there is quite a range of ability amongst the pupils and students.
8. Accreditation is available for pupils and students in Years 10 and above in literacy, numeracy, ICT, life skills and the OCR National Skills Profile. Many pupils and students are successful and are awarded certificates covering a wide range of subjects and at a range of different levels.

Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour across the school are good, and standards have at least been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils and students are keen to come to school in the mornings, are enthusiastic about their learning and work hard.
10. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good, and pupils and students respond well to teachers' consistent application of the school behaviour policy. Occasionally, some pupils and students present challenging behaviour, as a feature of their learning difficulties, but this is well managed by staff who act calmly and defuse the situation.
11. Most pupils and students are capable of sustained concentration, and some work co-operatively together. Behaviour around school and in the residences is also good, and pupils and students socialise well together, particularly at mealtimes and during after-school activities. There have been no exclusions in the past year, although a pupil was moved to a more appropriate placement which better suited his needs. Pupils and students are encouraged to take responsibility wherever possible and are able to make choices in their work and leisure activities. The development of responsibility is often a key part of their behaviour support plans. Pupils and students successfully take on a range of activities and responsibilities in the residences, which are often part of externally accredited courses in life skills. Some older pupils and students help with younger ones at playtimes, which they find particularly enjoyable and rewarding.
12. Relationships between adults and pupils and students in the school and residence are very good and make a major contribution to pupils' and students' achievement. Staff are very good role models and show care and respect for their pupils and students. The relationship between pupils and students is good; they play well together and show concern for each other from an early age. Pupils and students are encouraged to think about their impact on others and to understand other people's feelings, and this is exemplified in pupils' and students' behaviour towards each other.
13. There was no evidence of racism, bullying or other oppressive behaviour during the inspection and staff are very aware of pupils and students who may, on occasion, because of their learning difficulty, act inappropriately towards others, and guard against it.
14. Pupils' and students' personal development is good and is encouraged through activities in which they have opportunities to take part in group discussions and reflect

upon their thoughts and feelings. The personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum, and the detailed care plans in place for pupils and students who are resident, also strengthen the personal development of the pupils and students. Attitudes, values and personal development are carefully and individually monitored so that the school is immediately aware of any lack of progress.

15. Attendance is very good and is well above the national averages for either residential or non-residential special schools. Unauthorised absence is low.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching in the school is very good throughout and is a major strength. As a result, the learning and the progress of pupils and students are also a very good indeed. A great deal can be said about the quality and the thoroughness of the planning that goes into each lesson. This planning takes full account of the individual needs of each pupil and student, and also the fact that, for many of them, those needs change from day to day, if not from hour to hour.
17. All pupils and students enjoy the same very good teaching because planning is on an individual basis and suitable resources are available for the lessons. Methods of teaching are well adapted to the individual needs of pupils and students. Teachers are aware of the pupils' and students' ethnic backgrounds and additional special needs and make sure that their lessons are planned to take careful account of all these factors.
18. Excellent teaching was seen in science with a Key Stage 4 class. The teacher had planned with meticulous care and the lesson which followed challenged each of the pupils and kept them all interested and involved throughout the whole lesson. During the lesson, the activities were very carefully matched to the individual needs and abilities of the pupils.
19. Teachers take care to make sure that their pupils and students understand what they are expected to learn. There is also much variety that helps to hold the pupils' and students' interests. The teaching methods enable pupils and students to learn difficult concepts; the teachers have high expectations and make sure that the lessons proceed at a brisk pace.
20. Teachers make very good use of British Sign Language (BSL). They work hard at maintaining and improving their signing skills. In one particular mathematics lesson, signing was very effective and was matched carefully to the different levels of knowledge and understanding the pupils.
21. In the very best of lessons, pupils and students are given the opportunity to evaluate their own work and that of the other members of the class. This was particularly so during physical education lessons. During one personal, social and health education lesson, the teacher was very successful as the pupils learned about the function of the heart, how it pumps blood around the body.
22. In spite of the very good teaching overall, there are odd occasions when opportunities to help pupils and students to develop their communication skills are missed by the teacher. Sometimes, the plenary session does not work effectively, especially when pupils and students are not given the opportunity to reflect or comment upon the work that they have done. These situations are, however, rare and do not impact significantly on the overall achievement of the pupils and students.

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

23. The staff have worked extremely hard and effectively in improving the curriculum from unsatisfactory at the previous inspection to good. Teachers plan a wide range of good-quality learning opportunities where pupils and students can learn to communicate, become independent and gain in their knowledge, skills and understanding. The senior management team has developed a timetable which reflects coverage of all National Curriculum requirements. There is no teaching of a modern foreign language as all pupils and students have been appropriately disapplied from this part of the National Curriculum.
24. A particular strength which permeates the whole curriculum is the use of total communication, which includes signing, picture exchange communication systems (PECs), objects of reference, symbols, speech and facial expression. These enable pupils and students to understand and communicate to the best of their ability.
25. The curriculum successfully meets the needs of a diverse range of ability. The multi-sensory support unit follows a sensory curriculum which aims to increase pupils' and students' learning through the development of all the senses. There is a curriculum which meets the needs of pupils and students with autistic spectrum disorders, a primary department and a secondary department, which offers a more vocational approach for 15- and 16-year-olds.
26. Curriculum planning is good. Schemes of work are planned from the National Curriculum guidance, the QCA and the 'P' levels, and statutory requirements are met. A great deal of work has been put into developing the high quality schemes of work for most subjects. The school will be updating its music, personal, social and health education, sex education and drugs education schemes of work in the near future. Subject co-ordinators are in the early stages of monitoring the curriculum and will be examining the breadth, balance and progression throughout the school in each subject area. Teachers' planning effectively combines teaching activities, learning outcomes and assessment opportunities, which provides a clear focus to lessons, where pupils and students make good progress in their learning. Planning to meet the needs of all pupils and students, who have such a diverse range of ability, is very good. Statements of special educational needs are used as a basis for ensuring that the requirements of each pupil and student are met, and that they have equal access and opportunity to all areas of the curriculum. Individual education plans are of a high quality and are provided throughout the school on the Intranet. Targets set are monitored by the deputy headteacher. They are precise and relevant and demonstrate that pupils and students are making good progress over time.
27. The school employs specialist staff – physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, a physiotherapist and a physiotherapy assistant, an educational psychologist, an educational audiologist and commissions the services of an occupational therapist and a general practitioner. Therapists work closely with teaching and support staff in delivering high quality programmes, and make a significant contribution to meeting the pupils and students' special needs. These staff have a very positive impact on the pupils' and students' learning and are of great benefit to them.
28. The personal, social and health education programme is effective. Morning circle time is well planned. There are high expectations and pupils and students are encouraged to work co-operatively with others. There were many examples of sensitive and respectful relationships between staff, pupils and students during the inspection. For example,

when pupils were guided to concentrate and respond in a circle time session looking at individual timelines for the day. In a personal, social and health education lesson with the theme of 'my news', some wonderful examples of pupils with profound and multiple difficulties working together and relating to each other were observed. Here, pupils were inspired to communicate by vocalisations, indicating yes/no, smiling and withdrawing their hands. The personal, social and health education scheme of work is currently being revised to cover the areas of personal growth, healthy lifestyles, self-awareness, social development and sexuality. Sex education and drugs education are combined within the personal, social and health education scheme of work, some aspects of which are taught through subject-specific lessons and others through a cross-curricular approach.

29. The good quality vocational education for pupils and students aged 15 and 16 years prepares them for their next stage of education. Pupils' and students' individual education plans are tailored to include work experience, off-site learning and access to vocational tasters within the post-16 department. A very successful placement was observed at MacDonald's restaurant, where two students were fully integrated and well supported by staff and a communicator. One student served customers, whilst the other checked serviettes and straws.
30. Accreditation is available for pupils and students aged 15 and 16 years in literacy, numeracy, ICT, life skills and the OCR National Skills Profile. There are good links with Stockport Careers Service which offers regular careers sessions for pupils and students and training for teachers.
31. The effectiveness of the school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good. A working party revised the national strategies to make them accessible to all learners. There is a co-ordinated whole-school approach to the strategies. New documentation has been devised in order to record prior learning, there is a greater purpose to lessons and learning support assistants have received training. A sensory approach is used successfully with pupils and students with profound and multiple difficulties, and a library of sensory boxes is being developed to support a variety of texts.
32. Effective use is made of extra curricular activities to enrich pupils' and students' learning and develop their independence. There is a fortnightly youth club and disco, scouts, guides and gym club. Residential pupils and students have access to a variety of clubs – deaf club, information and communication technology club, camera club and the Mencap youth club. Music, dance and drama are organised by the musicians in residence, and students have the use of the school's facilities, for example the hydrotherapy pool, and there are also visits into the community. There are visits by theatre groups, the Halle orchestra, the Women's Guild and one of the local banks, where all pupils and students have an account and make their own transactions. These all have a positive impact in extending the richness of learning opportunities. Some opportunities are provided for good-quality links for pupils and students to work in mainstream settings, for example Cheadle Hulme College and a local mainstream primary school.
33. The school welcomes children who are not deaf into the weekly youth club. The school scout group also admits non-deaf children and also girls. Outside groups use the school's resources. There has recently been a family fun day for families with deaf children which attracted 350 people to the school. Three pupils are included, with good support, in mainstream schools for part of each week. One will transfer into full-time

mainstream provision in September. Support for this pupil is very good and well-planned support will continue to be offered by the school.

34. The school works hard to ensure the best educational inclusion opportunities for all pupils and students and equality of opportunity. The school works hard to ensure all pupils and students have access to the curriculum, successfully using a range of techniques such as intensive interaction or resources such as ICT to achieve this. There is no disability discrimination because curricular planning is so well adapted to individual needs. There has recently been specific training in equal opportunities issues for education staff. The co-ordinator has organised a series of cultural workshops for all pupils, students and staff to raise awareness and appreciation of pupils' and students' ethnic backgrounds. The newly rewritten policy includes gender and sexuality issues besides those of race equality.
35. There are currently no pupils and students in the school for whom English is an additional language but since all children have complex communication difficulties, a range of alternative communication strategies are used according to the pupils' or students' individual needs.

Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

36. Pupils and students have very good opportunities for spiritual development. Much of the very good provision in the school and the residential setting continues to be through the dedication and high level of commitment from adults who know the pupils and students well, value them highly and have their best interests at heart. By means of their sensitive and respectful interactions with the pupils and students, they show them to be highly valued, and this raises their self-esteem. The school is decorated with photographs of all the activities that the curriculum and residence provide, with pupils and students taking a prominent part as important young people. Pupils and students are pleased to point to these photographs and examples of their work displayed nearby, with pride, pleasure and self-confidence. This involvement and attainment of all pupils and students is the result of the very high expectations which are characteristic of the teaching. The confidence of all staff that expectations will be met, sometimes against great odds, has a strong spiritual dimension, to which the pupils and students respond. Assemblies continue to allow pupils and students to worship together, and there is a time for reflection in circle time. Religious education and humanities lessons frequently contain opportunities for spiritual development. In science, a lesson on electrical circuits held pupils spellbound. In food technology, there are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the important changes which occur when the ingredients are mixed together, and change from their constituent parts into something which seems to be entirely different. Lessons for pupils and students with sensory difficulties, in which they experience specific sensory stimulation, sometimes for the first time, continue to generate awe and wonder in pupils, students and adults alike.
37. The school makes very good provision for pupils' and students' moral development. Pupils and students are left in no doubt as to what is right and what is wrong behaviour, and there are clear moral boundaries. All pupils and students with challenging behaviour have individualised behaviour support plans and they are especially effective for those with poor communication skills. In some classes, pupils and students help to determine class rules, which further develop their perception of right and wrong. In lessons such as personal, social and health education and citizenship, pupils and students are reminded of social rules by much of the teaching, thus enabling them to take responsibility for some aspects of their lives. The school rewards all achievement. The teachers provide very good role models in this respect.

38. Opportunities to further pupils' and students' social development are excellent and a strength of the school. The excellent teamwork of all teachers and staff enables pupils and students to learn socially acceptable behaviour. This is strongly allied to the provision for moral development and gives pupils justification for what they achieve. The very good provision for their social development allows pupils and students to become increasingly aware of others and the effect of their actions upon them. A striking wall display, the result of lessons in citizenship, shows pupils' and students' awareness of people who help them. Pupils' and students' social development is further supported by the very good and well-planned opportunities the school provides for maintenance of skills in independent mobility, eating and drinking, and allowing alternative ways of communication to be acknowledged and understood. Pupils and students have very good opportunities for working in a variety of groupings in lessons. Excellent opportunities are given to pupils and students to speak for themselves at annual reviews and to participate in the school council. These experiences enhance their social awareness. Visits out of school, the very good opportunities given to pupils and students to welcome visitors to the school and well-supported involvement in youth and leisure pursuits further enhance provision.
39. There are very good opportunities for pupils and students to understand their own culture and the cultures of others through subjects such as art and design, where pupils and students observe and copy African prints and African and Chinese masks. In food technology, they learn to assist in cooking a range of food from around the globe. Besides a good range of British stories and rhymes, pupils learn of the Greek myths in English and enjoy the African tales 'Handa's Surprise' and 'Crocodile Tea'. In a humanities lesson on India, a pupil dressed in a sari, and all were able to taste spicy Indian food. There has been a valuable series of workshops, attended by all pupils and students, which have served to increase awareness of other cultures and races throughout the world. In them, pupils and students have celebrated festivals of light, such as Divali, Hanukkah and Christmas. They have tasted Indian, Jewish and special food for Christmas. The school has welcomed an Egyptian interactive workshop. African drummers and musicians have visited the school and organised workshops containing valuable and stimulating experiences for all pupils and students.
40. The continued level of improvement since the last inspection builds upon the good provision that was evident at that time and has ensured further developments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

41. Care for pupils and students, including monitoring and support, is very good. It has improved since the last inspection and is a strength of the school.
42. Thorough arrangements are in place for health and safety, and an external company with expertise in this area carries out detailed risk assessment regularly. Reports based on these are made regularly to the governors' development sub-committee, by the site manager, who then has oversight of implementing the agreed action plan. Risk assessment is also a regular feature of school planning and is carried out by class teachers. A number of staff are trained first-aiders and the school nurse is on site in the medical centre. All staff have had recent training in child protection procedures, and the head of care and deputy headteacher are experienced in this area and have regular training. The school social worker has an important advisory role and is the link to external Social Services departments.

43. A range of professionals working in the school all contribute towards the care and welfare of pupils and students, including the educational psychologist, speech therapists, physiotherapists, the music therapist, audiologists and occupational therapist.
44. Very effective personal support is given to pupils and students by all staff who know them very well. They are guided by the individual plans in place for pupils and students, and see personal support as a major part of the strategy to raise pupil and student achievement. The residential staff follow the same approach, and pupils and students who live in the residences have comprehensive care plans, which help staff to behave consistently towards pupils and students and monitor their progress. A recently established 'Befriender' project has started in the residence, and carefully selected volunteers, all young people, are making links with a group of older pupils and students with the initial aim of sharing experiences and socialising together. Overall, the residential provision plays a key role in supporting pupils and students and fostering their personal development.
45. Behaviour is very effectively supported with an exceptionally good policy and procedures, based on a positive approach and a low arousal response to challenging behaviour. This includes, for some pupils and students, a comprehensive behaviour support plan, written as far as possible from the pupil's or student's perspective, which is regularly monitored and reviewed. An initial evaluation of the use of these plans and the impact on staff behaviour toward pupils and students has been carried out, with positive results. Staff record any incidents which occur, immediately, and a 'chain' of monitoring and action is in place involving a number of key post holders across the school and residences.
46. Attendance is monitored by class teachers and the school secretary and good attendance is promoted.
47. One of the school governors, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, as well as a range of outside agencies, regularly visit the residences. The deputy headteacher takes responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the 24 hour curriculum,

Assessment

48. The school provides very good levels of support, guidance and assessment for the pupils and students and does its best to ensure that they enjoy school and make progress. With very good leadership from senior staff, teachers and learning support assistants work together closely to provide pupils and students with a learning environment that is caring, supportive and warm and one that promotes pupil and student progress. The school makes very effective use of information from their own assessment centre (The Rycroft Centre) in supporting pupils' and students' progress.
49. The school has worked hard on improving its procedures for planning and assessment across the curriculum in all year groups and these arrangements for assessing pupils' and students' attainment and progress are now very good. In particular, the work that the school has done on using the 'P' levels to more sharply focus on pupils' and students' attainment and measure the progress that they make against targets is of a very high standard. The school has very good systems and procedures in place that allow learning objectives from pupils' and students' statements to be broken down into very precise targets within individual education plans. These are then used consistently across the school to facilitate precise teaching which ensures that pupils and students make very good learning gains. Individual education plans, which are reviewed and

revised three times each year, are published on the school Intranet which allows all staff access to pupils' and students' targets and enables teaching staff to provide relevant learning experiences for all pupils and students.

50. Evidence shows that senior members of staff monitor individual education plans to ensure that targets are appropriate and effective. Assessment processes are moderated, but the school does not yet produce portfolios of evidence of assessed pupils' and students' work to inform assessment within school.
51. Evidence demonstrates that the school has very well-structured and detailed procedures which prescribe the role of senior managers in monitoring the quality of assessment, recording and reporting, although subject co-ordinators have insufficient time to carry out their role in these processes effectively.
52. Appropriate and challenging whole-school targets are set and evaluated. The school now has a useful bank of data on pupil and student performance assessed using 'P' levels and is using this data very effectively to analyse performance against targets and inform future practice. In lessons, teachers and learning support assistants consistently and routinely monitor pupil and student progress against targets.
53. Very good progress has been made in the standard of baseline assessments, and the ongoing assessment of pupil and student performance towards their individual targets in individual education plans is very good. This information is used to very good effect in informing annual review and transition plan reports. The information provided for parents through these reports is of a very high quality and is produced consistently by teachers.
54. A whole-school assessment, recording and reporting policy and a policy for recording achievement provide very good frameworks for practice, and support the work of staff in implementing procedures with consistency. Similarly, the school marking policy is of a high standard and provides clear direction for staff in marking and assessing pupils' and students' work. Within lessons, marking is shared with pupils and students and is clearly linked to recording their performance against targets.
55. Teachers' daily planning is very good and lesson plans are detailed and thorough, outlining work that carefully matches pupils' and students' individual needs. This, coupled with ongoing assessments of pupils' and students' progress, enables teachers to make informed decisions about curriculum planning to meet the needs of individual pupils and students. Teachers consistently share the learning objectives with pupils and students so that they know what they are expected to learn, and outline the work of the learning support assistants so that they can give pupils and students the best possible support.
56. Records of achievement folders are maintained for and by all pupils and students. Each pupil and student has a file which contains samples of work, photographs of experience and certificates of achievement. Evidence of achievements and experiences across the range of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, are plentiful and sufficiently attractive and structured to allow pupils and students to use their national records of achievement effectively for self-advocacy.
57. The welfare of the pupils and students is well supported by monitoring on an individual basis. No group of pupils or students does worse or better than any other relative to their prior attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. Parents are very supportive of the school and its impact on their children. They believe the teaching is good, that their children are making good progress and are expected to work hard. They say their children like school and are being helped to become mature and responsible, and that the school works well with parents. The inspection team supports the parents' views about the school and this is reflected in the report.
59. The school social worker is in important link between home and school, especially for parents who live considerable distances away, and his role is to keep parents informed and involved and be another point of contact for them. For some parents, this now takes the form of videoconferences, which are particularly effective for annual reviews. Close links exist between the residential staff and parents, with regular telephone contact and parental input into the care plans. Home/school diaries form an effective link between parents and school particularly for pupils and students who go home regularly or who are day pupils and students. They are extensively completed by parents and teachers.
60. Parents receive good quality information about their children's progress through the annual review process. For many who are not local, it may be the only opportunity to make a contribution towards their children's learning in school. This is an area where there is room for further development in order to increase opportunities for parents to be more closely involved in the work of the school. Links between the school and care staff, who take on the parental role during term time, are very good and give continuity and consistency.
61. The governors' annual report for parents meets statutory requirements but gives no information about how the governors have carried out their role over the year, both collectively and individually, for those who have a particular lead role. The prospectus is attractive but does not meet a number of statutory requirements, most of which need to be updated each year. The school produces an interesting newsletter for parents but it appears to be limited to two editions each academic year. The school improvement plan has identified the need to involve the parents more in school life, and plans are in place to do this.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The headteacher, her deputy headteacher and their senior management team provide very strong leadership and guidance for the school. They are well supported by the subject co-ordinators who work well to ensure that the school provides an appropriate and stimulating curriculum for its pupils and students and ensures that they make good, continuous progress.
63. The chief executive, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher are all relatively new in post. There has been a great deal of improvement in the management structure and effectiveness since the time of the last inspection. The school has taken very careful note of the issues that were raised at the time of the last inspection and has addressed all of these. There is now a strong and effective management structure.
64. Within the management structure, is the role of the school bursar. She plays a vital part in the running of the school and, through her accountancy skills, helps to ensure that the school runs efficiently. In all decisions concerning spending on staff, resources and accommodation, there is lengthy discussion during which decisions are challenged by members of staff or the governing body. This ensures that the best possible price is paid, the best possible people are available to do the work and the most appropriate resources are acquired. They also provide a list of approved suppliers, which includes

the local Chamber of Commerce. The school also makes sure that essential services are available at the best possible prices.

