

INSPECTION REPORT

BRENTWOOD SCHOOL

Timperley, Cheshire

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106391

Headteacher: Bernice Kostick

Lead inspector: Dr. Mick Megee

Dates of inspection: 15th-17th March 2004

Inspection number: 258876

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	73
School address:	Brentwood Avenue Timperley Altrincham Cheshire
Postcode:	WA14 1SR
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bill Hiett
Date of previous inspection:	June1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brentwood School is a school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 located in Timperley near Altrincham, Cheshire. Currently, 73 students attend the school. Most of the students have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Since the school was last inspected, it no longer accepts pupils below the age of 11, and in the last year, the LEA has begun to recommend the admission of students who have autism. There are currently four of these students on roll. All students have a Statement Of Special Educational Needs and when they come into the school, their attainment is well below average. Students come from a wide catchment area and although individual students' socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are about average. Most students are from white (British) backgrounds, although there are nine students from different heritages. Five students come from families who speak English as an additional language. During the previous year, two students left the school other than at the usual time of leaving, which is well below the national average.

The school has developed partnerships with the primary special school which provides Brentwood with most of its students, with two secondary mainstream schools and with the local further education college. Students attend the college and secondary schools each week for half or whole days.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23629	Mick Megee	Lead inspector	Modern foreign languages Music Physical education Personal, social and health education
9883	Brian Silvester	Lay inspector	
16930	Jeff Plumb	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language
15600	Colin Richardson	Team Inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Citizenship
4989	Lynn Lewis	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective**, inclusive and caring school with a number of very good features and it provides good value for money. All students, whatever their learning difficulties or background, achieve well in most subjects because teaching is good, and students are fully engaged in their lessons. Students enjoy coming to school and their attitudes to learning and to school life are very good. Students' personal qualities are very good, and around the school relationships are also very good. The school experienced some difficulties in staffing a few years ago and progress stalled to some extent. Subsequently, a new headteacher was appointed. She has provided very good leadership and has recently appointed an effective and improving management team. Together with a supportive and skilful governing body, the school is now successfully developing and improving the quality of education provided for students.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher is a very effective leader and the school is moving from strength to strength.
- The school very effectively fosters students' personal qualities, which helps them to be proud of their school and achieve well.
- Students of secondary age do not achieve well enough in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The school goes to great lengths to include all students and involve them through seeking and acting on their views.
- The curriculum for the sixth form is very effective and prepares students very well for future life.
- Whilst most teaching is good or better, subject coordinators do not yet evaluate teaching and learning so they cannot be sure that their subject is always being taught well.
- Lessons are too long, which makes it more difficult for some students to maintain concentration.

The school has improved well since the last inspection. The most significant improvements have been in the provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties; in the planning of the curriculum; and in the development of a careers education programme. The school has not yet done enough to resolve the problem with the provision for ICT. The key issues from the last inspection also included two statutory requirements which have now been met; and good progress has been made in improving assessment, with the final stage to be completed next year.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good
Year 13	Good	Good

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

Achievement is **good** overall. The achievement of students with autism is very good and the achievement of all other students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, is good. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or students who speak English as an additional language. Students in the sixth form achieve well in the accredited coursework programmes which they follow. Achievement is good in English and mathematics, and very good in science. Achievement in ICT for students in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory, because of unresolved problems with software and hardware. The students' personal development, including spiritual,

moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. The students' attitudes to school and their behaviour are very good. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and for students with autism, it is very good. This is because there are very good relationships in the classroom, staff know the students' needs well and teachers have enthusiasm and are skilled in their subjects. Students' learning mirrors the good and very good teaching. Strategies for assessment are good, and the next step – to bring in an agreed overall system – is planned for next year.

The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 11 is well planned and effective, and in the sixth form there is very good provision. The school provides an especially wide and interesting range of extra-curricular activities. There is too little use of ICT across the curriculum, and the length of lessons is too long for many of the students. This can mean that they lose attention or become bored. The care, guidance and support offered to students are very good. The school maintains a good partnership with parents, and it works very effectively with the community and other schools. These partnerships further support students' good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides very effective leadership, and has implemented very effective action in priority areas: raising staff morale; and appointing and developing an effective and committed management team, which is setting good standards for the school as a whole. Leadership overall in the school is good and improving. Management is good and improving. The headteacher and senior staff receive good support from the governors, who carry out their role well as critical friends of the school. All statutory requirements are met. The subject coordinators have worked well under the headteacher's direction to improve the curriculum, and should shortly undertake the next step – to monitor the teaching and learning of the subject in the classroom.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Students speak very well of the school. Parents feel that the school provides and cares well for their children. Most parents feel fully informed about their children's education, care and welfare, but some parents are concerned that they are not well informed about supporting their child at home. The inspection team agrees that more could be done.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to raise achievement in ICT;
- to further extend the role of subject coordinators to include the monitoring of teaching and learning;
- to reduce the length of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects

Standards are well below those expected for students of this age, but are similar to those expected for students with severe, or multiple and profound learning difficulties. Achievement overall is good, and the achievement of the small number of students with autism is very good. Besides this, there are no differences in achievement for boys and girls, students with English as an additional language (EAL), or those with different levels of ability.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good and very good teaching in English, mathematics, and science is having a direct and positive impact on students' learning.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) achieve very well.
- Students make good progress against their individual personal and social targets.
- Achievement in ICT for students of secondary age is unsatisfactory because of problems with unreliable or unsuitable resources.

