

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHMOUNT SCHOOL

Loughborough

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120352

Headteacher: Mrs. K. Waplinton

Lead inspector: Mike Kell

Dates of inspection: 29th September – 1st October 2003

Inspection number: 258863

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special (severe learning difficulties)
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 4 – 19 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 75

School address: Beacon Road
Loughborough
Postcode: LE11 2BG

Telephone number: 01509 268506
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr. John Doyle

Date of previous inspection: 26th – 29th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ashmount is an average size for a school of this type. The majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties but the school does have on roll a significant number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and others have autism and sensory impairment. Therefore, pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are significantly below national expectations. There are approximately the same numbers of boys and girls and all pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The school has a wide socio-economic mix in keeping with its intake from a wide geographical area. The majority of pupils have a White background, with about 10 per cent having an Asian background. Ten pupils are at the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language and the most common home languages spoken by these pupils are Gujerati, Bengali, and Punjabi. A few pupils attend some classes at local mainstream schools in order to extend their learning and to encourage their personal development. The school does not provide a base for any regular outreach service to local mainstream schools to support teachers in their work with pupils who have significant special needs.

The school received a Schools Achievement Award in 2003 and is currently part of the local education authority's Public Service Agreement project involved with target setting for pupils with special educational needs.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ashmount is a good school that is well led and managed. High quality teaching promotes pupils' learning well and they achieve well. The very good school ethos is supported by excellent links with parents and so pupils make very good gains in all aspects of their personal development. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching ensures pupils achieve well
- Very good personal development, behaviour and attitudes are promoted
- An excellent variety of aids is used to promote pupils' communication skills
- The excellent partnership with parents makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Good quality leadership and management are provided by the headteacher
- Very good links with the community and local schools and colleges enhance pupils' learning
- Inconsistent practice in lesson planning and assessment means that on occasions teachers focus more on the activities that pupils do rather than on what they learn
- The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 19 years is not sufficiently different and distinctive.
- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory and restrict pupils' learning

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. More effective teaching means that pupils achieve better and the provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly with a particular emphasis on its use as a communication aid. The health and safety issue has been addressed and all statutory requirements are now met. Although the length of the taught week has been increased for older pupils, it still falls below the recommended figure for some year groups. Assessment procedures require further development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 13	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, poor, very poor.

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, **pupils achieve well** at all stages and make good progress. Boys and girls make similarly good progress and pupils with English as an additional language and those with the most complex needs achieve equally well. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development.

Pupils' good progress in subjects of the curriculum is due to the overall good quality teaching and adult support that is available across the school. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in achievements in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The regular, routine, and consistent use of many and varied communication systems are a significant factor in the standards that pupils achieve. Speech, signing and symbols together with the use of communication books and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) provide a very good learning environment for pupils with autism. Pupils with the most complex and profound learning difficulties are provided with a sophisticated range of specialist access devices to new technology that supports their learning very well.

Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. The school's work in promoting **pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good**. This reflects the very good ethos in the school. There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with similar schools nationally.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality education for its pupils. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and lessons have many strengths. Teachers manage their pupils very well and this is based on the quality of relationships, encouragement and trust that feature in all lessons. Very high expectations of behaviour, pupils' application to work, interesting activities and very high quality two-way communication all contribute greatly to pupils' good achievements.

The school provides a satisfactory range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum through extra curricular provision are good. The curriculum provision for pupils with the most complex needs is particularly good because of the school's commitment to include them in mixed ability groups. This is because of the advantages to them of increased stimulation from their classmates, especially in terms of language acquisition and social development. The curriculum programme for pupils aged 14 to 19 years is not sufficiently different to that lower down the school. The length of the taught week for pupils aged seven to 16 years remains below national recommendations. Resources are good and well used but aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Pupils are provided with good quality support, advice and guidance. The school involves pupils by seeking their views in a satisfactory way.

Links with parents are excellent. The school has very good links with the community, other schools and colleges. The school provides satisfactory outreach support to teachers and pupils in mainstream schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance of the school is good. The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership. Management is good and is supported by an effective self-review process.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in very high regard and are very positive about the education and care provided and the impact that this has on the achievements and happiness of their children. Pupils are very positive and say that 'it's a friendly school'.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are to:

- Ensure that assessment of pupils' achievements is consistent, recorded, and focuses on what pupils have learned
- Incorporate assessment information into all lesson plans so that they state clearly what it is anticipated individuals and groups of pupils will learn
- Improve the curriculum for pupils and students aged 14 to 19 years by making it more distinctive
- In consultation with the local education authority, improve the accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with the most complex needs achieve equally well. Boys and girls make similarly good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn well because good teaching ensures that they are all included equally in the activities provided.
- All pupils' language development and communication skills are promoted through adults' use of a very impressive range of strategies.
- The communication skills of pupils with the most complex needs are enhanced through the very good use of new technology.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 11 achieve very well in their personal development
- The highest attaining pupils extend their learning because of very effective links with other schools.
- The highest attaining pupils in Years 10 to 13 do not have access to a sufficiently wide range of accredited courses that meets their needs

Commentary

1. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). This represents significant improvement on the findings from the last inspection when achievements were judged as satisfactory or, in the case of ICT, no judgement could be made. Pupils also achieve well in art and design, music and physical education. They achieve very well in personal, social and health education (PSHE). Achievements are satisfactory in French, religious education, history, geography and design and technology.
2. Pupils' achievements are further enhanced when they go out into the community. Local schools, resources and facilities are used very effectively to extend and enrich learning and to meet the learning and social needs of individuals through the school's inclusion programme.
3. The regular, routine, and consistent use of many and varied communication systems are a significant factor in the standards that pupils achieve. Speech, signing and symbols together with the use of communication books and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) provide a very good learning environment for pupils with autism. Pupils with the most complex and profound learning difficulties are supported by a sophisticated range of specialist access devices to new technology that supports their learning very well. These include touch screens, single switches, flexible mounting arms, neck, knee and foot switches, and alternative keyboards which provide good access to the curriculum for a significant minority of pupils.
4. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is evident in its ethos and all the work that it does. Registration sessions and periods at the end of the day are used very well to help to promote personal development. The youngest pupils are encouraged to develop their communication skills and confidence through activities like Circle Time when teachers and learning support assistants encourage pupils very well to participate. Older pupils have the maturity, self-esteem and confidence to engage in discussions. For example, a class of post-16 students took part in a very interesting and stimulating discussion about current affairs based on newspapers and magazines that they had brought into school. The school's very good provision for PSHE provides more formal, planned opportunities to promote all aspects of personal development. The school uses these opportunities very well.