65. The school is recovering from the financial difficulties resulting from the problems that occurred three years ago. The large deficit is part of a three-year planned budget that was devised to address the difficulties and the deficit will be off-set by the trustees of the Sea Shell Foundation, which provides secure financial support and guidance.
66. The school uses commercial computer software to manage the school's finances. The school pays a substantial fee each year for the maintenance of the system. Although this is good practice, the school is presently investigating the possibility of alternative suppliers in order to arrange an even better deal. It is hoped that a new system will be in place by Christmas and will run, initially, in parallel with the existing system until all information has been transferred.
67. The school's forward planning is secure and firmly based on the aspirations and visions of the headteacher, and the support and guidance of the deputy headteacher. The headteacher and her deputy work very effectively together, the work of each complementing the work of the other.
68. The school is working hard and successfully towards improvement. It is clear that during the last two years, there have been tremendous changes and improvements in the school. Much of this is due to the drive and rigour of the headteacher, her deputy and the chief executive.
69. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor the teaching throughout the school very effectively. There is openness to improvement within the school, and staff are very positive about their work. The constant striving for the best is reflected throughout in the very high quality of work within the school.
70. Overall, the governors' support and monitoring of the work of the school are sound. They make effective use of their specialist skills and expertise to support the school. The governors are gaining a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school. They realise that they still have to build on their strength, their existing position and ensure that they adhere to all statutory guidance.
71. Special educational needs are managed very well at the school. Governors are clearly aware of the changing focus within the school and how the current needs of many of the pupils and students are different from those of the past. There are pupils and students coming to the school who are bringing in new difficulties with them. In these cases, the school works very effectively in ensuring that the pupil or student is quickly integrated into all activities. This is a good document that provides very useful guidance for staff in meeting the special educational needs of pupils and students in school. The document contains very appropriate focus on the importance of accuracy of assessment and the need for careful planning to meet individual needs.
72. The school's procedures for appraisal and performance management are very good, and all the teaching staff have clear performance targets. The school's priorities for development are formulated around the needs of the staff, pupils and students. The actions taken to meet the school's targets are very effective. School resources, grants and other monies are used appropriately and they are carefully recorded and monitored by the bursar.

73. There are very good induction procedures for all new staff. These begin with a three-day programme, which covers all school procedures including child protection, health and safety, equal opportunities and the school curriculum. There is also specific training concerning the management of difficult and challenging behaviour. The school has also ensured that staff are trained in the use of new technology and that they use it well to support the work of the school.
74. The management structure within the school enables the learning support assistants to take responsibility for their own professional development. They monitor each other and support each other, taking great pride in their work. The overall line manager for the support staff is the deputy headteacher. The extensive monitoring of the support staff and the teachers gives the headteacher and her deputy extensive knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of all staff. This enables them to be very effective in their planning for professional development amongst the staff and make very effective use of their special qualities. However, the management does not provide sufficient time for subject co-ordinators to fulfil their roles as effectively as they could.
75. The school provides equal opportunities for all pupils and students and supports them with a consistent whole-school strategy, based on very good knowledge of the ethnic background of all pupils and students.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

76. There are good numbers of teaching and other staff to support the learning needs of the pupils and students. The very good level of learning support, both classroom, therapy and medical, is a strength that enables those with the most profound needs to benefit fully from their education. Much of the therapeutic work is carried out in the teaching areas either in a classroom setting, during breaks or at lunchtime. There is a high level of medical support with a general practitioner at school for one session each week and full-time nursing cover. The school's educational psychologist is often working in classrooms making assessments and advising teachers of pupils' and students' needs. Other specialists are available such as an audiologist and a technician. The residential provision has a large, proficient care staff of five team leaders, five senior care workers and a further 30 residential support workers at various grade levels, who support throughout the twenty-four hours. Cleaning and domestic staff provide high levels of cleanliness, and catering ensures varied and wholesome food. There is good support by very efficient administrative, bursary and premises staff.
77. Accommodation is good overall but there are areas that are not fully tailored to the needs of the current school population and there are times when this has a negative impact on the learning opportunities available to the pupils and students, particularly those who are non-ambulant. For example, there is no elevator in the Dockray building with a first floor that is serviced by a stair lift. When more than one non-ambulant pupil or student needs to access the special percussion facility it is a ponderous, time-consuming system which limits the teaching time in the provision. Similarly, the very attractive swimming pool is not ideal for use by many of the current school population and limits the range of activities that might be delivered. The grounds are extensive and well maintained, as are the buildings. Attractive, well-presented displays of work in the corridors and teaching areas help create an interesting and motivating working environment. There is a clear emphasis on the quality and range of the learning experiences being offered. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement to the specialist rooms for science and design and technology that have been re-sited and are now good. The grounds are extensive with some very attractive sensory gardens and a range of different types of pathways to enable mobility

programmes to be undertaken and benefit the varied needs of the pupils and students. The garden outside the secondary accommodation is designed to encourage pupils and students to grow crops and to study horticulture. There is also an adventure playground and a range of appropriate playground areas to suit the ages and special educational needs of the pupils and students. The residential facilities are good, with pupils' and students' dignity and privacy given a high priority. There are also hydrotherapy facilities and two snoezelon (sensory rooms), one in the multi-sensory unit and the other at Wainwright House. However, despite all of the re-modelling, the building still has the appearance of an institution.

78. Resources for learning are good and, in mathematics and music, they are very good but, currently, they are barely satisfactory for design and technology and satisfactory for both humanities and physical education. The strategic use of the resources is very good. The library is well resourced and, where work is displayed around the school, it is described using both words and symbols to illustrate its meaning. A major resource throughout the school is the consistency of signing and the use of symbols by all staff. On many occasions, staff have extended 'conversations' with pupils and students using sign language.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to improve the quality of education even further, the chief executive, governors and headteacher should:
- (1) Increase the effectiveness of the governing body by extending their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils and students in order to enable them to make informed decisions when shaping the direction of the school and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. (Paragraph 70)
 - (2) Ensure that there is adequate time for curriculum co-ordinators to fulfil their present responsibilities and improve the efficiency of some co-ordinators in the management of their subjects. (Paragraphs 26, 51, 74)
 - (3) Involve parents more in the work of the school. (Paragraph 60)

Provision for the deaf

80. The school has extensive experience in the education of pupils and students with hearing impairment with additional disabilities. It has experienced and well-qualified teachers and learning support assistants, many working on a one-to-one basis with pupils and students who have severe disabilities. The pupils and students are admitted from various areas of the country.
81. In relation to their degree of deafness and their abilities, pupils and students make good progress. The very good gains in learning are a direct result of very good teaching and, in this respect, full advantage is taken of opportunities in the whole curriculum to reinforce pupils' and students' self-esteem and confidence. This is especially noticeable in their ability to use total communication.
82. The pupils and students have access to all aspects of education provision, including the extra-curricular facilities, for example the school's scout troop, the signing class and the gymnasium club. All the school's staff has had extensive deaf awareness training and all the staff are competent users of British Sign Language (BSL). The school has

appropriately modified the curriculum to meet the needs of deaf pupils and students and all the work is methodically differentiated to meet individual needs.

83. All the pupils and students have a statement of special educational needs before they are admitted to the school. The statements are annually reviewed with all the interested professionals; the teachers and the parents taking a lead role in the process. There are good links with all the interested parties from the various authorities who are invited to attend the meeting or present a written report. These include the educational psychologist, audiologist and speech and language therapists. From the statements and annual reviews good individual plans are developed with appropriate targets for the coming year.
84. The school has two speech and language therapists who work in partnership with the school and residential staff. The school encourages the involvement of parents as vital in developing their children's full potential and has established many initiatives to secure this aim. This includes organising BSL lessons for the parents to enable them to communicate with their children. Two-way communication and parental access to staff have the highest priority to ensure that all pupils and students thrive through ongoing education, whether at home, in residence or school.

British Sign Language (BSL)

85. The school's provision for deaf studies and BSL is very good, especially relating to the way pupils and students are taught. Their communication policy focuses on a 'child centred' approach, which is evident in the support provided to BSL users in the school and in the residences.
86. All the staff of the school are expected to reach a nationally recognised accreditation in sign language through the Council for the Advancement of Communication with all Deaf People (CACDP) with a minimum of Level 1 qualification.
87. One lesson observed with two pupils and students by the tutor, who is deaf herself, was thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and students. They participated enthusiastically and the lesson provided challenge and, at the same time, reinforced the pupils and students' ability to communicate using a sign language. This boosted their confidence and self-esteem.
88. The use of BSL has also enhanced the communication skills of pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) who do not have a significant hearing loss.

Audiological provision

89. The unit's audiological resources are excellent. The school has a wide range of high quality test equipment and a variety of spare hearing aids and consumables, such as batteries and leads that enable pupils' and students' audiological needs to be well met. The school has an educational audiologist as well as an audiologist who work as a team. The audiologist checks and renews their ear moulds as required and ensures that there is an effective daily routine for checking hearing aids.
90. All the classrooms with the hearing impaired pupils and students are equipped with the 'Sound Field System' auditory aids that are in good condition and used daily. All the staff are advised and guided on their value to the pupils and students and, as a result, they are consistently used in classrooms. The use of this system has also enhanced the communication skills of pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties who do not have a significant hearing loss. The educational audiologist is responsible for advising the school on the provision of the best amplification equipment and also works closely with all the staff, both in the school and the residences.
91. The school also recognises the different audiological needs of the pupils and students that have had cochlea implants and works closely with the local health authority on these pupils' and students' recuperation after the implant.
92. The Ryecroft Assessment Centre has a nationwide reputation for its expertise in assessing children with hearing impairment with multiple learning problems. It offers its services and provides advice to a number of education and health authorities. It has an array of highly specialised equipment for this purpose. The educational audiologist leads on audiological assessments with enthusiasm and a high sense of commitment for the pupils and students in her care.