Commentary

1. Judgements about achievement have been reached by examining the work of a good cross-section of students, records of progress, discussion with key staff, and by observing students in lessons. The headteacher and the senior staff see that a good climate for learning is maintained within the school. Skilful teaching and improvements in assessment mean that students achieve well in English and mathematics, and very well in science. There are continuing hardware and software problems within ICT which mean that students do not make satisfactory progress or achieve as well as they should.
2. Teachers ensure that students get off to a flying start and make rapid gains in learning when they enter the school, and their achievement is maintained through to the end of Year 11. They continue to achieve well in the sixth form with its distinctive, more adult approach to young people. Students have achieved modules at 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade in the National Skills profile (NSP) scheme.
3. All students achieve well against their individual social skills targets, and these targets are achieved by most students within the predicted time-scale. Staff are well acquainted with the students' targets, and they do well in incorporating them into lessons and into lunch times. Individual academic targets have improved over the last couple of years. They now have clear criteria for success, and are evaluated each term.
4. Students who have English as an additional language (EAL) who also have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) make good progress and achieve well because of the good teaching. For instance, such students were given opportunities to anticipate the outcome of water being sprayed on their skin during sensory stories and experienced what it is like inside a cave. Because of excellent stimulus, they pointed their eyes at objects used to support the telling of stories. The achievement of higher attaining students with EAL is very good. They read poetry out loud accurately and with expression. They are able, as a result of very good quality teaching with an emphasis on social story, to independently introduce themselves to an adult in an appropriate manner and with very good social skills.
5. Achievement for students with autism is very good. Because of skilful specialist teaching methods these students are beginning to communicate independent choices. They are learning to work with others and to take turns when participating in educational games. Those who avoid contact are making rapid gains in overcoming their fear and dislike of different textures as they

are gently introduced to new materials and encouraged to explore them. Their personal development is good as they are encouraged, at a level appropriate to their complex needs, to support each other.

6. Students with PMLD make good progress and achieve well. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when their achievement was unsatisfactory. They are very well stimulated by staff, who have very high expectations. Accordingly staff when telling stories give the students lots of experiences to see, feel, touch, smell or taste props which illustrate the narrative. The students respond enthusiastically by pointing their eyes at the objects of reference and so make good progress with their reading. They move their heads when they hear sudden changes in the sound of music and sometimes express their sense of enjoyment with delightful smiles.
7. In English, students achieve well in communication, speaking and listening, reading and writing, because the teaching is motivating and demanding. In mathematics, relationships between teachers and students are good and so all make good progress. In science, students achieve very well because the teachers are very skilful, and lessons are enjoyable. However in ICT in the secondary classes, students' achievement is hampered by continual problems with equipment and software. Students in the sixth form achieve satisfactorily in ICT.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is good. The students' attitudes and behaviour (including the incidence of exclusions) are very good. The students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' interest in school life means they are keen and ready to learn.
- Students relate very well to each other and there is a harmonious atmosphere for learning
- The school stimulates a desire to learn.
- The school day and lessons have a very prompt start.
- The school has high expectations of students' conduct.

Commentary

8. There are very good relationships between students and adults, and these foster a warm and friendly working atmosphere within the school. Students enjoy the range of activities provided and work to the best of their ability, encouraged by the humour and persistence of staff. All parents say their son or daughter likes coming to school and enjoys their work. Staff make sure that students know they have done well by rewarding good work and behaviour regularly in weekly assemblies and form tutor time. The school successfully nurtures a desire to learn, and to work independently. The students' very good attitudes to their work have a very positive impact on their achievement. The personal development of the students is very good. Where appropriate, students are given responsibilities and their views are considered. The students' attendance is above the national average. The level of punctuality is very good. When students arrive late, it is usually due to a problem over the transport provision.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.6
National data	8.5

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.5

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

9. The behaviour of the students is generally very good. Sometimes a student will ask another student to refrain from an act of misbehaviour. The school has a good positive handling policy which enables the school to support students with challenging behaviour. Each of these students has an individual behaviour plan which is regularly reviewed. All staff use a nationally approved safe approach known as 'Team Teach' when students become upset and aggressive. There were no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection, and there was only one fixed-term exclusion prior to the previous inspection in 1998. There are virtually no parental concerns about bullying or harassment. There is no evidence of any racial incidents.
10. Students' personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Their spiritual development is good. Students respond very well to the many opportunities they are given for personal development. Year 11 students act maturely when undertaking their responsibility to answer the telephone and students with autism make valuable gains through the opportunities they are given to communicate informed choices when shopping. Through the school council students make decisions that bring about improvements in the quality of their provision within school. All staff work hard to ensure that students quickly develop valuable social skills for example in taking turns and learning to share and work together.
11. Relationships are very good. Students show a great deal of care and respect for one another. They have decided to raise funds for a range of charitable causes and have had an important say as to why they have chosen the charities in question. Moral development is very good. Teachers and their assistants are very good role models. Staff are painstaking to ensure that students are involved in their own behaviour management plans. Certainly higher attainers understand when their behaviour is inappropriate and show a desire to improve; several examples were seen during the inspection.
12. Spiritual development is good. In a lesson seen, staff worked effectively to arouse curiosity through play with bubbles, and the students' facial expressions conveyed total fascination at the effect which resulted in improved eye pointing. During instructional writing students experienced moments of excitement when the 'penny dropped': one Year 11 student with a sparkle in his eye said: 'That has made my day!' when it dawned that the pen pal in his letter was a girl and that she shared his interest in Star Trek. On these occasions there is fun and excitement in learning which contributes to very good achievement. However, sometimes opportunities to promote students' spiritual awareness are missed by the teachers. For example, when working with sixth form students on Wordsworth's poem 'Daffodil' and also when working with Year 9 students on instructional writing on how to plant a bulb, the lessons could have been improved by building in opportunities for students to marvel at the beauty of nature.
13. Cultural development is very good; particularly students' awareness of cultural diversity. Students raise funds for a school in Africa. Through art, geography, music, design and technology and religious education they taste foods from Japan and make masks associated with the Chinese New Year. They explore through touch, sight and smell interesting artefacts from a wide range of cultures other than their own. Posters and displays respect not only the mother tongues represented within the school community but also a wide range of other languages. Visits to museums and galleries, as well as visitors to school, play a significant part in raising students' cultural awareness.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is well planned and effective, and students' care, guidance and support are very good. The school maintains a good partnership with parents, and it works very effectively with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment for secondary students is good, and in the sixth form it is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students' individual needs are known and understood thoroughly, and this helps all students to learn well.
- Teaching and learning are very good for students with autism.
- There are very good relationships in the classroom which help students to make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are good in most subjects and they are very good in science, but they are only satisfactory in ICT.
- Sometimes teaching time is lost because lessons are too long, and students lose concentration.