5. Skilled teachers ensure that speaking and listening are very well promoted in all subjects. Key words are used regularly in mathematics, ICT, and science and pupils learn vocabulary related to the subject. Higher attaining pupils access information through books and the internet in a range of subjects. The basic skills of numeracy are well taught in other subjects of the curriculum. In swimming teachers use a range of number songs and rhymes to develop pupils' water confidence, and understanding of number is encouraged as pupils count in subjects like science and physical education. Teachers plan opportunities for younger pupils to develop and rehearse ICT skills in different subjects of the curriculum, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

6. The school offers two accredited courses of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN); Transition Challenge and Towards Independence. These courses provide an appropriate degree of challenge for many pupils and enable them to receive recognition of their success. However, other courses that could be more appropriate for higher attaining pupils should be explored.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

7. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good because of excellent relationships. They make very good progress in their personal development because provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to their work and activities
- Pupils behave very well in lessons, around the school and when making outside visits
- Relationships are excellent throughout the whole school community
- The very positive ethos supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well
- Pupils' punctuality is very good
- There are no exclusions from the school
- The personal development of post-16 students is limited by the accommodation.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.7%	School data	0%
National data	9.1%	National data	0.6%

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

8. Pupils' attendance is as expected in a school of this type. Although for many this is affected by absences for illness or medical treatment, they come to school when they can. Punctuality is very good because the transport is efficient and brings pupils to school in good time.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	59	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

9. The excellent relationships and the caring, inclusive attitudes of all staff create a positive atmosphere to which pupils respond very well. Pupils arrive at school calm, settled and ready to learn. They listen carefully to instructions, try hard with their work and take pride in their achievements. Many are able to maintain concentration and work hard because they are interested in what they are doing. The very positive interaction that pupils have with staff means that they are well motivated to learn and respond enthusiastically. For example, the youngest pupils couldn't wait to hear the next part of a story in a literacy lesson and were excited as the teacher turned the page to find out what happened next.

10. Pupils behave very well in all areas of the school. Even though some pupils enter with behavioural difficulties their behaviour improves as they move through the school. This is because all staff have the same high levels of expectation and apply behaviour management strategies fairly and consistently. There is a very friendly atmosphere and pupils enjoy the good use of humour by staff, sometimes initiating it themselves. They are sociable and polite when moving around the school because they know how they are expected to behave. Outside school, for example when taking part in an art lesson at another school, pupils act responsibly, get involved and respond very well to the teacher. Post-16 students behaved maturely and sensibly when visiting the shops in Leicester to buy sweets for a Divali party.

11. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development as a result of the school's very positive ethos. Regular assemblies and periods of reflection at the end of the day are a significant factor in promoting pupils' spiritual development. In addition, pupils develop spiritually because they are all treated with dignity and respect and staff work with all pupils, no matter how profound their difficulties, to develop in them a sense of self-worth and identity. Pupils' moral development is also very good. They learn to understand and accept that others have different needs to their own, to take control of their behaviour and understand that their actions might have an impact on how others feel.

12. The school provides many opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development through a wide range of visits outside school, including residential trips, and by welcoming visitors to the school. Their social development is promoted well through their experiences of mixing with their peers in mainstream schools and further education colleges. Pupils develop good levels of independence, through activities such as taking registers to the office and walking to and from the transport on their own, when older students frequently help younger ones. The lack of a common-

room facility for post-16 students, however, impedes the development of their independent living and social skills.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

13. The school provides a good quality education. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. The school provides a satisfactory range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. The school has created an excellent partnership with parents. Community links are extensive and benefit pupils greatly and there are strong links with other schools. The outreach service offered by the school to support pupils in mainstream schools is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

14. Pupils of all ages are taught well and lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Consequently all pupils learn well and make good progress in developing new skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers manage pupils extremely well and expect very high standards of behaviour and pupils' work
- Learning support assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning
- Pupils' communication skills are encouraged very well through adults' skilled application of many communication strategies, including the use of ICT
- The highest quality of relationships underpins teachers' very high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour
- Teachers' planning is inconsistent
- Teachers do not consistently use a good and simple whole school assessment system.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	13 (35%)	15 (41%)	9 (24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

15. The overall quality of teaching and learning are good and lessons have many strengths. Teachers manage their pupils very well and this is based on the quality of relationships, encouragement and trust that feature in all lessons. Very high expectations of behaviour, pupils' application to work, interesting activities and very high quality two-way communication all contribute greatly to pupils' good achievements.

16. Pupils' successes in learning are underpinned by the communication expertise shown by all adults, who are particularly skilled at using augmentative and additional communication systems such as signing, symbols, PECS as well as text. However, they do not do this to the detriment of promoting speaking and listening skills. Consequently, pupils show developing maturity in expressing their own views orally and listening to those of others. Teachers' very effective orchestration of discussions and their use of questions are particularly influential in this respect. Questions are carefully worded to challenge individuals and others are given the opportunity to extend the detail of the answers provided. All of these features were evident in a session when a class of seventeen year olds discussed a newspaper article about escaped refugees.

17. The school also employs a comprehensive range of high technology aids to support pupils' communication after they have been individually assessed. These devices enable pupils to participate fully in lessons as well as encouraging their personal development as they can express choices and make independent contributions. However, no pupils are totally reliant on these technological aids. If they break down, or become inappropriate, all pupils have access to alternative communication strategies in order to ensure that they can continue to participate.

18. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour mean that pupils listen carefully to what they are asked to do and respond positively. As a result, they make a great deal of effort and approach tasks with very good interest and concentration. They are further encouraged to do this because of the range of interesting activities that teachers provide. Skilled teachers with very good understanding of their pupils' needs and good subject knowledge provide many opportunities for them to acquire subject-specific skills and understanding. In addition, because teachers are committed to developing pupils' personal qualities as well as their subject knowledge, activities often require pupils to work independently or collaboratively.

19. Good quality resources, which at times are simple but effective, are used well to stimulate learning. Specific multi-sensory resources are used equally effectively to promote the learning of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and other resources are tailored to meet the needs of pupils with other educational needs. Links with other colleagues, such as specialist teachers for pupils with visual and hearing impairment, a music therapist, and an augmentative and alternative communication specialist provide regular and targeted support.

20. Lessons are well organised and managed because generally activities are well planned in advance. The highest quality plans identify clearly tasks that are carefully chosen to meet individual pupils' needs, with planning based on teachers' detailed information about pupils' prior learning. Consequently, all pupils are included and actively involved as lessons are worthwhile experiences for all pupils. At other times, planning does not provide such detail but pupils still learn well because of adults' knowledge of their pupils. There is extremely good teamwork between teachers and very effective learning support assistants and consequently they ensure that individual pupils reinforce and extend their learning although more precise planning on these occasions would better ensure such progress.

21. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. In lessons teachers are good at observing how well pupils are learning and they, and learning support assistants, adjust what they are doing according to how they judge pupils to be progressing. However, the notes made after lessons often do not reflect what has happened in terms of pupils' learning. They may say, for instance, that the pupil looked at the light and enjoyed the activity. They do not tend to say, for example, how long or how often he looked at the light; whether or not this was better than previous looking; how much prompting was needed, if any; and how well he achieved against other targets for the lesson. Assessment information of this sort is not sufficiently useful in deciding what needs to be taught next, and how it should be taught. This lack of detail continues in the reports that are subsequently written. In a number of subjects, such as science, geography and art, comments do not often say whether or not a pupil has learned anything, or if he has made progress in needing less help. Instead, they say more about what the teacher did, or what the topic was, or if the pupil enjoyed the topic

The curriculum

22. The school provides a satisfactory range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum through extra curricular provision are good. Resources are good and well used but aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for pupils with additional special educational needs is very good
- There is a very good personal, social and health education programme

- Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum well
- Good quality resources are well organised
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory in some areas and limits what can be taught
- The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 19 years is not sufficiently distinctive
- The length of the taught week for pupils aged seven to 16 years remains below national recommendations

Commentary

23. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in relation to the key issues relating to the curriculum. Provision for ICT has improved very well and all pupils now have many opportunities to develop and rehearse their skills. The length of the taught week remains unresolved. The school has partially addressed this issue by increasing the length of the morning for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students but overall the taught week remains significantly below that in both comparable schools and against national recommendations. Part of the problem lies with the use of organised transport. The transport is extremely well organised, efficient and punctual but buses carry pupils of a wide age range from large geographical areas and many are on the bus for a considerable time. Therefore, if time is added to the beginning or end of the day to benefit the oldest pupils then vulnerable tired young children will also have the length of their day extended. However, there are times during the day that the school could consider readjusting in order to extend taught time.

24. The school's curriculum takes appropriate account of guidance in the National Curriculum and the national literacy and numeracy strategies for pupils in Years 1 to 9. Statutory requirements, including provision for religious education and collective worship, are met. There are a good number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to allow the curriculum to be taught effectively, supported by good quality resources. All pupils, including those with additional special needs, benefit from the full range of the curriculum although the relatively short taught week means that some subjects, like geography and design and technology, are only available on a modular basis. Lunchtime clubs, such as an ICT club, games and a Christian fellowship group provide a number of well planned additional experiences. Small drama and musical productions further enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils have opportunities to take part in residential visits and these make a significant contribution to their personal development.

25. The curriculum provision for pupils with the most complex needs is particularly good due to the school's commitment to include them in mixed ability groups. This is because of the advantages they receive through increased stimulation from their classmates, especially in terms of language acquisition and social development. Pupils are assessed by an augmentative and additional communication specialist and then provided with suitable communication aids. They are trained and monitored and very well supported in the use of this equipment. The curriculum needs of these pupils are further met through an appropriate sensory curriculum, such as the use of a multi-sensory room and stimulating resources.

26. While the main purpose of links with mainstream schools is to promote pupils' personal development, these contacts are used well to meet the curriculum needs of higher attaining pupils. Individual pupils are supported, on a weekly basis, when they attend mainstream classes for subjects such as art. Links with the local college provide similar opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students to widen their curriculum through a variety of taster courses. This provision makes a good contribution to the school's curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 19 years but generally this programme is not sufficiently different to that lower down the school. Accreditation is available through ASDAN but pupils cannot work for any other qualifications. In addition, pupils do not have access to specialist teaching areas or to appropriate leisure / independent living facilities.

27. Some aspects of the accommodation are very high quality, such as the swimming pool, library, and the food technology room, but accommodation overall is unsatisfactory. Apart from the lack of specialist accommodation for subjects like science, design and technology, and art the school does not have appropriate space for indoor physical education or whole school gatherings.

28. The lack of appropriate leisure / independent living facilities for post-16 students reduces significantly opportunities for personal development. Four classes are based in demountable buildings. Although these have ramped access, walkways are uncovered, exposed, and not sufficiently wide so that wheelchair 'traffic jams' occur. It is not appropriate that very vulnerable pupils should have to travel between buildings in this way in the winter. After such a journey they are cold and not ready for work. This has an adverse effect on their learning.

29. Circle time for the younger pupils is good preparation for their future work in PSHE. The programme for older pupils takes appropriate account of matters relating to sex education and relationships, as well as alcohol and drugs misuse. Topics such as personal care, safety, healthy living, bullying, and sex and relationships are all taught in a structured and progressive way and all pupils have elements of citizenship built into the programme.

Care, guidance and support

30. The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Pupils are provided with good quality support, advice and guidance. The school involves pupils by seeking their views in a satisfactory way.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good awareness of health and safety requirements especially with regard to the needs of the pupils and the difficulties of accommodation
- Very good quality care for all pupils by all staff in the school
- Good induction arrangements for pupils new to the school
- Good quality careers education and guidance
- Excellent relationships and high quality communication means that pupils are well supported
- Individual education plans are too complex and lengthy for teachers to judge small steps in progress that pupils make.
- Procedures for identifying and monitoring pupils in public care are not yet formalised
- Pupils' views are highly valued although there is no formal process for regularly gathering their views of the school.

Commentary

31. This is a very caring school where pupils are happy and well looked after. The quality of support offered to pupils is good because staff have excellent relationships with them and understand their individual needs very well. There is strong emphasis on using every method of communication possible so that pupils can be fully understood, are able to participate as much as possible in their learning and can express their wishes and choices. While there is no formal forum, such as a school council, for pupils to discuss school life and how improvements can be made, staff listen carefully at every opportunity to what individual pupils have to say to them and take their views seriously.

32. The school has correct procedures for child protection, and is aware of its responsibilities towards those pupils in public care, although discrete monitoring of these pupils is currently informal. The school has very good awareness of health and safety requirements and is particularly vigilant where the accommodation presents significant difficulties, for example, when pupils move around narrow corridors or come from the outside demountable classrooms.

33. All staff, including support assistants, medical, administrative and maintenance staff, demonstrate very good care, concern and respect for pupils. They understand their backgrounds and difficulties well and have excellent relationships with their parents and carers. This means that there is open dialogue between home and school so that any worries are dealt with straight away. Because all staff follow the school's ethos of care and concern for the individual, pupils are able to

develop trusting relationships with all adults in the school and learn to understand the expectations that they will behave well and respect one another.

34. There are good induction arrangements for pupils who are new to the school. Extended visits with parents, discussions with staff and careful planning to provide for each pupil's individual needs mean that pupils quickly get used to school routines and settle down to their learning. Pupils are helped to mature as they move through the school. They are offered good quality support and guidance through monitoring of their personal and social development, recognition of their achievements in the classroom and in celebration assemblies and, for pupils aged 13 to 19 years, through a well-planned programme for careers education. Pupils are very positive and say that 'it's a friendly school' and that 'people help you if you fall out with each other.'