Residential provision

93. The building for the residential provision is that of a traditional boarding school, but there have been extensive alterations and refurbishment in the past few years. This had been made necessary to meet the needs of the pupils and students who are now admitted to the school. Many of these pupils and students have physical disabilities and others have severe learning difficulties. As a result of the refurbishment and alterations, the residential accommodation is good with many very good features.
94. At the time of the inspection, there were 42 pupils and students in residence for part of the time; certain pupils and students live in for the full week. Each pupil and student has a single room and, where possible, they are able to decorate their own rooms and bring mementoes from home. The head of care and team leaders place a strong emphasis on providing an environment in keeping with a home rather than an institution. There is a 'family' atmosphere within the provision. Each room is carpeted and has curtains, in many cases, of matching colours. Pinboards have been made for pupils' and students' use for display. One staff house has been adapted for students between the ages of 19 and 21.
95. There are sufficient wash basins, baths, showers and toilets, which provide very good privacy. The doors to toilets have functional bolts. The school has also made large investment to cater for physically disabled pupils and students in providing hoists and the 'Gorman tracking' in some areas for carrying non-ambulant pupils and students from their room to the toilets and bathroom.

96. The head of care gives high priority to child protection and works very closely with the local authority protection team. They also have regular spot inspections from the Social Services officers and the outcomes are very positive. The school will be subject to a full National Care Standards inspection in the very near future. One governor has been delegated with responsibility for the residences. These are indications of the school's determination to safeguard pupils' and students' welfare and to protect them from harm in the residential setting.
97. There is very good liaison between teaching and care staff. There are clear hand-over procedures and a school/residence book, and this is extended to a school/residence/home book when the pupils and students go home. Any incidents or problems in either the school or home are documented in the book so that staff in either the school or the residence are aware of any problems that have occurred.
98. There is an impressive range of activities within the residential provision. Some of these are built into the National Curriculum subjects that are taught, such as the gymnasium club and the signing club. Following tea, they can opt from a range of activities during the evening and at weekends. Visits have been made to parks, museums, a theatre and other places of interests. In addition, there is an extensive list of sporting and cultural activities, which can be undertaken nearer to the school, for example certain pupils and students occasionally attend the local church youth club. The school has its own scout troop and hut where they hold their activities. They hold an annual scout camp in the school grounds. Children from outside the school are members of the scout troop, opening the door for suitable inclusion participation.
99. There is a homely atmosphere with opportunities to mix with their peers. These factors, together with the 24-hour curriculum, make a significant contribution to pupils' and students' personal development. This very good ethos within the residence means that the residential provision provides good value for money. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.

Speech and language therapy

100. The school has employed two speech and language therapists (SALTs). These staff work with school staff in partnership to support the communication needs of pupils and students. For most of their week, they are timetabled to work at providing in-class support. This greatly increases communication opportunities for pupils and students. The nature of this work is negotiated with teaching staff; they may be directed to provide intensive support for groups or individuals or provide an assessment on an individual. Only occasionally is a pupil or student withdrawn from class for speech and language therapy, maximising inclusive opportunities. On occasions, when a young person is withdrawn from class, it is to ensure that the personal dignity of the pupil or student is maintained or in order to work in optimum listening conditions.
101. All work on communication by the speech therapists is recorded and filed within classrooms to allow teaching staff ease of access to particular individuals' programmes and maintain consistency of support for pupils and students.
102. Recently, staff have been engaged in a curriculum, assessment and policy working group with other staff across the campus, out of which has been formulated two policies; a communication policy and communication in practice policy. The first is an informative, well-structured document emphasising that at RSDM, communication is the bedrock of teaching and learning. The second document is designed to complement the monitoring of progress within the curriculum using 'P' levels. A communications

assessment recording system has been designed to monitor and record very small steps in progress with communication.

103. To support the work of the newly formed autistic spectrum unit, the speech therapists have introduced the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) in order to promote functional communication for pupils and students diagnosed within the autistic spectrum. The speech therapists have trained staff, pupils and students across the campus to use this system and are beginning to work in partnership with parents to promote PECS within the home.
104. All parents are invited into school to work with SALTs on individual programmes for their children. Unfortunately, due to the distances involved, this is not always practical. To enhance communication with parents, the SALTs effectively use home/school diaries. The SALTs contribute most effectively to the school's annual review processes, contributing to and attending all meetings where appropriate.

Medical support

105. The work of the school is further supported by a doctor working part-time as, in addition to a range of hearing and communication difficulties, a wide range of paediatric pathologies, including rare genetic syndromes, are present among the pupil/student population.
106. The doctor and school staff, including a children's nurse and head of care who is also a trained nurse, manage all day-to-day medical issues. Along with the support of the local general practitioner 24-hour support is provided.
107. Furthermore, as well as a range of basic physical impairments, a number of pupils and students have varying degrees of epilepsy and the doctor works in partnership with the school to maintain contingency plans and protocols to support pupils and students.
108. Medical and school staff work together very effectively, and medical staff, in particular, are highly aware of the difficulties in making diagnoses of pupils and students on the autistic spectrum who also have communication difficulties.
109. Due to the fact that pupils and students are referred from a wide range of local authorities, on occasions, difficulties can arise in engaging secondary medical care for some pupils and students. There can be difficulties in engaging appropriate highly specialised, professional medical advice and support due to issues involved across different health authorities and trusts. Contracts are not always established across borders. In particular the school shares a national difficulty in engaging specialist treatment for deaf youngsters with mental health problems.

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy

110. The department is staffed by three part-time and one full time member of staff. The therapists see their role as facilitators for pupils and students and are very successful in maximising young people's potential for inclusion by supporting their physical needs. Some work is timetabled but, of necessity, much work is reactive, responding swiftly to the developing needs of the pupils and students.
111. The department works with about 40 per cent of the pupils and students, providing individual treatments and facilitating movement and position. In addition, the department

maintains specialist equipment to support movement and conducts training of both teaching and care staff to carry out individual programmes for pupils and students.

112. Links with parents are good with a good response from parents to attend their children's clinics. Support for pupils and students is strengthened as individual treatment programmes are recorded on video and sent home for parents to maintain.
113. The department manages the hydrotherapy provision for the school, working mainly with pupils and students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Hydrotherapy sessions are very well staffed and allow a great deal of work to be done with individuals. The high staff ratio during these sessions ensures the maintenance of pupils' and students' personal safety and dignity. Staff communicate well with pupils and students through appropriate use of speech and signing. However, the staff feel that the pool area is poorly designed, floor tiles easily become slippery, there is no safety gate between the changing area and the pool and changing benches are too low for older pupils and students. The work focuses on two key areas: therapeutic movement, in particular, active anatomical, passive movements; and breathing exercise. The other key area is teaching pupils and students water safety through the Halliwick swimming method.

Autistic support unit

114. A unit of two classes of pupils and students has been created recently to provide for the special educational needs of pupils and students who have additional learning difficulties associated with the autistic spectrum disorder.
115. The work of the unit is underpinned by a very good policy document and curriculum statement which place an appropriate emphasis on using the curriculum to develop communication and social awareness.
116. Staff are able to provide a highly supportive and structured learning environment for pupils and students. They do this through accurate assessment of needs, target setting and breaking down learning tasks for each pupil or student during lessons in order to maintain pace and a positive response to learning.
117. The recent introduction of the Picture Exchange Communication System is enabling these pupils and students to make very good gains with their communication skills.

Multi-sensory support unit

118. A unit of two classes supports the educational needs of pupils and students who have additional learning difficulties of profound and multiple natures.
119. The work of the unit is underpinned by a very good policy document, which emphasises curriculum entitlement delivered through all available senses, and provides support and guidance for subject co-ordinators and teachers in planning differentiated work for individual pupils and students.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils and students	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	34	29	6	0	0	0
Percentage	13.8	42.5	36.3	7.5	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils and students

Pupils and students on the school's roll	No of pupils and students
Number of pupils and students on the school's roll	65
Number of full-time pupils and students known to be eligible for free school meals	0

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

Pupil and student mobility in the last school year	No of pupils and students
Pupils and students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils and students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Ethnic background of pupils and students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils and students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	56	0	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.6
Number of pupils and students per qualified teacher	5
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y3 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	108
Total aggregate hours worked per week	3498

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	3,647,472
Total expenditure	4,215,554
Expenditure per pupil/student	63,283
Balance brought forward from previous year	338,118
Balance carried forward to next year	-229,064

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	55
Number of questionnaires returned	16

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	94	0	0	0	6
My child is making good progress in school.	81	19	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	38	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	13	6	0	31
The teaching is good.	88	6	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	81	13	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	6	0	0	13
The school works closely with parents.	75	13	13	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	69	6	6	0	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	88	13	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	75	25	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

120. Provision is very good. Pupils make a very good progress relative to their prior attainment in Years 5 to 11.
121. By the end of Year 6, pupils watch and listen to the teacher intently. All show a positive reaction when rhymes and stories are read to them. Some are able to hear and understand the very simple poems and tales. Pupils in the autistic spectrum disorder unit, however, need the reality of artefacts to prompt their understanding, and those in the multi-sensory support unit understand by means of additional auditory and tactile experiences which enable them, after much repetition, to achieve some measure of understanding. By the end of Year 9, pupils continue to listen and watch their teacher carefully. Pupils capable of vocalisation make good, oral contributions to lessons in response to skilful questioning. Higher attaining pupils increasingly respond to spoken instructions, particularly when reinforced by consistent use British Sign Language, which is a positive feature of all teaching. Higher achieving pupils are capable of working productively in groups, with a great deal of support. Pupils with autism begin to develop the notion of expressive communication by this stage, responding positively to the teachers' use of tone of voice, signing and gesture. Those unable to vocalise make good use of picture exchange cards and BSL to make their needs known. Those with multi-sensory impairment begin to be aware of other people and are helped to communicate with them by pressing a switch to say 'good morning', for example, or by being helped to approach others to say 'hello' and shake hands. Most respond with delighted smiles to the routine, for example when reading a big book such as 'Crocodile Tea', and attend with concentration and calmness to the auditory, visual and tactile prompts which give them some measure of understanding. Higher achieving pupils enjoy such myths as the story of Persephone. Their use of signing allows them to comment on the tale, but their understanding is limited because they do not yet link weather changes during the year with the names of the months or the seasons. About three-quarters of the class with autism enjoyed 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'. Although realistic and multi-sensory resources were used well to aid pupils' understanding and add to their enjoyment, not all were able to appreciate the simple story. Higher achieving pupils write simple phrases and sentences by the end of Year 9 with some use of capital letters and full stops. Some label their illustrations. Others copy and overwrite words. A lower achiever is helped to sequence symbols to communicate his news using objects of reference. Pupils begin to write in words and symbols using 'clicker' technology which provides illustrations to support both.
122. Higher achieving pupils are capable of some form of expressive communication by the time they are in Year 11. Some make extended verbal utterances, but need prompting to do this. Others sign to express attitudes and feelings. As part of their successful study of verbs and adjectives, pupils act out specific responses to such descriptions as 'happy, partying' and 'road rage', for example. There was much mirth at the concept of 'exciting ironing'. Pupils use signing, vocalisation and text written as symbols, to respond to the twin concepts of 'doing' words and 'describing' words'. A higher achieving pupil read her extensive personal news aloud, vocalising fluently. Picture exchange cards and signing are a staple of the communication of pupils with autism, who continue to require to see or feel a dustpan and brush, for example, to make the abstraction of language understandable as the fictional family cleans in the big book 'Grandma's Visit'. Pupils read sequences of symbols, and higher achievers generate

simple language by means of a computer program, which allows them to choose words or symbols and shows the appropriate illustration to help them with their writing.