Commentary

14. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school, but ranges from excellent to satisfactory. Teachers generally understand the need for pace and frequent changes of activities to keep students engaged with their work through long lessons which normally last for an hour. Because of this, sometimes lessons are finished a little early and some teaching time is lost. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and offer an imaginative and exciting range of experiences, which match up well to the students' individual needs and interests. This in turn allows students to achieve well.
15. Throughout the school, there are very close, friendly and productive relationships between staff and students. Teachers know their students and their individual needs well and take their views into account whenever this is possible. Teachers use methods and resources that enable their students to learn effectively. Experienced teaching assistants are well briefed on how to manage students, especially those with more profound or complex difficulties, and work proficiently alongside the teachers. In the sixth form, teachers are careful to always use language appropriate to the students' age and ability and their good relationships with their students enable them to challenge them, sometimes in a friendly, teasing way.
16. English and mathematics are taught effectively throughout the school, and there is very good practice in science. ICT, although satisfactory, is not taught as well: occasionally, teachers expect too little of their students or use software which is not appropriate to their age or ability. In the few lessons seen in other subjects, teaching and learning were good overall. The quality of teaching and learning is good for students with EAL and so they achieve well. The teaching quite rightly focuses on their main special educational needs as outlined in their statements. But careful attention is paid to their cultural backgrounds and there are bi-lingual resources available for the higher attainers. Displays value the cultural backgrounds of students within the school and this makes a valuable contribution to their good learning and achievement.
17. The quality of teaching and learning for students with autism is very good. The teacher and two teaching assistants work as a very effective team. They have expertise and skill in working with these students and their expectations are very high. Challenging behaviour is skilfully managed and so very good learning takes place in lessons. There is a strong and successful emphasis on improving the students' personal development and their communication.
18. The specialist teaching combined with total communication strategies results in improved communication for students with PMLD. When these students exhibit challenging behaviour they are treated with the same dignity as the rest of the students in the school and so they are gently and assertively reminded in a manner which is suitable that they are there to learn. All,

including those with the most complex needs, are fully included in all of the activities and so make good gains in their communication.

19. Assessment strategies and the use of 'Performance' levels – a special system of assessing students who have not yet reached Level 1 of the National Curriculum – are good but less successful in science. The current system does not fully meet the assessment requirements of the school and there is a continuing search for improvement. As part of this, the school has sensibly evaluated and compared several new whole-school systems. It will be putting the chosen system in place next year. Teachers currently use information from a range of assessments in their lesson planning to ensure that all students are fully included. They mostly do this well, but a streamlined whole-school system would have many advantages, and make it easier to identify individual strengths and weaknesses. The most effective assessment tracks students' achievements systematically and their work is sampled with comments made. Parents welcome the fact that the headteacher has improved the individual education plan (IEP) system by having IEPs written and agreed on a termly basis to ensure that there are appropriate targets set. In the sixth form, students follow very good assessment practice by using externally accredited schemes like the National Skills Profile. The assessment coordinator shows that she is always on the lookout for further improvements, and will be introducing the Transition Challenge produced by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) in September.
20. All students are routinely given an understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. The method of doing this is matched to their ability. The most capable respond well to marking and target setting and verbal feedback. Students with profound and severe learning difficulties get 'signs' for good work and success is celebrated in assemblies. Progress since the last inspection has been good. In the last report the procedures for assessment were unsatisfactory overall although that in the sixth form was deemed to be satisfactory.
21. The new headteacher's influence is found throughout the school. Her calm authority is reflected in turn by the teachers and staff, who manage difficult situations in an unruffled, uncomplicated way which is consistent across the whole school. This allows the students to return quickly to their work. The three heads of department generate an excitement and enthusiasm to the teachers whom they manage, and this is evident in the way in which teachers talk about their work and plans.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	12 (35%)	14 (41%)	7 (21%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum caters well for students' interests. In some subjects and in the sixth form the curriculum is very good. The school provides an abundant and varied range of opportunities for learning beyond the school day. The accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides purposeful opportunities that cater for the complex needs, aptitudes and interests of students.
- Extra-curricular activities, clubs, visits and links with other educational establishments contribute very well to enriching students' learning.

- ICT is under-used across the curriculum.
- The length of lessons is inappropriate for most of the students.