35. All pupils have individual education plans (IEPs) that identify targets for their learning but these plans are too complex for teachers to manage. Instead of having a few very specific and focused targets that can be included in planning across the curriculum, IEPs may have a list of up to 20 targets some of which are simply descriptions of a series of routine activities. This is particularly the case for pupils with the most profound and multiple difficulties and therefore it is extremely difficult for pupils to meet these targets when they are so wide and involve relatively large steps. Adults' detailed knowledge of the pupils means that they know when, how and where small steps in progress have taken place but the complexity of IEPs and the lack of very sharply stated targets mean that teachers are not always able to record this progress. Consequently, IEPs contain comments such as "continue" year on year even though there has been progress within some of these targets.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

36. Links with parents are excellent. The school has very good links with the community, other schools and colleges. The school provides satisfactory outreach support to teachers and pupils in mainstream schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have excellent views of the school and its work
- The school communicates very well with parents and provides them with high quality written information
- The school deals very well with parents' questions and worries
- There are very good links with other schools and colleges in the area
- The school uses its links with the community effectively to extend pupils' learning
- There are no regular support services provided by the school for assisting pupils with special needs in mainstream schools and their teachers.

Commentary

37. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and works very effectively with them. As a result, parents hold the school in very high regard. They are very positive about the education and care provided and the impact that this has on the achievements and happiness of their children. In the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting, parents showed almost unanimous support for the school. They say that there really is a 'partnership' between home and school and that 'the school listens very well and responds.' They report that they feel involved and that they get 'excellent information about how my child is getting on.'

38. There has been good progress since the last inspection because parents are now much more involved in their children's education. This is because the school provides them with much better quality oral and written information about what is going on in school and how well pupils are progressing. High priority is placed on daily communication with them through the home-school diaries and telephone calls. The school is open and friendly which puts parents at their ease when they wish to speak to staff. All records, such as individual education plans, are fully discussed with

parents. This means that parents know how their child is being taught and managed and they can continue this support at home. Although the school does not regularly seek parents' views in a formal way, such as through a questionnaire, it encourages parents to discuss their worries as soon as they arise. Parents say that they are able to air their views and concerns with confidence and know that they will be taken seriously.

39. The school makes very good use of the local area and community to enrich the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils have made a wide range of visits to places such as Twycross Zoo, Skegness, a Hindu temple and the local shops. Many visitors also come into the school, adding a broad range of enrichment to pupils' learning. These include children from other schools, for example dancers celebrating Divali. The school is fortunate to have access to a large number of volunteers, including some parents, who work alongside staff in many areas of the school such as in swimming sessions. Local charities are very supportive of the school and provide pupils with high quality resources such as the multi-sensory room and library books.

40. The school has very good links with local schools and colleges. Where possible, it extends pupils' experiences by seeking suitable integration links, such as for pupils attending art lessons at a nearby secondary school, play opportunities for younger pupils at the adjacent primary school and placements at the nearby college for post-16 students. These links are well planned and carefully monitored to ensure that they are appropriate for the pupils and are making a positive difference to their learning and social skills. The school continues to make very good use of local sporting facilities and involves pupils in events with other schools through, for example, the Jubilee Sports Association. There are good opportunities for students in training or on work experience to visit the school and to work with staff and pupils.

41. There has been little impetus from the local education authority for the school to develop an outreach support service to local schools. Therefore, there is no regular, formal extended service currently provided although school staff do work in schools in other ways. These include training staff in the use of Makaton signing and responding to individual 'one off' requests to advise schools in their work with pupils with complex needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

42. Governance of the school is good. The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership. Management is effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has high aspirations and a clear sense of purpose in ensuring pupils achieve to the best of their ability.
- Performance management and staff development are used very well to bring about improvement
- Finances are managed very effectively to support educational priorities
- The school is fully committed to ensuring pupils' individual needs are met
- Data collected on the achievement of different groups of pupils is evaluated but not acted upon fully
- The school development plan has too many targets and does not prioritise its most important strategic objectives
- In most ways governors work well but do not challenge senior staff as much as they could

Commentary

43. There has been an improvement in the way the governing body functions since the last inspection. Governors now fulfil statutory requirements very well and have a good understanding of how the school functions and what needs to be done. This has been achieved through their involvement in development planning and focused visits. They are very supportive of the school. However they do not always discuss in sufficient depth with senior staff proposals they put forward to them in order to ensure all avenues have been explored before decisions are made.

44. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and this has ensured improvements in leadership and management. The senior management team lead by example, are often in the classroom and, as a result, have a good overview of what is going on and where developments are needed. The headteacher's high aspirations for the school ensure that there is an ethos that encourages high standards. She aims to make sure pupils achieve as well as they can and that their individual needs are fully met. To accomplish this she has clear ideas for the future, including developing inclusion links so pupils have access to the provision that best suits them. The leadership of core subjects such as English, mathematics, science, ICT, and PSHE is equally effective. Subject development plans show how subject co-ordinators have moved their areas forward and there is regular non-contact time for these staff to carry out their management and monitoring functions. This is carried out reasonably well, although guidance on assessment is lacking in some subjects. Strategic planning varies. Strengths are the very thorough staff development targets, the yearly evaluations which are used to revise targets, and the clear responses to government and local education authority priorities. However, there are many targets, some of which are not prioritised or even strategic, and they detract from important issues.

45. All staff, including support staff, are involved in high quality performance management and appraisal and this gives them the confidence to work with the various special needs of pupils in each class. There are very good induction procedures shared between the deputy head and headteacher which help staff settle into the school so that they become effective quickly. Staff development is a priority and is linked to individual and whole school needs contributing very effectively to raising standards. There is a good range of meetings to ensure staff work effectively in teams, discussing pupils' needs and planning work. Monitoring, particularly of teaching, is good. It has improved since the last inspection and is supported by an effective self-review process which takes place in co-operation with the local education authority.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	912698
Total expenditure	909934
Expenditure per pupil	12132

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	81693
Balance carried forward to the next year	118670

46. Financial planning and administration have improved and are now very good. This is well supported by the governors and the bursar who closely monitor finances. This means that the school is able to direct resources effectively towards its priorities, such as carrying forward money to pay for building improvements. There is clear delegation to subject co-ordinators and senior managers and governors check the educational impact of how money is spent. For example, improvements in literacy have already been linked to the new library. The school seeks to ensure that the services it receives are provided at the best value. However it needs to more formally canvas parents' and pupils' views. Data on the performance of different groups of pupils is being collected and analysed but the school does not yet use this information to make sure all pupils are achieving equally well and, if not, determine a suitable response.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

English as an additional language

47. Pupils whose home language is not English make progress at the same rate as their classmates. The school manages the educational provision for these pupils well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know the pupils and their learning needs very well and provide good individual teaching for them.
- Good support is provided by a visiting specialist teacher for those pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning English.