123. Teaching is very good. All lessons have very clear learning objectives, and individual planning for each pupil's progress towards them is based on a comprehensive understanding of what pupils already know and how they learn best. Speech and language therapists make a valuable contribution in this regard. Teachers work very hard with their teams whose knowledge, commitment and concern make possible the very good learning seen in all years, and is a key strength of provision. Promotion of communication skills informs all lessons. Clear explanations, backed up very well by appropriate technical aids to hearing, helps pupils to learn. Illustrations, symbols, objects of reference, and expressive body language further enhance communication. The excellent and consistent use of signing helps pupils' understanding. Lessons are planned to contain a variety of activities with good opportunities for all to take part actively, which pupils enjoy and from which they learn well. Pupils make the very good progress that they do because the teachers' expectations are very high and pupils are enabled to rise to the challenge by the high level of dedicated support they receive. The use of inventive resources, some of which are made from humble materials but, which are, nevertheless, effective, helps learning. A visually impaired pupil was helped to use a computer screen by limiting her vision further, thus allowing her to learn to focus properly before her visual field was enlarged. This enabled her to see the screen as a whole.
124. Learning is consistently very good and sometimes excellent. Particularly impressive levels of learning took place in the lesson on knowledge about language. Pupils were shown how verbs and adjectives can be used to express ideas, make statements and describe what is happening by means of role play which built on their capacity for expression and resulted in them learning a demanding linguistic concept. In another lesson, an excellent level of learning was seen as the teacher managed her team to maximise individual multi-sensory inputs which enabled pupils to understand, in some measure, a familiar story in a big book. Pupils learn very well because they work hard. Most of them put a great deal of effort into their learning and classrooms are a hive of activity.
125. It is a particular strength of the management of the school that after extended absence due to illness, the subject remains very well co-ordinated. Monitoring of teaching has been systematic and has served to raise the standard of teaching and learning of all pupils. Good practice is now routinely shared, with positive results. Constructive links have been developed with the 24-hour curriculum for residential pupils, which have further improved their communication skills.
126. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is now very good. The use of symbols in the teaching of reading and development of communication is now highly effective. Pupils with autism communicate very well, using their books of symbols, and are capable of self-expression. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively introduced into lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Learning support assistants have been successfully trained to improve learning. Provision is now well assimilated and is affecting standards positively. Effective new procedures of assessment have been introduced and are now used well to demonstrate progress and improve the precision of target setting for pupils and for the subject as a whole. The current development plan for the subject is relevant and well considered.

127. The new assessment procedures have pinpointed further development of writing, criticised in the last report, as a continuing target, and writing and recording methods continue to be developed. The provision of sensory boxes for big books has been improved but more are required. Induction procedures for new teachers require further consideration. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' social development.

Communication

128. The promotion of communication is a major focus of the school's activities and a major strength. The policy is comprehensive and well monitored. Provision is very well co-ordinated by speech and language therapists. The standard of audiology on offer to pupils is excellent. Individual planning to fulfil communication needs is of a high order. Techniques fully promote the school's aims to allow all pupils to express their feelings effectively and safely. Pupils with autism are enabled to communicate their wants and needs by the use of a picture exchange communication system. By this, and other well co-ordinated means, they make very good progress in their capacity to predict the events of the day. Pupils with multi-sensory difficulties are helped to become aware of others, make contact with them and have some knowledge of cause-and-effect in relation to other people.

129. All pupils make very good progress in communication because they have individual learning programmes which are highly appropriate to their needs. All teachers and learning support assistants know what is required and promote pupils' communication consistently, in lessons and during social activities. Co-ordination of provision for the teaching of communication throughout the 24-hour curriculum, and the continuing involvement of parents in the process of helping pupils communicate, are key strengths. The school is aware that the continued development of British Sign Language and promotion of increasing competence in the technique of picture exchange cards for teachers, carers and parents are necessary for provision to develop further.

Library

130. The library in Dockray is good. It is a valuable resource and contains a number of books well in excess of the School Library Association's recommendations for schools of similar size and range. The book stock is well kept, attractive and suitable for the needs of teachers and pupils with regard to the National Curriculum. The well-illustrated volumes provide good materials for browsing and, for the very highest achievers, reading. There is a good stock of big books. Symbols designate where books are to be found but there are few books written in symbols. Tables and chairs of different sizes, bean bags to sit on, a television and two computers furnish the light and welcoming room.

131. Pupils enjoy the library and this has a very positive effect upon their attitude to study, particularly in searching for information through reference books. They are attracted by familiar texts. Pupils with autism particularly enjoy books illustrated by photographs, of which there is a good selection. Library books are devolved into classrooms where they are used well, in science, for example. Library management is good.

MATHEMATICS

132. Pupils' achievements in the primary and secondary departments are very good. Some pupils in the secondary department achieve nationally recognised accreditation. Overall, the provision is very good. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented

effectively in primary and secondary departments. The impact of this is beginning to be seen in pupils' skills in mental calculation. All classes use a timetable made of words and symbols. This helps pupils learn the days of the week and develops their understanding of the order of events each day and during the week.

133. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made progress in relation to their prior learning. They show an interest in number. Some pupils can count confidently up to 12. They recognise numbers and sets and can subtract ones and twos from amounts with confidence. Other pupils join in or show an interest in number songs and rhymes; they coactively sign numbers and explore textured number shapes. By the end of Year 9, some pupils can count in twos by shading numbers on worksheets; they add in twos with confidence both mentally and in performing calculations on paper; they use a computer independently to match shapes and sets. Pupils know that there are 12 months in the year and can name the months in order. Other pupils work with the support of learning support assistants on matching numbers in sequence, shapes and sets, using practical equipment, or, with support, engage in this work using a computer. By the end of Year 11, pupils recognise number bonds up to ten and count to 100 in fives and tens. They can perform calculations using these units. Pupils understand the principles of conducting surveys and can produce tally charts to record their findings. They are able to estimate periods of time with accuracy by striking a pose and holding it and they perform calculations using time and record their answers using units of five, 15 and 30 minutes. Other pupils identify numbers on the clock face; one pupil very effectively uses a voice communicator to respond to questioning. Pupils with more severe needs work with objects of reference on number activities. They explore number boards using gaze to identify numbers correctly. Other pupils make choices, touch and explore shapes and number. They respond, and are attentive, to number songs and rhymes. Pupils with more severe needs have an awareness of the passage of time and, with the help of symbols and objects, understand the ordering and pattern of the day. Other autistic pupils match coins with prices of consumables, some independently, others with support; one pupil uses talking switches very effectively to communicate responses. One pupil, with support, is able to coactively use PECS and a symbol chart to collect a list of preferred items on sale from other pupils in his class; he then uses a text and symbol program to wordprocess the list.
134. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good in both the primary and secondary departments. Lessons are consistently very well planned and reflect the structure of the successful strategies for teaching mathematics identified in the National Numeracy Strategy. Where teaching is very good, lessons begin with a clear explanation by teachers of the learning objectives and continue with whole-class activities which recap previous knowledge and focus attention on mathematics. The class is then divided into working groups to tackle the theme of the lesson at an appropriately differentiated level, and the lesson finishes with a plenary session which provides structured opportunities for pupils to communicate the results of their work. The lessons are very well planned. Because of this planning, teachers have identified very accurately the different learning needs of all pupils in their class and set work accordingly. This results in very well-focused teaching which enables pupils to make progress against their individual learning targets. Where lessons are very well planned, the mathematics resources and learning support assistants are deployed very effectively to support learning. Learning support assistants work very well in partnership with teachers and are consistently very good in supporting small groups or individual pupils. Some learning support assistants are involved in ongoing assessment of pupils within lessons. When this occurs, the teacher has a clearer picture of pupils' attainment and progress. Where teaching is very good, pupils are supported by constant teaching input using very effective questioning.

135. Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are always at least satisfactory and often good or very good. By the end of Year 6, pupils enthusiastically join in number games and rhymes at the beginning of lessons. By Year 9, pupils are able to stand in front of their classmates and communicate their knowledge of number bonds. Pupils by Year 11 are attentive and well focused during warm-up sessions, counting in sets of fives and tens. They demonstrate obvious enjoyment with their task and respond well to the teacher's praise. Pupils are generally very well behaved and respond well to praise and encouragement from staff. Pupils who have individual behaviour support plans are very well managed and do not disrupt learning. Pupils concentrate very well and work hard in their lessons. They are able to work independently and in small groups and support each other. Where lesson planning has structured opportunities for communication, pupils listen carefully to staff and their classmates.
136. Assessment of pupil progress is generally very good and in accordance with the whole-school assessment policy. Assessments using the 'P' levels are analysed and information is used to inform future practice. Teachers record pupils' attainment, in relation to targets set, at the end of each lesson. Where pupils communicate their learning, their capacity for self-assessment is impressive. The curriculum in mathematics is structured to meet the learning needs of all pupils in the school and enables staff to assess pupils' progress from baseline assessments. As a result, the link between targets within individual education plans and learning objectives specified for pupils within lesson planning is consistently secure and promotes pupils' progress in the subject.
137. Leadership and management of mathematics are good and contribute effectively to the progress made by the pupils. The co-ordinator has developed the subject well. She benefits from a clearly prescribed role as outlined in the subject co-ordinators handbook, and has worked very well in co-ordinating the planning for the delivery of the subject, but has insufficient time to monitor the quality of teaching of mathematics across the school.
138. Pupils' work is marked and dated. A suitable action plan is in place. An appropriate allocation of time is made to the teaching of mathematics for each year group.
139. Resources for mathematics are good. The co-ordinator works with staff to identify resources that will further develop the subject. In classrooms, there are displays of numbers and mathematical symbols. Pupils' work is also displayed to good effect. Good use is made of computers to support learning. The school has an appropriate range of software that allows some pupils to work independently for sustained periods of time and for other pupils to work with the support of an adult. This assists in the development of mathematical concepts and increases pupils' pride in their work and presentation.
140. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. This is reflected in pupils' learning and in their achievements. An appropriate amount of teaching time is devoted to mathematics; this, coupled with effective curriculum co-ordination and very good assessment processes, has contributed to improved standards.