Commentary

22. The school's curriculum is making rapid and significant progress, and is one of the key factors in the good progress which students make. Schemes of work are in place, giving a broad range of curricular experiences that is well supported by a wide range of enriching opportunities for learning. All staff work hard to achieve a curriculum which is good or very good in most subject areas. The school is aware of its weaknesses and those subjects that require further development are to be given an extra impetus during the coming year. The ICT co-ordinator is planning to raise the profile of the subject with staff training, especially in the use of the interactive whiteboard. The curriculum for students with the most challenging needs ensures their inclusion in the learning. However, the length of lessons is too long for a majority of the students, especially those with ASD and the more severe and profound difficulties. This is a problem because it makes teachers have to work unnecessarily hard in order to provide a long sequence of attention-grabbing experiences, and there is an ever present risk that students will become fatigued and lose concentration.
23. Provision for secondary students is good, and in the sixth form it is very good. There is very good support from outside agencies in preparing for the next stage of education and life beyond school. There is very good support from 'Connexions' staff who visit frequently, offering help and guidance to students on a wide range of future needs. A very good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is evident in many areas of the curriculum. Sex education is of good quality and involves the school nurse, with a male nurse visiting when it is necessary to deal with personal hygiene issues. Throughout the school students are made aware of the dangers of drugs and drug-taking. Students know that some drugs are harmful and that they must never take pills which are not their own. The newly formed school council has made a good impact and is working very well. Following the elections to the council, it has begun to make suggestions for improving facilities. Early requests include the placement of mirrors in the toilets and 'sorting out broken computers'. Within the PSHE programme there is good coverage of Citizenship, Careers and Healthy Living in addition to those mentioned previously.
24. The sixth form curriculum is broad and balanced and builds systematically on the students' learning. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for students meets their individual needs very well. The curriculum is coherent and provides effectively for work related, vocational courses and careers education. Students attend Sale Grammar School for joint productions in performing arts and South Trafford College for catering and sport and leisure that lead to accreditation at entry level in the National Skills Profile (NSP) and Welsh Joint Education Committee syllabus. Good accreditation opportunities are provided through the NSP scheme for students with severe learning difficulties and through the Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) scheme for students with PMLD. The Connexions advisor and the Social Services transition worker provide positive support for students up to and beyond their final year at school.
25. Teaching staff are developing a strong team ethos which is very well promoted by key stage co-ordinators and in the sixth form. In lessons it is evident that teaching assistants have an essential part to play in ensuring that all students are included in the learning. The therapists too are very much part of the teams. The physiotherapist for example, has prepared care plans for PMLD students in discussion with teachers and these, together with other pertinent information, are available in classrooms. All staff ensure that students who have difficulty in walking are made as comfortable as possible to benefit from the curriculum, bearing in mind the unduly long lessons. Handling and positioning are discussed with staff and the best procedures are agreed.
26. Students benefit from the rich and varied extra-curricular activities. Each day there is a lunch-time club. During the inspection, 3 students from a local college took a 'Fit Bods' session with

the students from Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. All were involved in strenuous exercise for a full 40 minutes. It was delivered with pace and enjoyment for all. There was also very good video evidence of dance/drama in the 'Holocaust Memorial' production. The school also did a production of 'Grease' in July 2003.

27. There are many out-of-school visits that provide abundant and wide-ranging learning experiences. Visits are thoroughly planned for and checked carefully to ensure that there is an emphasis on learning and development. Many visits are to local sporting facilities for training and competitions. These include the Salford Track, where they use adapted bicycles, and netball and New Age Kurling at the Velodrome. In competitions the 'A' and 'B' boccia teams were very successful this year, gaining first and second in the Greater Manchester championships. Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress in developing the curriculum.
28. The quality of accommodation is good. Since the time of the last inspection there has been a considerable improvement in the accommodation for sixth form students which is now very pleasant and stimulating. A new purpose built extension to the school has recently been completed. Corridors are wide and wheelchair users have easy access to all rooms. In the main school, specialist accommodation is good, especially the fairly recent provision for science/ICT. The lack of specialist accommodation for music has been temporarily resolved by using a teaching area designated for future provision for students with autism. A good feature is the overhead tracking and hoists installed in most teaching areas. These allow students to be lifted out of chairs with the minimum of delay and personal intrusion. The premises, including the grounds, are kept in excellent condition. However, the outdoor area is very small and outdoor sports facilities are completely inadequate. This means that students lose curriculum time travelling to better facilities in the community. The school is well resourced for most subjects apart from ICT. Although hardware resources are good, present software resources are not appropriate for the teaching of parts of the subject's curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare and health and safety provision for the students is very good. The support, advice and guidance given to students are very good. The involvement of students, through seeking, valuing and acting on their views, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure students work in a healthy and safe environment are very good.
- The extent that each student has a trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school is very good.
- The induction of new students into the school is very good, and as a result they settle in quickly.
- There are very good communications between school and home about the care of the students.
- The school council is working very well and there are genuine opportunities for students to influence decisions made
- A few staff have not yet been fully trained in appropriate procedures for child protection.

Commentary

29. The headteacher and senior staff have worked hard to ensure that the care, guidance and support provided for students is always given high priority. Parents appreciate the steps which the school takes to ensure the welfare of their children. Thorough health and safety surveys are carried out each term and a full range of risk assessments is completed. There is a medical room and a very committed school nurse works very closely with students, staff and parents. As well as the nurse, there is one other fully qualified first-aider. Regular fire drills are carried out. The school is working towards a healthy schools award and encourages healthy eating at

break and lunchtime. Some mid-day assistants have not yet been trained in child protection procedures.

30. All staff are well trained in the moving and handling of students. The positive handling policy is an effective tool and enables staff to provide very good support to students with challenging behaviour. All staff use the 'Team Teach' system described in paragraph 9. Teaching and support staff, the school nurse, therapists and specialists work together well as a multi-disciplinary team to support students and parents. Teachers are respectful of students but are firm when necessary. Staff have a positive attitude, work well together and ensure that the students are taught in a happy atmosphere. The school has a good policy on students' right to dignity and courtesy. There is clear guidance on how students should be treated regardless of their level or type of difficulty. The educational and personal support and guidance given to students have a very good impact on their achievement.
31. The induction into the school of pupils from the main feeder school, Delamere, is very good. Parents and pupils visit the school and are made very welcome prior to transfer. There is a good interchange of staff, both teaching and non-teaching; the headteacher attends Year 6 reviews and there is a good exchange of records.
32. Transition arrangements for students in preparation for the next stage of their education represent good practice. Each student in Year 9 has a transition interview and a transition plan is drawn up. The transition plan is reviewed at the student's annual review, in the presence of parents. Where appropriate, students are integrated into mainstream school classes for some of their work, and some of the older students take subjects like art and design, cookery and physical education in local schools and colleges.
33. Students in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form are elected by their peers onto the school council. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and have had some of their ideas adopted. For example, a new rule, 'Be Polite' has been added to the school rules. Students have responsibilities in their class and the more able students are keen to help their less able peers. The students' independence skills, like using the telephone, are well developed. Students are encouraged to take choices and some do voluntary work at a local old persons' home.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. The links with the local community are very good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The involvement of parents through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.
- There are very good links with the main feeder school and through wider partnerships.
- Sixth-form students have good opportunities for work experience and to study for a business award.
- Parents are kept well informed about their child's education, care and welfare.
- There is a lack of consistency in the provision of class newsletters.
- A substantial minority of parents does not think the school informs them on how they can help their child at home.