Commentary

48. These pupils' learning is restricted more by their severe and complex learning difficulties than by their lack of English understanding and speaking. Teachers tailor their lessons well to meet their individual needs. Classroom support staff and teachers are good at helping pupils with their learning on an individual basis: they use clear speech, regular use of key words, signing, pictures, symbols and objects to get their meaning across to the pupils. A specialist teacher from the local support service works well in the classrooms with the pupils who are most in need. She is experienced and well organised and concentrates on translating for the pupils so they can understand what a lesson is about. This is the preferred way of working, rather than teaching English directly to the pupils, and it works well. This teacher also brings in a selection of appropriate cultural resources to help pupils' learning in different subjects. For example, she brought in dandia sticks to assist with counting as the pupils will be seeing these at home at the present time as they are associated with navratri, the beginning of the Divali festival. She is a valuable contact with pupils' families, helping them to understand what is being taught, and how they can help.

49. The school has begun to set targets for all groups of pupils, including pupils whose home language is not English. Early results indicate that pupils in this group do not exceed their targets as frequently as other groups of pupils do. However, this appears to be a result of target-setting that is not yet as accurate as it might be for different groups of pupils rather than a lack of progress by these particular pupils.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 – 4 AND POST-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

50. Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because adults use a very good range of communication strategies.
- Teaching, based on well adapted national strategies, ensures that pupils of all ages make good or very good progress in speaking and listening, reading, and writing.
- An excellent library enhances pupils' learning very well.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.

Commentary

51. The school's use of all forms of augmentative and additional communication strategies and devices is particularly impressive. The use of sensory resources, signing and symbols to promote communication for all pupils is very good throughout the school. Speaking and listening, reading and writing are all supported by the use of sign and symbol where appropriate. In addition, notices, labels, and captions around school are all in word and symbol. Every room is identified by a tactile device which shows the symbol and speaks its name. The use of new technology by staff and pupils is equally very good and the provision of a range of electronic communication aids enables pupils with additional learning difficulties to make very good progress.

52. An appropriate strong emphasis throughout the school on speaking and listening, supported by speech therapists, ensures very good progress in this area. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils well to target questions in group sessions. Pupils progress from giving simple answers in Years 3 to 6 to a more sophisticated approach to communication at post-16, analysing and responding to the contributions of others in the group. Although there is a wide range of ability in each year group, pupils make good or very good progress in reading. Pupils learn about characters and plots, and some can anticipate and predict what may happen next. A love of stories is encouraged in exciting literacy lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Popular fiction, such as *Spiderman*, motivates pupils aged 12 and 13 years, while higher attaining, older pupils are encouraged to read newspapers as well as books for information. Inclusion for pupils with complex learning difficulties is achieved by the use of sensory resources and very good support from learning support assistants. Progress in writing is good for pupils of all ages as all pupils follow a whole school policy. Progress in written communication is also encouraged well through the use of symbols as pupils learn to sequence them to form sentences, to give information, retell a story, or make a request.

53. The excellent and well-used library supports the teaching of English very well. In a very welcoming room, it houses a wide range of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry books as well as a selection of relevant videos. The organisation is superb. All books for use in literacy hours are accompanied by very good resources and previous lesson plans. When suitable, age-appropriate books have not been available, staff have made their own. Many of both the commercially and staff-produced books are accompanied by symbol "translations". Non-fiction books are arranged by curriculum subject, and reading books by level. This allows pupils to learn to use this library in the younger age groups as a preparation for using the public library in Years 10 to 13.

54. Pupils' very good learning in lessons occurs because teachers plan well and have high expectations. This develops in pupils very good attitudes and behaviour so that post-16 students have a mature approach to study. The common approach to planning, which is based on national literacy strategy guidelines, ensures a consistent learning environment in which pupils respond to familiar routines. Teachers are enthusiastic and present interesting and challenging work supported by very good resources.

55. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of the subject and the commitment to achieve it. Management is good, but the monitoring of teaching does not occur on a regular basis. A broad, balanced and relevant curriculum has been implemented and this introduces pupils to a wide range of literature, from simple stories to Shakespeare. It provides them with the resources and skills to access books and the internet for information and is enhanced by visitors, such as the local librarian, to story time and theatre workshops which culminate in a performance for parents and friends. The assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do is good overall, moderated by the co-ordinator, and the information gained is used well in planning. However, the monitoring of progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is less well developed because targets are not sufficiently clear and precise to allow small achievements to be recognised and recorded.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. Skilled teachers ensure that speaking and listening are very well promoted in all subjects in addition to the use of signing and symbols that allows all pupils to participate. Key words are used regularly in mathematics, ICT, and science and pupils learn vocabulary related to the subject. Higher attaining pupils access information through books and the internet in a range of subjects. However, since many pupils are at an early stage of reading and writing, few examples are seen until Years 10 to 13, when there is evidence through ASDAN work of reading for information and recording results.

French

57. Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils experience elements of French culture and tradition, introduced through shopping, eating, drinking, and music
- Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties are fully involved in experiencing the smells, tastes and sounds of France

Commentary

58. French is taught only to pupils in Years 7 to 9 but no lessons were seen during the inspection. Therefore it is not appropriate to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, pupils do develop their knowledge of the French language through activities focusing on simple greetings, colours, numbers, and food and drink. The most competent pupils make satisfactory progress in retaining learned vocabulary and those with profound and multiple difficulties show recognition of greetings.

59. Pupils and students aged 14 to 19 years consider aspects of French life through their ASDAN work when their understanding of greetings, colours and numbers is consolidated. The topics studied, such as school, holidays, clothing and hobbies also provide pupils with new opportunities to extend their vocabulary.

MATHEMATICS

60. Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effect of implementing the national numeracy strategy is seen in the good quality of teaching and learning.
- The subject makes a good contribution to developing pupils' independent skills
- Well chosen resources, including new technology, are used well to include all pupils
- The subject is well led and managed
- The assessment and recording of pupil progress is not consistent across the school.

Commentary

61. Standards in mathematics have improved well since the previous inspection. This is due mainly to the way in which the school has adopted and adapted the principles of the national numeracy strategy. Teachers put these principles into practice well so that lessons are well structured with a three part lesson format that includes well paced introductions, carefully chosen activities, and effective plenary sessions that establish the degree of pupils' learning. The quality of learning is further enhanced by teachers' references in their planning to pupils' targets in individual education plans.