SCIENCE

141. Pupils' achievement in this subject is very good and in some lessons progress is excellent. Pupils' work, which is well presented in classroom and corridor displays, and subject records indicate clearly that achievement is consistently very good for all levels of capability. Pupils are confident in recalling previous learning by using a combination of signing and symbols and are gaining knowledge and understanding of energy and the components required to complete an electrical circuit. In the last inspection, pupils' achievement and progress were good but, by the end of Years 9 and 11, they were deemed to be unsatisfactory. There has been a very marked improvement in secondary pupils' achievement and progress since that time.
142. The quality of teaching and learning are very good overall and, at times, they are excellent. This again shows very good improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning is very good across the subject, and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Learning support assistants were very well managed and played an important part in ensuring that all pupils had access to the learning opportunities. In a lesson on the solar system, the teacher had made very creative use of home-made resources to give pupils an excellent understanding of the rotational relationships between the earth, sun and moon. The complexity of the lunar cycle was presented very simply, allowing all levels of capability to understand the process and why we see new moons, half moons and full moons during a month. The management of pupils who often display challenging behaviour is very good. Pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder, who experience great difficulties, have a quiet room where they are able to recover their composure with a learning support assistant and return to the lesson with negligible disruption to the learning of others. In the very best lessons, pupils' interest is maintained and pace is consistent with the challenge of the set tasks.
143. The leadership and management of the subject overall are very good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has embarked on a full-scale appraisal of subject needs. She has updated the subject policy and is developing schemes of work based on the National Curriculum requirements for science, based on a three-year rolling programme. She has completed the first phase which has been properly resourced and includes an extensive range of large books to cover topics to be delivered. Monitoring of the subject is underway but the non-contact time allocated to the co-ordinator during the development stage is insufficient.
144. The subject has moved forward very well since the time of the last inspection. There is now a light, bright teaching room with quality displays of pupils' work covering the most recently taught topics. The resources are very good for the first phase of the rolling programme and include large-scale magnets which can be easily held by those pupils who have physical difficulties. There are very good resources for teaching about the human body, including models with detachable organs and a skeleton. The many large books form a strong link to the literacy strategy and are used very well when presenting lessons on anatomy and the solar system. The subject promotes numeracy, and lessons give opportunities for practicing counting skills. Large photographs within the topic displays give a clear indication that the local environment is a valuable resource for the teaching of science. The co-ordinator recognises the need to produce an inventory of science resources and to distribute this to her colleagues who teach the subject. There is no table/bench which can be raised or lowered to enable wheelchair-bound pupils to be fully included in group activities, rather than remaining on the periphery.

145. Science makes a significant contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Time is given for reflection, and pupils are often surprised when they predict outcomes. There is a firm direction and emphasis given to correctness of procedures, especially when pupils are involved in experimentation. The social aspects are very strong, with an emphasis given to collaborative work with other members of the group and turn-taking within a group.

ART AND DESIGN

146. Provision for the teaching of art and design is very good. Boys and girls achieve equally well as do pupils of different abilities. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been very good.

147. Pupils' achievements in art and design are very good across the school as a result of teaching which is never less than good, and often very good, a broad and relevant curriculum and good subject leadership. Pupils undertake a wide range of two- and three-dimensional work, using many different media and techniques, they study the work of other artists and the school benefits from the range of high quality art work on display in classrooms and corridors.

148. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learnt how to work with a range of different media. They are beginning to express themselves and the higher attaining pupils are knowledgeable about how different techniques and media can be used to create an effect. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were decorating bottles using coloured paper, paint and glue. They understood the importance of choosing colours carefully, of the need for the whole of the bottle to be covered and the care needed to ensure that the paper sticks to the bottle. Very good teaching ensured that the pupils understood the importance of producing a product of good quality which could be displayed in the entrance hall. This lesson also demonstrated good cross-curricular links between art and design and numeracy; all the pupils made a large, coloured number for their bottle and the teacher and learning support assistants used the opportunity to reinforce some number and counting skills. Displays indicate that, by Year 6, pupils have worked with a wide range of different media, including wax crayon, various types of paint, natural materials, textiles and photography.

149. Due to timetable arrangements, no art and design lessons in Key Stage 3 were observed, but scrutiny of pupils' work, displays and teachers' planning indicates that, by the end of Year 9, pupils' achievements in art and design are very good. Displays and portfolios of pupils' work show that they have studied animated art, the work of other artists, space and landscapes and public art. Within this range of work, pupils have discovered and refined techniques which they explore in a range of different applications, for example line drawings, landscapes and abstract work.

150. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills and understanding of what they can achieve in art and design have developed to the point where they can indicate preferences and likes and dislikes. For example, pupils in a mixed Years 10/11 class, undertaking work in batik, had very clear ideas about the colours and effects they wished to obtain. Displays of pupils' work in Key Stage 4 indicate they have built on the good and very good teaching they have received and the skills and techniques they have learnt to produce work of good, sometimes striking, quality.

151. The high quality work and the pupils' achievements in art and design are a result of good, often very good, teaching, a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, closely linked to the National Curriculum, and very good subject leadership. All art and design

lessons are well planned; lesson plans contain clear lesson objectives and expected pupil outcomes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and much of the art work is linked to other curriculum areas, for example religious education, history and geography and personal, social and health education. The high quality of art work on display is testament to the high quality of the teaching, the very good support from learning support assistants and the enjoyment pupils obtain from their work in art and design lessons.

152. The subject co-ordinator is well organised and has very good subject knowledge and skills. She is very creative in the manner in which she presents the subject to pupils, particularly in the way she allows pupils to use the subject to explore and discover ways of expressing themselves. Since the last inspection, art and design has become more whole-school focused. Staff, including the co-ordinator, teach both within the school and within the post-16 department. Older pupils and students undertake 'commissions' in art work for use around the school. The subject co-ordinator monitors teaching and discusses projects with all staff teaching art and design. The co-ordinator manages a whole-school budget for the subject and resources are good, although facilities are still limited; the art and design rooms in the main school are small with few facilities and there is no kiln in the post-16 area. However, the impact of these shortcomings is negligible; the subject is very well led and pupils' achievements are very high.

CITIZENSHIP

153. Provision is good. Pupils have made good progress in Years 7 to 11, relative to the recent introduction of the subject.
154. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have some understanding of citizenship in other lands through participation in cultural awareness days. They study local and global news. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 have bank accounts and are encouraged to manage their own finances. Skills of enquiry and communication are well promoted, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where pupils speak of their achievements at annual review. They have a good opportunity to have their views heard when they are interviewed by the specialist careers service. Pupils develop skills of responsible action in lessons which are well integrated into the school's personal, social and health education programme. By Year 9, pupils generally understand the necessity of washing and eating healthily and, by Year 11, have come to realise that smoking can shorten life. They are usually able to exercise choices, and higher achievers are aware of some of the consequences of making them. Pupils are given good opportunities to work independently and with others, in the study of electrical circuits in science, for example. Pupils with autism have good opportunities to develop skills of self-responsibility on well-planned shopping trips and other outings. Those with sensory impairment begin to be aware of others and how their behaviour affects them, this is the key to responsible relationships.
155. A strong feature of provision for the development of pupils' skills of participation and responsible action includes fundraising for a range of charities, including a school in Africa. During 'deaf awareness week', there was a signing competition in school, and one class ran a deaf awareness café at a local church. Pupils are heavily involved in a range of clubs which support their leisure and cultural interests. Older pupils have good opportunities to visit work places. Pupils are involved in making tactile books and signs for the Royal School for the Blind. Good links with local schools, colleges and businesses extend pupils' knowledge of society and their place in it as potentially responsible members of the community.

156. Teaching and learning in lessons designated 'citizenship' in whole or in part are consistently good. Planning is on an individual basis. Use of skilful questioning consolidates and extends learning. Resources are suitable. Management of pupils with a wide range of complex difficulties is outstandingly good.
157. Management of the subject is good. The cross-curricular provision has already been audited. Plans are well advanced for the monitoring of teaching. Resources for learning are satisfactory and it is planned to develop them further. The citizenship curriculum is very well integrated into the whole-school curriculum, although further development is envisaged. The further promotion of the awareness of deaf people and deaf culture is an area for development.
158. The subject did not form a part of the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

159. Since the last inspection, there has been much change in the housing and delivery of design and technology. A new room has been found which is large, light and a pleasant working environment. Next door to this facility is the ceramics room that is well equipped with a new kiln, potters wheel and clay bins. Evidence of the popularity of this section of the subject is the mural of tiles where each pupil has made a tile for the corridor display. The whole area is now a good facility and indicates the very good progress that has been made since the last inspection when accommodation was unsatisfactory.
160. During the inspection, most of the subject was taught as food technology, where a range of lessons were observed. Achievement and progress in these were good overall and very good in a lesson for Years 10/11 pupils. By Year 9, pupils are making good progress in their food technology. Strong emphasis is given to hygiene, with pupils understanding and appreciating the need for cleanliness and the washing of hands and working surfaces when preparing food. Pupils use a wide range of basic kitchen utensils and understand the reasons for safety when using knives. In the lessons observed, pupils struggled to cut a block of cheese with a knife and would have found it easier to use a cheese wire. Cheese graters were also difficult for some pupils to use and the task would have been made easier by having a revolving grater with an operating handle. Pupils were involved in the basics of providing wholesome meals for themselves, an important life skill for them.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and, in food technology, it can be very good. In the best lessons, teachers' planning is thorough and learning support assistants are very well briefed on the subject delivery and have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the special educational needs of the pupils. In each lesson observed, there was a strong feeling of teamwork. When preparing meals, pupils shared the tasks, with some of them peeling vegetables and others involved in cutting and slicing them. The teaching team stressed the importance of washing vegetables thoroughly before they were eaten. Currently, there is no member of staff with a Food, Health and Safety Assessor award to enable pupils to gain accreditation, and possible future employment, in this area. Teaching in design and technology for pupils of secondary age is good but there is insufficient time available for the subject specialist to deliver the full range of activity. In an autistic spectrum disorder class, the management of very challenging behaviour was excellent and resulted in minimal interruption to the learning of others. Pupils in this lesson were tasked with printing a fabric design using varying shaped sponges and brightly coloured paints. Pupils were given ample opportunity to make decisions as to colour, positioning and shape of the sponge. The teaching team were patient and gentle as they encouraged pupils to take part. Pupils

understood the need to apply pressure to the loaded sponge to get a good print. Teaching at the secondary phase is now good but was judged to be satisfactory in the last inspection.