Commentary

34. The school enjoys a good relationship with its parents, and the school planners are used well as a two-way communication vehicle between home and school. The headteacher is seen as sympathetic and effective, and enjoys the confidence of parents. She sends out regular termly school newsletters which are welcomed by the parents. Some teachers send out class

newsletters very frequently, but others do not and parents are not happy with this inconsistency as their children move through the school. All staff work very hard to ensure that parents and carers are fully informed about their child's education and care. All parents participate in the students' annual reviews. They receive copies of their child's individual education plan (IEP) and are given information about progress against their learning objectives. As well as the annual review, there are two parents' evenings a year. The students' annual reports tell parents what their child knows, understands and can do but does not give learning targets.

35. In the inspection questionnaire for parents, a significant minority of parents did not think that the school informs them how they can help their child at home. This was not an issue that had been highlighted in the school's own annual parental questionnaire. The inspection evidence indicates that the school could do more to inform parents how they could help their child at home.
36. The Friends of the School association organises fund raising events and the money raised is used to provide social events for the students and to enhance the provision. The association finds it difficult to get strong support from parents. A regular coffee morning is held for parents but not many attend, especially the parents of students up to Year 11. However, parents do attend school events and special performances like the musical Grease, leaver assemblies and career evenings. It is evident from discussions, questionnaires and testimonials that the school has the confidence of all communities associated with it.
37. The quality of links with the wider, local community is very good. Students use local leisure facilities, colleges and shops. The sixth form does work experience in the business community, and Manchester City Pride supports sixth-form students to achieve an Education Business Partnership Award. The local garden centre, shops and taxi drivers help with the school's fund raising. The funds are spent on resources for the students' lunchtime activities. BUPA Manchester has offered support for the school's grounds development. The school is used for a holiday play scheme and an after-school club.
38. The school's links with other schools and colleges are very good. Six sixth-formers attend the South Trafford College to participate in the National Skills Profile in Catering. Students attend Pictor School for hydrotherapy and Sale Grammar School for drama. The school is attempting to achieve an Arts Specialist Status link with the Altrincham College of Arts. The school also has links with Altrincham Grammar School. Trafford Connexions gives carers support and Music Unlimited teaches music one day a week. Students from Loretto School hear students read. Students from South Trafford College and Manchester Metropolitan University carry out work practice in the school. There are 16 sixth-formers who attend weekly at South Trafford College for sporting activities. As well, PE students from the college come into Brentwood School weekly to lead lunchtime fitness sessions.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides very effective leadership. Leadership in the school as a whole is good and improving. Management is good and improving. The governance of the school is good. Statutory requirements are fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has undertaken a thorough and accurate review of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has created a sense of common purpose and direction.
- The recently appointed senior managers are already working effectively and are becoming used to a higher level of responsibility and independence.
- Subject coordinators do not yet monitor teaching and learning.
- Finances are well analysed and used, so the school makes the most of the money it has.

Commentary

39. The school experienced some serious personnel difficulties a few years ago, including the sudden departure of a number of staff and the previous headteacher. At this time, staff morale was very low and the school's development stalled. Subsequently, the current headteacher was appointed and applied herself fully and skilfully to the task of bringing the staff together. She is highly principled and forward-looking, and has been a driving force in establishing the inclusive and caring quality of the school. She has been very successful in creating a positive climate for change, motivating staff, gaining the confidence of parents and securing the commitment of all to school improvement. Staff now support each other and work together as a unit. The headteacher, alongside governors and staff, has undertaken a thorough review of the school's work, has established relevant priorities for action and has implemented a significant number of these in a short time.
40. As one of her key priorities, for example, the headteacher has restructured the leadership group and appointed three new senior managers who are held in high regard throughout the school, and are committed and enthusiastic. They have been provided with intensive training to develop their leadership and management skills. They are already demonstrating effective leadership by providing staff with good guidance, and are overhauling the school's organisational systems. The headteacher delegates responsibilities well and provides confidence and encouragement to all staff.
41. The leadership and management of each of Years 7 to 9, Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form is good. The coordinators have good ideas and plans for the further development of their department. For example, in the sixth form, good links have been established with colleges and with the Connexions service, whose staff help to organise an annual careers week which includes a careers evening for students and parents to attend. The small number of students in each year group has been overcome by work being mainly based upon a three-year module cycle. The school's careers education advice coordinator is also helping to develop sixth form provision well. The school is to join two mainstream schools for a pilot project, supported by the LEA, on the introduction of the new careers education and advice scheme of work.
42. Another key priority for the school has been to reduce the frequency with which staff use physical restraint to keep students safe when they are upset or becoming out of control. The headteacher and senior managers have reacted robustly to this issue, and have seen to it that all staff have received advanced training, and have introduced alarm systems to summon assistance when necessary. The number of incidents has dropped dramatically and there is great consistency between classes and among all staff in managing students. Adopting the management of physical restraint as a priority has been of benefit on a number of fronts. It has given the staff more confidence in dealing with a changing and perhaps more difficult population of students. It has reassured parents and students, and the school is now much more settled and calm. This priority demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring that all students, no matter what their difficulties, are fully included and given equal opportunities to succeed.
43. The headteacher has worked very hard on developing the curriculum. She has carefully transferred her own specialist knowledge and skills in design and technology to the new coordinator of the subject. She has ensured that there are coordinators to manage every area of the curriculum, and that there is a complete set of up to date schemes of work and policies. All these improvements have had a direct and positive impact on provision and are raising students' levels of achievement.
44. There is some variation in the quality of management of subjects by coordinators: some coordinators are very effective, like in physical education, and most are effective. However, in subjects like religious education, although management is satisfactory, there is still much to be done. While most coordinators currently do not monitor teaching and learning in their subject, this is planned to be in place by next year. At present, however, this means that some coordinators cannot be sure that their subject is being taught to the required standard. The headteacher and senior staff recognise this as a weakness and have already been actively

involved in monitoring and developing teaching, and have begun to address variations in the quality of teaching.