62. Teachers present exciting and challenging lessons and all pupils are enabled to participate because highly skilled support staff understand pupils' different needs and abilities. In addition, a wide variety of communication techniques are always in evidence and therefore pupils know what is going on and what is expected of them. As a result, they enjoy the subject and behave well and teachers use a range of resources and devices, that are carefully chosen to match pupils' needs, to grab and maintain their interest. These range from an inflatable hammer to songs and new technology. Songs are used particularly well to reinforce learning and to develop early mathematical language such as more/less and bigger/smaller as well as to consolidate number work. *The Teddy Bears' Picnic*, *'One, two, three together'*, a song about crocodiles, and one to count jam tarts were all used well to encourage understanding and to check on learning. Simple, but effective, resources such as hats and mirrors enabled Year 6 pupils to practice counting skills as they looked at facial features, and the smell, taste and feel of oranges were used effectively as part of a multi-sensory approach with pupils with more complex needs. New technology was equally effective and appropriately well used by higher achieving Year 9 pupils to rehearse counting in twos.

63. Mathematics lessons provide many opportunities for developing aspects of pupils' personal development. The youngest pupils do this through class-based activities, such as the Year 3 pupils who were making milk shakes and were encouraged to make choices and to count out ingredients. Older pupils have increasing opportunities for independence and applying their mathematical knowledge in everyday situations as they visit the shops to buy food and make purchases in the coffee bar when they visit college.

64. Mathematics is well managed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. She is committed to raising standards further by evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school although this does not take place routinely at the present time. This will also enable the best practice to be shared across the school. Monitoring procedures do not ensure that assessment records are maintained consistently and in a way that identifies more clearly the small gains in knowledge and understanding that pupils acquire.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. The basic skills of numeracy are well taught in other subjects of the curriculum and a number of examples were seen during the inspection. In swimming teachers use number songs and rhymes to develop pupils' water confidence by encouraging them to immerse themselves in the

water. Year 9 pupils in science counted the number of planets in the solar system as they placed simulated planets on to orbits drawn on the ground. A class of fifteen and sixteen year olds with more complex needs counted their successes as they rolled balls into hoops while Year 2 pupils were encouraged to count the number of tablets in a pill box as they read a book together prior to a role play exercise.

SCIENCE

66. Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy lessons and often achieve very well
- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, teach them confidently and use imaginative resources to motivate pupils
- The subject is well managed
- Assessment is inconsistent and not always used to plan further work
- The lack of a science room makes it difficult for higher attaining pupils to take part in extended experiments

Commentary

67. The achievement of pupils overall is good because staff know their pupils very well, plan where they will need support and build work on previous lessons. Pupils in Year 11 achieve very well. Pupils are enthusiastic about science because teaching is well organised to meet their individual needs. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 experience relevant work on a range of topics so that higher attaining pupils acquire a good vocabulary. All pupils share work and are keen to learn more. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are keen to ask questions with higher attaining pupils remembering previous work so that by the time pupils are in Year 11 they are often achieving very well due to activities planned to ensure they work as independently and scientifically as possible. For example, while working on a textures investigation they used prediction successfully to further their understanding of the task. Pupils reinforce their literacy skills effectively when using texts, signing or pointing to symbols during practical work. There are good information and communication technology links with activities that make use of CD ROMs, the Internet and digital cameras. The use of this technology motivates pupils and helps to maintain their concentration.

68. The lack of a science room presents problems for staff. It is difficult to organise extended practical activities for older, higher attaining pupils using equipment such as Bunsen burners. Despite this, teachers do the best they can to ensure all pupils have the best possible chances to learn by making sure lessons are very practical but challenging so pupils remain interested. A particular feature of science lessons is the care taken to make sure resources are relevant to pupils' needs and support the learning of different groups. Group work is well planned and organised so it is relevant to all. For example, resources pupils can touch or hear are used to support pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those who are visually impaired, while research using the internet is planned for higher attaining pupils. Consequently, all pupils join in activities that motivate them to try their best. Learning support assistants make a substantial contribution to the quality of teaching due to very good team work with teachers and very good relationships with pupils.

69. Good subject management has led to suitable improvement since the last inspection when teaching and achievement were satisfactory. The national strategy is actively being developed in Years 7 to 9 to help challenge pupils further. Assessment is satisfactory but there is some inconsistent recording of what pupils know, understand and can do. A new lesson planning format and linked assessment is being trialled and where this was seen being used it was easier for teachers to evaluate pupil progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

70. Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Confident teachers ensure that ICT is used and fully integrated into the curriculum
- The subject is used very well to facilitate pupils' communication
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and very relevant to pupils' needs
- Leadership and management are good
- There is no routine monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

71. It was only possible to observe two ICT lessons during the inspection but there were many instances of pupils throughout different year groups using new technology across different subjects of the curriculum. Teachers are confident about using new technology, having completed their national training, and they are very well supported by a variety of high quality resources. These include an internet-linked computer in every classroom, as well as a computer suite for class activities, and equipment such as digital cameras. The provision of special access devices ensure equality of opportunity as all pupils can access computers.

72. As pupils get many opportunities to refine their skills they achieve well at levels appropriate to their capability. At one level, pupils with more complex needs make choices and give responses through using a touch screen or switches, such as the Year 9 pupils who did this to observe cause and effect when they investigated 'stop' and 'go' commands. Higher attaining pupils access information about the planets from a CD ROM, use the internet to research information, retrieve pictures to use in a project, and retell a story using symbol software on the computer. Post-16 students use computers to learn social signs and some have basic word processing skills. They know how to use a range of equipment including digital cameras, TV and video, photocopier, and camcorder and are aware of how information technology affects everyday life.

73. Communication throughout the school is supported very well by the use of information technology. Staff use it frequently to produce learning aids such as communication boards, labels, resources for word recognition, sentence building, reading support, and resources for the PECS. It is also used to produce on-screen word or symbol banks to facilitate writing. For a significant minority of pupils, their main form of communication is through an electronic communication aid. These pupils are well trained in the use of this equipment and were seen to produce sentences by accessing several layers, or grids, to find the right words. This skill is transferred to using the computer for writing. A number of skilled learning support assistants form a communication support group to further develop these skills.

74. Leadership and management of the subject are good and some aspects of it are very good. For example the co-ordinator seeks, evaluates, and demonstrates new software and then produces a reference file for every class. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that, over time, all aspects of information technology are covered. Medium and short term planning is relevant to the needs and abilities of individual pupils, combining challenge with achievable targets. The co-ordinators of English and information technology work together very closely, and this has been very effective in the development of communication in the school. At present teaching in the subject is not monitored by the co-ordinator, and the whole school review of the subject is not due for some time. This limits the sharing of good practice.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. Teachers plan opportunities for younger pupils to develop ICT skills in different subjects of the curriculum. Pupils aged 11 to 14 years develop new skills in discrete lessons but they, too, get

many opportunities to rehearse their previously acquired ICT skills across the curriculum. In particular, ICT is used very well in English, mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

76. Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad curriculum ensures that pupils learn about Christianity and other major world religions.
- The subject make a significant contribution to all aspects of pupils' personal development
- A range of multi-faith artefacts and visits are used well to support learning
- Assessment procedures do not identify sufficiently clearly the small steps in progress pupils are making.