162. The recently appointed co-ordinator is a specialist teacher who has worked hard to re-write schemes of work, produce a development plan for the new room and is monitoring teachers' session plans to see how these are being delivered. He has consulted with a local education authority subject advisor and has obtained a sizeable amount of funding to equip the new facility that already has a 'smart' board installed and one computer. The design and technology policy is reviewed annually by the senior management team.
163. Resources for the teaching of the subject are barely satisfactory but adequate funds have been made available by the trustees to address the deficiencies. Orders are being placed and the facility will be well equipped to deliver a curriculum which addresses i) design, ii) making skills and iii) knowledge and understanding of materials and components, mechanisms and control systems. Much of the current stock of Lego materials are outdated and are to be replaced with mechanical construction kits. Most of the resources in the first floor stock room need replacing. A vacuum former is also planned for the workshop area. Resources for the ceramics room are very good with a brand new kiln and potters wheel.
164. Re-siting of the workroom and the appointment of a specialist to co-ordinate the subject have been central to addressing the criticisms in the last inspection report.
165. Literacy is promoted in the food technology lessons with the introduction of new vocabulary that is well supported by signing and symbols. Numeracy is also very evident in weighing out ingredients and estimating how much cheese or water would be required in a mixture.
166. There are good spiritual links, with time to observe and reflect on changes being made when mixing or grating ingredients. There is a strong emphasis on correctness when using potentially dangerous utensils. Pupils have many opportunities to work collaboratively when preparing meals and there is a good sharing out of tasks such as washing-up and cleaning the work surfaces. There is also good cultural involvement with the use of vegetables, fruits, rice and pasta from other countries and meals such as pizza and dishes that use rice.

HUMANITIES

167. The school operates a rolling programme of history and geography. All the humanities lessons seen were in geography. Both subjects share the same co-ordinator and lessons are planned to the same framework, with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) documentation for pupils with learning difficulties forming the basis for the subject curriculum. The school policy for humanities reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole teaching staff
168. History is taught in subject-specific lessons and as a cross-curricular strand. The history scheme of work emphasises chronology so pupils are aware of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Activities during the week are used to recognise old and new, before and after. By the end of Year 9, pupils are expected to interpret pictures and photographs and speak about them. In Years 10 and 11, they progress to historical enquiry from various sources, for example diaries and news items. In geography, the scheme of work stresses the need for the pupils to be aware of their own surroundings

and explore features of the local environment. It also seeks to develop an interest in people and places in different parts of the world.

169. Pupils make very good progress in humanities throughout the school and the subjects overall show good improvement since the last inspection. In geography, pupils in a class for pupils from Years 2 to 6 begin to show that they can understand that there are other countries with different customs to ours. A lesson on India was enhanced by a student of Indian background on work experience dressed up in her sari. All the pupils were then given the opportunity to dress up and later taste Indian food. Another lesson on Africa was observed in a class with profound and multiple learning disabled pupils. Pupils had the opportunity to listen to African music and each pupil had their own book to illustrate the different kind of life in the forest, for example, the darkness and the rain. An excellent display of a geography project on Australia showed the growth of the country from its early colonisation. A lesson with a class of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder studied the different weather that we experience. Pupils recognise the different countries and the varying weather conditions using artefacts, such as musical instruments, different clothes that people wear and different food that they eat.
170. There is very good and excellent teaching in geography, especially for profound and multiple learning disabled pupils and pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Teachers use a wide range of multi-sensory stimuli as, for example, when simulating the life in the forest, using a tape to create the appropriate sounds, torch lights to demonstrate light in a darkened room and a fan to demonstrate the wind and storms. In the other lessons, real items, such as clothing and food, are used. Photographs are shown for the pupils to see family life in India and of animals in the forest. In the lesson with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, pupils were dressed up in different kinds of clothes for different weather conditions so that they could recognise what the climate was like. In the lessons, teachers focus very precisely on what they want to teach, managing successfully to combine the demands of the subject syllabus with individual education plan targets, such as encouraging pupils to indicate choices or eye-point their responses. Learning support assistants make a very positive contribution to lessons, participating actively in drama and role-play and reinforcing the language targets for the session. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond very positively to the work offered.
171. The subjects are effectively co-ordinated and staff are well supported in planning and resourcing their lessons. The overall level of resources in the subjects is satisfactory, with many suitable artefacts and large photographs, which help to clarify and enrich pupils' understanding. These subjects are often taught on a cross-curricular basis, for example a religious education lesson regarding life in a Caribbean island followed a geography lesson on these islands. This cross-curricular work made a valuable contribution to the lesson presentation. The curriculum is enriched with visits to relevant places in the local environment and further afield for both history and geography. The co-ordinator recognises the need to improve resources and sees this as a priority. There is currently no monitoring of teaching, but lesson plans are regularly checked and discussed by the co-ordinator. He has also begun to compile a useful portfolio of annotated work. This is a good practice that should provide continuity and progression in the subjects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

172. Provision is very good. Pupils make very good progress in all years.
173. By the end of Year 6, pupils regularly and effectively use touch screens, roller balls and a mouse to create effects on the computer screen. Higher achievers and some pupils with autism recognise symbols when they appear on the screen and realise that sequences communicate, which is good preparation for subsequent use of a specialised computer program which generates written text.
174. By year 9, higher achieving pupils use this program to record their work in a range of subjects. Pupils with multi-sensory difficulties follow individual and inventively-adapted programs to improve their auditory and visual awareness. One blind and hearing impaired pupil delights in the vibration, sounds and rhythm the program provides and discriminates tactile markers on the keyboard to receive a reward of stimulating sound. He shows a preference for sound over other sensory stimulation on offer and presses the correct marker without support. He is helped to vary the markers he presses to receive a variety of sounds. His excellent response to aural provision enables him to compose a sound sequence. Another blind pupil is helped to use a lever to begin to establish cause and effect. His interest is maintained by providing him with a range of sounds he has never heard before. A visually impaired pupil improves his perception of space by using a switch to activate a program. A pupil with fluctuating vision and severe hearing loss uses a concept keyboard and touch-screen to express a preference and control a musical program. Effective use of snoezeland equipment aids pupils' control of sensory stimuli and their capacity to control their environment.
175. By the end of Year 11, higher achievers and pupils with autism use a program to produce symbols and text to generate written language. Results are variable, but pupils, with help, successfully record their work by this means. Higher achievers use CD-Roms to support their work on planets and the solar system, for example. A very high achiever inserts images into text. Pupils successfully use programs to draw and colour images and patterns and are helped to save and print their work. A higher achieving pupil confidently gives a PowerPoint presentation of his achievements and interests. Opportunities for all pupils to make similarly excellent contributions to their reviews are a striking feature of attainment.
176. Planning for use of ICT in a range of subjects serves to improve learning. Pupils are able to wordprocess their own worksheets in science, for example, and pupils use the computer well to extend and consolidate their attainment in mathematics. In music, ICT provision allows pupils to compose.
177. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Provision is individually and appropriately planned. A strong link with a local university department has helped the provision of sophisticated and effective software which fully meets pupils' needs and motivates them to persist with their learning. The very high level of technical assistance on offer to teachers is a key strength. Teamwork in lessons is excellent, with all pupils well supported and enabled to succeed. The subject is a powerful motivator and pupils are capable of extended periods of concentration when using the equipment.
178. The newly appointed co-ordinator has not been able to proceed as planned due to illness. Nevertheless, management is satisfactory. Performance data has been used constructively. Plans to monitor teaching are well advanced. An audit of provision has yet to be carried out.

179. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good level of improvement. Standards of teaching and learning across the school are now very good, with some excellent teaching and learning in the multi-sensory support unit. Planning for the use of ICT is now school wide. Resources have improved, and the school has been able to keep at the cutting edge of technological development through its university link. Pupils' writing is now well supported, and continues to develop. The subject makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Interactive whiteboards are now required to consolidate learning in all subjects and further improve learning by this means.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

180. There is no teaching of a modern foreign language as all pupils have been disapplied from this part of the National Curriculum.

MUSIC

181. Pupils make good progress in developing their musical skills and abilities as a result of effective teaching across the school.

182. Pupils listen in anticipation to recorded music. They explore the different sounds that percussion instruments make. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 listen with sustained concentration to the saxophone being played. They are able to choose an instrument to play and to start and stop on request.

183. By the end of Year 10, pupils can request more music to be played by signing, and are able to vocalise through a microphone in response to the saxophone being played. They can also write a simple score and play the xylophone by following a simple score.

184. The quality of teaching is consistently good. In lessons, the resident musicians make a significant contribution to the high quality of teaching. Good planning with specific targets for learning enables pupils to make good progress. Where lessons are consistently good, there is a good pace, with skilful support from learning support assistants in keeping students on task.

185. The very good Gamelan resources are well matched to pupils' interest levels and inspire them to do their best. Younger pupils were encouraged to select their own photograph or name for everyone to sing 'hello' to, and were fully engaged in the activity. The very good and consistent use of total communication enabled pupils to make good progress in their learning. One pupil in an aurythmics session was challenged to listen to a note and could sign correctly whether it was long or short. The staff know their pupils well and use prompts skilfully in stretching their knowledge. For example, one pupil was able to consolidate her learning of cause and effect by activating a switch in response to staff questioning repeatedly 'do you want more music?'

186. Good use of ICT in the multi-sensory department extends pupils' knowledge and experience of music and allows them to make choices. It is used effectively as a reward in controlling computer programs.