45. The school improvement plan contains a clear, measurable agenda for improving achievement, teaching and learning, and is referred to frequently by senior staff and governors. The governors keep a close check on the school's finances through monthly scrutiny of the figures. The school ensures through competitive tendering that it obtains best value for money when purchasing resources and services, but has not yet introduced a formal policy for best value in line with national guidance. The most recent audit shows that there are no significant weaknesses in the school's accounting systems.
46. Governors are committed and very supportive of the school, and have a good understanding of what needs to be done. They are willing to challenge and debate with the senior staff at the school. They operate effectively through their committees. For example, the finance committee asks perceptive questions about the effectiveness of spending decisions during the meetings, and the chair of the committee comes in to see the headteacher each month to discuss financial matters with the headteacher. Link governors visit the school regularly and frequently, and meet with subject coordinators and informally monitor teaching in their subject.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	798990	Balance from previous year	51564
Total expenditure	832941	Balance carried forward to the next	17613
Expenditure per student	10679		

47. The balance carried forward to the current financial year was earmarked for specific accommodation improvements, but has had to be used to maintain appropriate staffing levels.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4, AND IN THE SIXTH FORM

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. It was not possible to observe any lessons or look at students' work in modern foreign languages during the inspection, and no comments can therefore be made.

English

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in communication for students with autism and for those with PMLD is good because of skilful and challenging teaching.
- Achievement is good throughout the school in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- Teaching and learning are good and based on a well planned curriculum.
- Insufficient use is made of communication aids to support the teaching and learning across all subjects.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

48. Achievement in communication is good throughout the school because of skilful teaching. Students with very complex speech and behavioural difficulties say what they would like in real life situations such as requesting food and drink in a café because of the high quality support they are given using a picture method of communication. The team that works with students with autism is patient and effective in the way in which it has high expectations and arranges suitable challenges for the students. As a result of this, one student, who evidently detested the feel of cream on his skin, took some cream from a pot and helpfully passed it to his teaching assistant who was working with another student. It was clearly evident that he hated the sensation of cream as he keenly wiped his fingers on his trousers as soon as he had passed the cream. Another student has made a remarkable breakthrough and now vocalises her request for 'cream' in the sensory room during her massage session. Students with PMLD, particularly in Years 7 to 9, make wonderful eye contact with the objects used to support the telling of stories by the teacher. This is very good achievement in reading and reflects a significant improvement from the last inspection. Those who have use of their hands use communication aids to respond to the stories and express their delight. Objects are used very effectively to enable these students to make a movement of their head and often gorgeous smiles are evoked as a result of the very good teaching based on an excellent knowledge of the needs of the learners.
49. In speaking and listening, achievement is good. Students' speaking and listening skills are well developed because teachers make very effective use of questions. In a Year 9 lesson a clever strategy on the part of the teacher resulted in the students paying close attention to what was being said and enhancing their speaking and listening skills. She posed a trick question in a lesson about instructional writing. Teaching about planting a bulb, she asked: 'Do we cook a hole in the ground?' This evoked a robust response from a higher attainer who said with emphasis: 'No, dig a hole!' Teachers use very good motivational strategies to develop good speaking and listening skills. The use of functional language is a strong feature and students have the confidence to support what they say with signing, for example in saying good morning when they meet visitors in the corridor or indicating when they need the toilet. A Year 9 boy, who had recently attended a lesson based on a 'social story', came and introduced himself to

an inspector courteously and without prompting. By Year 13 higher attaining students are confident enough to speak in front of the whole school community in an assembly because of the skilful way in which teachers build their confidence and self-esteem.

50. Students in the school have a wide variety of needs. This means that reading ranges from eye pointing towards an object in the PMLD classes, to reading the text of a Wordsworth poem by the highest attainers in the sixth form. Teaching strategies have successfully fostered a joy for reading whilst giving students the phonic skills required to enable them to read new words. By Year 9 the highest attainer is able to read poetry with expression, pausing at points of punctuation, and using expression when he comes across an exclamation mark. But all students by Year 9 have had very good opportunities to read using pictures, symbols and text well matched to their needs. Because of the emphasis on motivation the highest attaining students by Year 11 can read their letters to their 'pen pals' recognising key names in text and important symbols. There is an excellent balance between reading for enjoyment and for essential life skills. On the one hand the highest attaining students can read poetry but also they can read the address and telephone numbers of their parents / carers. Through well directed challenge and support, teachers successfully develop students' comprehension skills.
51. Every effort is made to ensure that all students who can use their hands experience writing. Students with autism, including those who do not like touching a crayon, experience a range of writing instruments. Following the gathering together of ideas about what happened at the weekend, students with severe learning difficulties throughout the school are encouraged to write their news. All can have a go. Some make marks, others copy over words written by the teaching assistant but by Year 9 the highest attainer can write three interesting sentences which begin with a capital letter and finish with a full stop. Instructional writing is good. The highest attainers are encouraged to sequence the series of instructions needed to plant a bulb using symbols and words. In Year 11 the highest attainers can edit and correct their writing themselves using the computer. The highest attainers in Year 9 and in the sixth form have developed dictionary skills to support them with their spelling when writing independently.
52. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from excellent to satisfactory. The best teaching is delivered at a cracking pace, based on the literacy targets in students' IEPs, and motivates the students to communicate at a level appropriate to their needs. Teachers have very good subject knowledge as well as an in-depth knowledge of what is most likely to motivate individual students. Most teaching is interesting, challenging and relevant and so students develop important life skills such as following the instructions to make toast and developing the skill of communicating their needs in a shoe shop. All students are provided with rich opportunities to develop creativity. This is skilfully managed through the use of sensory stories for students with PMLD, as seen in a Year 7 class and the opportunities provided for higher attaining students to write imaginative stories in Year 9. In the best lessons the teacher gathers students' ideas, and models writing before setting the high attainers off to write independently. There are some shortcomings with some lessons, where the pace of teaching drops, the lessons are too long for the students or the teaching assistant does not manage challenging behaviour as robustly as is needed. This happened in the PMLD class in Years 10 to 11.
53. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Planning is secure and enables good access to a rich curriculum for all students. Assessment is developing well but as recognised by the school it requires fine tuning to ensure improved consistency of practice across the school and to enable the very small steps of progress to be better monitored. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. As recognised by the headteacher, insufficient use is made of electronic communication aids and computers to support the teaching of language and literacy across subjects. In humanities students are given opportunities to write about the most suitable clothes to wear when it is raining and when it is