Commentary

77. There were no opportunities to observe lessons during the inspection but the satisfactory standard that pupils achieve was evident in their work and the displays around the school.

78. Religious education makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' understanding of living in multi-cultural Britain through their exposure to features of religions such as Sikhism and Islam as well as Christianity. Learning is reinforced and supported well by visits into the culturally-rich local communities. Older pupils also begin to develop understanding of national and religious festivals too, such as Divali and the Chinese New Year when they experience aspects of life through using resources such as chopsticks. Post-16 students also begin to appreciate moral and social concepts as they consider the need for rules and develop their understanding of the differences in key beliefs during their study of famous people.

79. Assessment processes are satisfactory but there is some inconsistent practice in procedures used across the school.

History

80. Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good practical "hands-on" approach to learning
- Pupils develop a good sense of things changing over time
- The assessment of pupils' progress is not carried out consistently.

Commentary

81. Pupils make satisfactory progress in learning about the passage of time but their overall progress is slowed by being taught only in alternate half-terms with geography. Lower achieving pupils find it difficult to understand the structure of a day's timetable, or the week, but teachers have a clear approach to developing this early aspect of learning, such as through the use of picture timetables. The highest achieving pupils learn that times change. They understand that many things were different a long time ago, and they look at several different periods to see what the main differences were. These have included topics such as the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians, and, nearer home, Tudor and Victorian times. Pupils have learned satisfactorily from handling objects from the past, looking at pictures of former times, and comparing themselves with older people.

82. Pupils' progress is the result of satisfactory teaching that uses an appropriate range of objects and pictures to bring the past times more "alive" to the pupils. Lessons are mainly practical, including dressing up, using real or reproduction historical artefacts, and going on visits out of school. This was well illustrated in the single lesson that was seen. Pupils learned by playing with the kind of games and toys that children used in Ancient Greece with the teacher effectively emphasising the fact that these games were from long ago, and comparing them with their own.

83. Teachers do not assess consistently how well pupils are learning. Although they make reports about pupils at the end of each topic, the reports tend to be about what the teacher has taught rather than what the pupils have learned. Often, they are about how much the pupil enjoyed the series of lessons rather than detail of the new knowledge they have acquired. This shortcoming is linked to some teachers' planning, which is a series of things to do rather than being based on a single clear aim of what it is anticipated pupils will learn. This subject is managed satisfactorily, with a clear plan of which topics should be taught in the long term. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not monitored on a regular basis.

Geography

84. Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The general approach is a good practical one, including visits around the local area
- Pupils have good opportunities to handle items from other countries
- The assessment of pupils' progress is not carried out consistently or effectively.

Commentary

85. Pupils' learning begins well within the school area and the wider local environment, with visits to places such as farms, a football club, a garden centre and the zoo. Learning then spreads further afield, partly by imaginatively following the travels of 'Barnaby Bear'. Higher attaining pupils understand some facts about, for example, the weather, and the importance of water in the world. They also begin to learn some basic facts about other places in the world, such as Brazil, and have a good idea that it is a very long way away. Lower attaining pupils do not develop ideas about such distant places, but they begin to learn their way around the school, and learn that rooms have different purposes, such as the office, the hall and the swimming pool.

86. All pupils achieve satisfactorily. Geography is not taught throughout the year; it alternates with history. This slows pupils' progress. No lessons were seen during the inspection, but pupils' work indicates that their learning is satisfactory. However, lesson plans are often not clear about exactly what the principal learning aim is. Planning tends to be more in terms of what the activities will be rather than what it is anticipated that pupils will learn although teachers use a satisfactory range of resources well. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly, at the end of each series of lessons. However, teachers' reports are often about whether or not pupils have enjoyed the lessons, or what the subject was. This does not give a clear idea about what progress pupils have made in learning, either independently or with varying degrees of support. The subject is satisfactorily managed, with a clear plan in place of what should be taught. However, the co-ordinator does not formally monitor the quality of teaching and learning or routinely evaluate pupils' achievements. The absence of such mechanisms means that the rate of pupil progress is not being evaluated regularly.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

87. Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have access to a good range of tools and materials
- There are opportunities to work with food and resistant materials
- There is good accommodation for food technology but other accommodation is unsatisfactory
- Assessment is not always sufficiently thorough

Commentary

88. No lessons were observed during the inspection but good displays of pupils' work indicate that pupils' achievements are satisfactory as they experience both elements of the subject, designing and making. Higher attaining pupils use the correct tools, such as a brace and bit and a saw, when working with acrylic and use equipment like sewing machines correctly as they study textiles. Some of these pupils appreciate that designs can also be tested to evaluate their effectiveness, such as the breaking point of the acrylic with which they were working. Food technology lessons provide similar opportunities for design as well as contributing to pupils' personal development. Pupils are required to make choices about sandwich fillings, and when they make these sandwiches concepts such as sequencing events and following instructions are reinforced.

89. Pressures on space have forced the school to convert its design and technology room into another classroom. The loss of this specialist accommodation has an adverse effect on pupils' learning, particularly those in Years 7 to 13, as tools and equipment are not easily accessible for use in ordinary classrooms. While pupils' work is marked it is not assessed consistently and in ways which allow small steps in pupil progress to be easily identified.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

90. Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn to use a good range of techniques, materials and tools.
- There are often good links with other subjects such as science, English, geography and history.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to aspects of pupils' personal development
- Pupil progress is not assessed consistently in terms of what they have actually learnt to do.

Commentary

91. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in learning to recognise colours, tones and textures. Pupils with the most complex needs feel the texture of paint, and are helped to hold brushes, sponges for printing, and crayons, to make "patterns" on paper. They are encouraged well to make choices; which colours and materials and materials to use and where to place them. Higher attaining pupils work with greater independence. They learn to use a paint brush, crayons and pencils to make recognisable pictures and patterns and discover the qualities of different materials such as cloth, wool, silver foil, shredded paper, glitter and clay. Pupils learn about different colours by making large panels of a single colour, using a very good selection of materials, textures, and tones of paint. Pupils apply their prior learning well when they produce more complex pictures and patterns, such as pictures in the style of famous artists such as the "drip" paintings of Jackson Pollock and the "dot" paintings of Georges Seurat. Topics such as this make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development and the displays of their work brighten up the whole school.