187. A subject co-ordinator will be in post during the summer term 2003. This will provide the opportunity for the current scheme of work to be developed to cover the full breadth of the music curriculum, including composing and opportunities for pupils to appraise their own work. Effective monitoring will support the continued development of the subject in ensuring continuity and progression across the whole school. Resources are very good

and include the aurythmics room and programme, and the Gamelan Indonesian percussion instruments, which enrich the pupils' musical experiences. Through the musicians in residence, very good links have been fostered with arts organisations in supporting the delivery of music across the curriculum. For example, the Halle orchestra worked on a music and literacy project 'The Weatherworld', and the Condoco Dance Company performed to post-16 and transition students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

188. Due to timetabling arrangements, it was only possible to see two physical education lessons during the time of the inspection. However, taking into account teachers' planning and other documentation, pupil progress is at least good overall. Pupils are well motivated and work hard and they build up their skills and confidence because of the good quality of teaching.
189. By the age of 11, pupils can climb three steps on the climbing frame and bounce independently on the trampoline. A 13-year-old pupil took great pride in demonstrating throwing and catching skills to the rest of the group, who clapped in appreciation and then could learn from what they had seen in improving the quality and control of their own work. In gymnastics, pupils are given strategies to apply skills and actions in sequence and combination. For example, two pupils were encouraged to throw the ball to each other, which they achieved independently. In a basketball lesson, pupils extended their skills and understanding because of the very good use of signing and symbols, which communicated exactly what was expected of them. Pupils were given the opportunity to evaluate the progress that their peers had made, when each pupil demonstrated to the group, and applauded their achievements. Pupils exerted a great deal of effort in climbing, with adult support, on the apparatus, which helped them to carry out the action with more understanding.
190. The quality of teaching is at least good. Where teaching is good, there is a clear focus to the lesson and it is purposeful and well organised. Both lessons observed during the inspection were well structured, comprising of a warm-up activity followed by a series of main activities that increase challenge to pupils and help them to progress in their learning. Lessons finish with an activity which relaxes the pupils and indicates that the lesson has ended.
191. Teachers and learning support assistants know each individual pupil very well and, as a result, can coach and guide them to achieve of their best. For example, a support assistant modelled how to climb and move through a hoop, which inspired one pupil to apply a great deal of effort in imitating. Teachers and support staff enjoy very good, positive and supportive relationships with their pupils and are sensitive to the needs of the more challenging pupils in their care.
192. The subject is well led and managed by the enthusiastic co-ordinator. Other aspects of physical education include swimming, movement and dance, athletics and outdoor pursuits. Therapy staff make a significant contribution to pupils' physical development, in addition to the very good hydrotherapy programmes. There is a policy in place and a recently developed scheme of work. Monitoring of the subject is in its early stages. The co-ordinator has plans for developing the subject further by extending resources in the community, providing teachers with good examples of teaching physical education across the key stages and developing resources to support the scheme of work.

193. Facilities and accommodation are good and include the hall, its neighbouring storeroom, the hydrotherapy pool, the swimming pool, the school grounds and a good range of large apparatus and small equipment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

194. The school has responded positively to the findings of the last inspection. Provision for religious education is now very good and the subject embodies the aims and values of the school particularly well.
195. Pupils throughout the school have religious education lessons. It is delivered both formally and as part of the humanity and art programme of studies, and informally at opportune times in other lessons during the week. The class teachers, who follow a scheme of work, normally teach the subject. The school has developed a religious education policy and curriculum using the principles laid down in the locally agreed syllabus adapted to the needs of the pupils of the school.
196. Due to the major disabilities of the pupils, adherence to the locally agreed syllabus is impossible; however, the school seeks to satisfy the statutory requirements. These are to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of Christianity, as the predominant religion of this country, as well as teaching about the other principal religions practised. It should encourage respect for those holding different beliefs and help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and mental development.
197. During the inspection period, a wide range of lessons were observed. There were also a number of displays showing pupils' work, for example Noah's Ark and the Creation, together with photographs recalling visits to places of worship. The displays quite clearly illustrate the commitment of the school to religious education. Pupils also gain insights into religious education through the celebration of various festivals such as Christmas and Easter and other religious festivals. They also learn in their personal and social education of the difference between right and wrong and the importance of sharing. Pupils are also shown different ways of worship through pictures, and visits to, for example chapels and churches.
198. During one lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties demonstrated the responses to sensory experiences and responded to music and held artefacts. The lesson was concerned with building Noah's Ark and the consequences. They were able to hear sounds of the storm and rain through recorded sound effects. Another lesson with an older group of profound and multiple learning disabled pupils aimed at developing the pupils' awareness of others and that different countries had their own customs and cultures, following the class theme on Africa. A lesson in a class of hearing impaired pupils with additional disabilities taught the concepts of 'sharing', 'kindness' and 'caring' for others. This was also a lesson which was closely related to geography, based on a story of a family on a Caribbean island. Art was used in another lesson to demonstrate 'jealousy' and 'forgiveness' in the story of Joseph and his coloured coat.
199. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve well in relation to their disabilities as they gain further knowledge of the festivals and pilgrimages celebrated by members of the different faiths. Other lessons in music, geography, art and design and other aspects of the school's curriculum make a significant contribution to pupils' social and personal development. The learning is enhanced by the use of artefacts. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of such issues as 'friendship' and 'caring for others' and, in these various ways, their personal, moral and social development is very good.

200. The co-ordination of religious education is very effective. There is a comprehensive scheme of work that actively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is endorsed by a clear policy that is reinforced by cross-curricular links. It is also sufficiently flexible to take account of topical events as they occur and to reflect the faith of individual pupils if necessary. There is a good range of artefacts; they are handled with care and respect. These are carefully stored and displayed at appropriate remembrances and festivals. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to acts of worship and there are moments of silence and reflection built into the teaching. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection.

Post-16 education

201. Provision for post-16 education is very good and a strength of the school. Male and female students achieve equally well, as do students of different abilities. The high quality provision for post-16 students identified at the last inspection has been maintained well and the weaknesses identified (in ICT provision) have been addressed; students now use a range of ICT applications in many areas of their work. Since the last inspection, further work has been undertaken in curriculum development and a very relevant and broad curriculum is in place with a focus on life skills, key skills, vocational skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. Students' achievements are at least good and often very good in the different areas of the curriculum which they study. This high level of achievement is due to the relevance of the curriculum, the high quality of teaching and the climate of care and support which characterises all lessons in the post-16 department.

202. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are promoted through the key skills curriculum. Within this area of the curriculum, students practise their listening, signing, speaking and observational skills with symbols, for example, so that they become effective in communication in all its forms. Students develop their basic understanding of numeracy in practical settings such as handling money. Higher attaining students can deal with simple money transactions when they go on visits into the community, for example to a leisure centre or to McDonalds. Much of the students' work within the key skills area of the curriculum is related to problem solving, and the very good teaching which challenges students within a supportive and caring environment enables them to solve problems and overcome obstacles. For example, teachers are very skilful in non-intervention strategies; they wait for students to attempt answers or tasks and the students respond well to this approach. In a lesson in the life skills area of the curriculum, the teacher used signing and symbols to request a student to make a cup of tea. The student achieved this with little or no intervention by the teacher, even when the activity came to a halt as the student waited for help. When the student then realised that help was not forthcoming, she proceeded to complete the task unaided. In lessons within the knowledge and understanding of the world part of the curriculum, students are able to work independently as a result of very good teaching. For example, they produce art work of impressive quality using a range of media, such as different types of paint, crayon and coloured paper. They glue, paste and stick and experiment with different approaches. Fine examples of students' art work are on display throughout the post-16 building.

203. Students make good use of ICT in many areas of the post-16 curriculum. They use keyboards, overlays, touch screens, PowerPoint presentations and other technology such as video, digital cameras and overhead projectors.

204. Through the vocational skills part of the curriculum, students study in a range of appropriate subjects, for example forestry, horticulture and small-bird management. They undertake mini enterprises and, through links with the careers service, are able to visit work places and experience the world of work. In the life skills programme, students study home management where they undertake practical activities, take part in leisure and recreational activities, both at the school and outside, and they consider a wide range of personal and social matters, including relationships, social and moral issues and citizenship. As a result of their wide and relevant experiences, students in the post-16 department develop very good social skills and awareness; they are friendly and courteous to visitors and show confidence, for example when asking for names and telling their own to visitors.
205. In all aspects of their work, both within the curriculum and in their general conduct around the school, the post-16 students maintain good relationships with adults and each other and behave in a mature and appropriate way; they co-operate with staff and show interest in their learning.
206. The very good standards of students' achievements and behaviour are the result of teaching which is very good overall. Teachers plan their lessons very well, informed by their deep knowledge and understanding of the students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are sensitive to the students' range of needs but challenge students to make their best effort. Expectations are high. In an art and design lesson, for example, the teacher insisted that the student remained on task even when he would clearly have liked the teacher or the learning support assistant to do the 'messy' part of the work. Many of the students exhibit very challenging behaviour which can easily disrupt lessons, but the staff in the post-16 department are all very skilled in managing behaviour. In a DIY lesson, for example, one student was distracted and disruptive and refused initially to become involved with the lesson, but skilled teaching with excellent support from the learning support assistant resulted in the student completing the task of driving nails into wood using a hammer; a task that she did not find easy but nevertheless accomplished. All staff, both teachers and learning support assistants, in the post-16 department are very skilled at signing and using other forms of communication with the result that students and adults always interact well. For example, students in a lesson which was part of the knowledge and understanding of the world programme, were making kites and the level of communication between the teacher, the learning support assistants and the students was of a very high quality and contributed to the success of the lesson.
207. Students' responses in lessons indicated that they feel supported, safe and cared for and, consequently, are co-operative and prepared to undertake work they sometimes find difficult.
208. Teachers use assessment effectively to monitor student progress. Comprehensive records are maintained on students and these are used to ensure that students' individual and behavioural needs are met in lessons. A range of opportunities for students to gain accreditation are in place, these include, OCR, NPTC, EdExcel and the possibility of GCSE (for example in art and design).
209. A significant factor in the high quality of teaching and student achievement in the post-16 department is the quality of the support staff. In all lessons, learning support assistants are fully involved in the teaching and learning process; they are familiar with the lesson objectives, know the students extremely well and make appropriate, rapid and spontaneous interventions to support the teaching and the students' learning.

210. Resources and accommodation for post-16 students are generally good. The department stands separate from the school and is more or less self-contained, thus creating a significant difference between statutory education at the end of Key Stage 4 and the post-16 provision. Although many aspects of the accommodation are very good, others, for example design and technology work with resistant materials, is unsatisfactory. Currently, this consists of a bench in the corner of a rather unattractive room which is used for a wide range of different types of work. Plans are in place to remodel this room as a vocational workshop and this would provide a more appropriate environment for work with resistant materials.
211. The post-16 department is extremely well led and managed by the teacher in charge. She is very experienced, knows all the students very well, is supportive of staff and, through good monitoring arrangements, has a clear and well-informed view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the department. Documentation is of good quality, although a significant amount is currently due for review.