sunny. Effective communication through sensory stories is evident in the planning for religious education in the PMLD classes. Speaking and listening and decision-making opportunities are promoted well through the school council and in school assemblies.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good throughout the school and sixth form, with teaching and learning following the same pattern.
- Assessment procedures have improved, but marking is still inconsistent.
- The use of ICT is inconsistent.
- Leadership is effective with good vision for bringing about further improvements.

Commentary

55. Good achievement in mathematics represents good improvement since the previous inspection and this applies in particular to students with PMLD in Year 7 to Year 9, who were previously judged to be making unsatisfactory progress. It is mainly due to good teaching and learning supported by the improvements in assessment procedures and their use. Students are assessed using Performance (P) level descriptors – a nationally recognised system for measuring progress in students with severe or profound learning difficulties. When they come into school in Year 7, teachers measure how much they know and understand in mathematics. Their progress is accurately tracked as they get older and move upwards through the school. In the sixth form, lessons are interesting and relevant to the age and ability of the students and support their learning well. Accreditation provision is good with Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) for the students with PMLD and the National Skills profile (NSP) for the others.
56. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the most effective lessons, teachers know their students well and make good use of this knowledge to ensure that direct questions are appropriate and guide individual learning. Further, the good relationship between students and teachers leads to a good learning atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers use this good relationship to challenge their students' understanding. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on identifying numbers the teacher put two cube blocks under the number 7 and there were instant cries of "No!" from the students. Teachers show high expectations of their students, high achievers are appropriately challenged and questions are appropriate to the age and ability of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers adapt their teaching styles and manner well to the severity of learning difficulty. This ensures that all students are totally included in the learning opportunities. For example, those teaching students with PMLD make good use of tactile and visual learning resources such as using large models of geometrical shapes, which students can touch or eye point to, to select in response to teachers' questions. Teaching is not so effective when teachers find themselves short of time, leaving little or no time to assess and consolidate new learning. The length of lessons is not appropriate for some students. Questions are sometime vague, and tasks are too difficult and not sufficiently differentiated for the lower achieving students. Students generally enjoy their work and undertake their set tasks well. Teaching assistants (TAs) are generally experienced, work well with teachers as teams and provide, in most cases, very good support which enables students, especially lower achievers, to make good progress.
57. The leadership of the subject is good. Although in post for only two terms, the coordinator shows good vision for further development of the subject. The present scheme of work is being reviewed and a new assessment system being considered. Accreditation provision is to be improved further with the introduction of a nationally approved scheme (ASDAN) for students in Years 10 and 11. However management is only satisfactory. No monitoring by the coordinator of either teaching or teachers' planning is currently taking place. The inspection team's analysis

of students' work showed that teachers' marking is inconsistent and too great an emphasis is being placed upon the teaching of number to the detriment of the other areas of knowledge, skills and understanding. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is inconsistent. This was an observation of the previous inspection and such use remains unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Students apply their mathematical skills well across the curriculum. However, although staff are aware of individual students' numeracy targets such application could be further improved if they considered the numeracy skills their students will require in the medium term planning for their subjects. This should ensure that students will approach tasks involving mathematics with greater confidence.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and well planned to meet a wide range of needs, so that all students achieve very well.
- Accommodation for science is very good and contributes very positively towards the students' scientific understanding.
- Assessment in the subject, whilst satisfactory, is a relative weakness.

Commentary

59. Students throughout the school achieve very well, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Much of the progress made is gained through first hand practical experiences. In the lessons observed, all students enjoyed the experiments and maintained interest over quite long periods of time. Students' work folders confirm the achievement made in the lessons observed.
60. The very good teaching and very well planned practical experiments maintain the interest of students over very long lessons. This was typified in a lesson exploring the results of mixing a range of materials with water. Students added small quantities of water to jelly crystals and discovered that they disappear and that the water changes colour. Literacy skills were promoted by introducing words such as 'dissolve'. Students were challenged by identifying what happened when cornflour was mixed with water. They also mixed icing sugar and spread the mixture onto biscuits. There was very good variation of approach and questioning to ensure that all students were on task and involved. The lesson ended with a very good summary of the learning and students were challenged to say whether the changes observed were permanent or could be reversed.
61. Assessment is satisfactory and the co-ordinator has recognised this as an area for improvement. This is included in the subject development plan. Leadership and management of the subject are good with the development of a subject policy and the recently completed subject schemes of work. Monitoring of the subject is through teachers' planning, meetings and recording. Resources have improved and are good but there are still areas for further development. All of the available resources are listed to enable teachers to plan effectively for delivering the schemes of work. The quality of the specialist science accommodation is very good and in the lessons observed was very well used. Visits to the science museum in Manchester and to nearby Jodrell Bank have been used well to support lessons on space.
62. Improvement since the last inspection is good - at that time there was no subject policy, students in Years 7 to 11 made only satisfactory progress, resources were adequate rather

than good and assessment lacked coherence and consistency - but the latter still requires development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are unsatisfactory throughout the school apart from the sixth form, where they are satisfactory.
- Lack of appropriate software for all students inhibits their progress.
- Hardware resources are plentiful but unreliable.
- Leadership and vision are good.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum and as an additional aid to communication is inconsistent.