92. Pupils' good progress is the result of overall good teaching, although on occasion teaching is satisfactory. At these times individual lessons lack excitement but over the duration of the topic being studied, with lessons every week, pupils develop their skills and understanding well. Teachers

and learning support assistants work very well together to encourage pupils' learning, without helping too much, so that a level of expectation of independent work is maintained. Visits out of school and visiting artists who come into school enrich pupils' learning opportunities, and the learning of the highest attaining pupils is extended very well as they benefit from attending lessons at a local mainstream school. This experience also makes a major contribution to their personal development.

93. Reports of pupils' progress are limited in the information they provide. They are mainly about what pupils experienced, or were encouraged to do, or how much they enjoyed it. They do not often say what pupils learned, or which skills improved. The subject is managed well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator who has only been appointed to the post recently. However, the quality of teaching is not monitored systematically, and nor is the rate of pupils' progress.

Music

94. Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music is used well across the curriculum to motivate pupils and reinforce learning
- Good use is made of music to signal the start and end of activities
- Pupils enjoy music very much and are keen to join in
- There is no specialist teacher or co-ordinator
- Assessment of music is inconsistent.

Commentary

95. Achievement in music is good over time. This is because it is consistently planned by teachers who use it confidently as an integral part of their lessons in a range of subjects. Music is often planned into lessons to support literacy where younger pupils concentrate well when they sing songs such as *'What's in the bag?'* In numeracy, counting songs such as *'One, two, three together'* and *'Seven jam tarts'* are sung to assess if pupils up to Year 9 remember their previous work, or as reinforcement at the end of the activity. In Years 3 to 6, pupils warm up enthusiastically to music in physical education and they move around in different ways such as plodding to music from *The Jungle Book*, linking their movements to how the elephants might feel.

96. Teachers plan well for different needs using a variety of good quality resources. For example, pupils in Years 12 and 13 took great pleasure in making choices of which music they would hear. This activity actively motivated students with profound and multiple learning difficulties to communicate as they listened, took turns, made choices and signed or said 'more' to hear the rest of a tune. These pupils also get to choose untuned instruments such as tambourines and shakers and they delight in shaking them in time to music. For pupils with visual impairment, instruments such as a violin are played to reward good work and stimulate them. Music is used to reinforce routines, particularly for younger pupils, through activities such as the *'Hello'* song to help pupils with their social skills and as an introduction to the school day or lessons.

97. Only one music lesson was seen. During this lesson, for older pupils and students, work was highly suitable and the teacher and learning support assistants worked well together. As a result, pupils concentrated very well, enjoying the experience. There is comprehensive long term planning throughout the school to help ensure that pupils have a range of musical experiences. The lack of a co-ordinator is unsatisfactory and means there is no one to monitor the subject and make sure that assessment is consistently carried out. However, most staff are very confident in teaching music within other lessons and pupils' achievement in this subject remains good at present. This has ensured that improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and music remains an integral and strong part of many activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

98. Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The swimming pool provides an excellent facility that is used very well, but other indoor sports accommodation restricts the learning of some pupils.
- Teachers manage pupils very well
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development
- Lesson planning does not identify a range of teaching approaches or what different groups of pupils might be expected to learn.

Commentary

99. Pupils make very good progress in swimming and thoroughly enjoy the sessions. Very lively lessons are supported by high levels of adult support and very good relationships. Consequently pupils work hard and have very good attitudes. Therefore, pupils make very good gains in developing their water confidence and personal development as they work with adults and other pupils. Very well chosen activities that meet individual needs, such as the use of a range of floatation aids, ensure that all pupils are fully engaged and encouraged to develop their emerging swimming skills as well as their confidence.

100. Teachers manage their pupils very well. They have high expectations and pupils respond positively. Therefore, they listen carefully to instructions and contribute willingly to discussions. For example, a group of five to eleven year olds proposed some imaginative ways in which they wanted their classmates to move as they all stood in a circle and sang. Adults' support allowed all pupils to move in the required ways. Pupils also demonstrate their developing maturity in the way in which they wait patiently for their turn. A class of sixteen year olds remained patient as they waited their turn to roll balls into hoops and towards tiers of cans to knock them down. This was particularly impressive because the resources that were provided initially were not really appropriate but pupils still tried their best.

101. Lesson plans have some shortcomings but pupils still achieve well because teachers know them very well and therefore they are able to provide activities that encourage the development of new skills. However, the deficiency in planning becomes evident when teachers try to assess individual pupils' progress. Planning does not identify what teachers want individual pupils, and groups of pupils, to learn during lessons and therefore they cannot evaluate the progress they have made against specific learning targets.

102. The hall is unsatisfactory for physical education, particularly for older pupils. It is small and therefore does not provide enough space for pupils to run around easily and play ball games.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

103. Provision in pupils' personal, social and health education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very well organised subject co-ordinator has produced a comprehensive programme
- Pupils study a range of age-appropriate topics as they move through the school
- Pupils aged 14 to 19 years follow a good careers programme that prepares them well for leaving school.
- Strong links with community facilities support learning

Commentary

104. Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is evident in all the work that it does. Lessons in PSHE build on this well to promote pupils' personal development in a formal and planned way. The school is keen to extend the quality of the work that it does and is therefore very willing to explore and participate in initiatives. These include linking with social services on a Person Centred Planning project and participating in a national project to examine how pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can be fully included in careers work.

105. A very enthusiastic and well organised co-ordinator has produced a subject syllabus that addresses topics such as personal care, safety, healthy living, bullying, and sex and relationships in a structured and progressive way. In addition, all pupils have elements of citizenship built into the programme. In Years 2 to 6 this covers topics such as my community and me, and sharing and tolerance. Older pupils build on this work as they consider more complex topics like environmental issues, moral understanding, and the electoral process and local government. Consequently pupils in all years develop knowledge and understanding of these aspects through activities that are appropriate to their age and interests. This equips them very well with the skills required to become full members of society.

106. A high quality careers programme also contributes significantly to preparing pupils for leaving school and this is supported through access courses that pupils follow at the local college. This very good link also makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. They visit specialist facilities and use areas such as the coffee bar which develop familiarity with the site and gives confidence to those who attend after leaving school. Careers education and guidance in lessons is well supported through links with the school's Connexions personal adviser, and work experience in Years 12 and 13. They are well prepared for their work experience placements so that they are able to obtain maximum benefit from them. However, the previously accessible careers library has had to be relocated because of pressures on space and this restricts pupils' ability to use it when they wish.

107. Placing pupils for work experience is facilitated greatly by the school's strong links with the local community. Visitors into school, such as police officers and school nurses, and trips to facilities in the local area, like the library, all contribute very well to the school's aims in this subject. It aims to promote independent skills within the community, such as making choices, and enabling pupils to access facilities beyond school at times like the weekend. It is very successful in this work.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

INSPECTION JUDGEMENT

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).