Commentary

63. The curriculum offered to the students does cover the subject appropriately, and meets statutory requirements, but there are some outstanding difficulties. There is a lack of appropriate software for the teaching of discrete skills; the computers are temperamental and unreliable; and some staff are still not confident and competent in the subject. The provision has not improved satisfactorily since the last inspection.
64. There are many appropriate programs available that are specifically designed to support the learning of discrete ICT skills for students who have severe learning difficulties or PMLD. However, very few of these are being presently used. Consequently students are not being provided with an appropriate learning environment that encourages their enjoyment of learning and which allows them to build upon their skills. This is resulting in the majority of students not achieving as well as they might. Higher achievers are able to type in their names and addresses, and make a collage from clipart images, and to use the internet for research and information with support. Others are able to use a graphics program to produce a picture of straight lines with the higher achievers going on to colour the areas of intersection. Most students with PMLD use switches well to learn about cause and effect on the computer or to operate sensory equipment. However, once students have consolidated these skills they are not taken further. For example, very few instances were observed of students using switches to operate communication devices to initiate communication rather than just passively receiving information. Students with autism are encouraged to use switch operated sensory resources as part of their learning to accept other people and of being part of a learning environment. This worked well in one lesson observed, supported well by experienced staff.
65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers know their students well and provide appropriate support. Planning is detailed and effectively takes into account students' personal objectives. However, sometimes expectations were too low and students were not always being challenged to further their skills. The complexity and inappropriateness of the programs being used had negative effects on some students' learning. For example, one student using a program downloaded from the internet was confused by the American English sounding of words and others used a graphic program intended for mainstream use. Teaching assistants provide very good support although not all teaching and support staff are competent and confident in their use of ICT.
66. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are good and students' achievements are satisfactory. Teachers use ICT well to give support to students with severe learning difficulties in their National Skills Profile (NSP) and to students with PMLD in their Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) programme. Tasks are appropriately matched to abilities and the students generally enjoy

using ICT in their learning although some basic skills are weak due to lack of previous opportunities.

67. Leadership of the subject is good and indications are that the subject provision will improve quickly. Since recently taking up post the coordinator has shown good vision to correct weaknesses and to move the subject forward. Initiatives are rapidly being put into place to ensure appropriate software is available and a technician has been appointed to resolve the technical problems that the school has experienced with its networked computers. Although there was no previous scheme of work the coordinator has produced an appropriate scheme based upon nationally recognised units. Targets have been set, initially for Years 7 to 9, and resources are beginning to be provided for the subject specific use of ICT. Management of the subject is satisfactory and should improve when the monitoring of teaching and teachers' planning is in place. Hardware resources are good with 20 of the 24 curriculum computers being networked.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. Although there is an increasing use of ICT to support subject teaching and learning such use is still not consistent. The subject coordinator is aware of this and is introducing the planning of ICT into subject medium term planning next term.

HUMANITIES

In humanities, work was sampled in geography, history and religious education.

69. Scrutiny of students' work and teachers' planning indicate that **geography and history** make a very valuable contribution to raising students' awareness of cultural diversity. The quality of the curriculum planning indicates that the leadership and management of the subjects are good. Through these subjects the students have valuable experiences that promote their personal development. In geography they learn about what clothes to wear when it is raining and that it is important to protect their bodies from the sun. They taste and smell foods grown in Africa and India. There is evidence of good drama and role play activities providing them with an experience of what it was like to live in a shelter during the Second World War.
70. Three lessons were observed in **religious education**. In the lesson for students with autism the quality of teaching was very good. In the lesson for Year 10 / 11 students with PMLD the teaching was good. The quality of teaching for students with SLD in the Years 10 and 11 lesson was satisfactory. The students with autism had an experience of Easter and one student who has a very low tolerance to touching various textures managed to feel an egg and took part in a game with other students. However, the analysis of planning and scrutiny of students' work indicates that religious education does not have a secure place in the curriculum, especially in the sixth form. There are some weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordination of the subject is not sufficiently robust and so not all year groups yet have a secure planned coverage of the subject, some planned activities are not yet sufficiently resourced and there is no monitoring of teaching and learning. There is a timed development plan to address these deficiencies. Photographic evidence indicates that students enjoy religious education and that the subject contributes significantly to raising their awareness of cultural diversity at a level suitable for them. They have enjoyed participating in the Rama / Sita story as part of their study of Hinduism and they have shared the foods typically eaten by Muslims at the festival following the end of Ramadan. Good opportunities are made of visits to places of worship and the subject makes a valuable contribution to students' spiritual development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Work was sampled in art, design and technology, music and physical education.

71. Only three lessons were seen in **art and design**. In two the teaching was good, and in the other it was satisfactory. In addition to observing lessons there was an interview with the art co-ordinator about the subject and consideration of both classroom and corridor display. There was no art co-ordinator during the whole of last year. Art work in Year 8 was of a satisfactory standard and that in a Year 8 class of students with autism was good. Display in the art room was attractive and of a good standard. There was some good quality display in the corridors. The art co-ordinator has been in post for just nine weeks and has made an energetic start. She has already written a policy and has changed the long term plans in the scheme of work. The school is planning to go for the Arts Mark Award during the current calendar year. Already there is a close link with Sale Grammar School which should help to raise the general standard of the subject at Brentwood.
72. In **design and technology**, work sampling showed that some students with severe learning difficulties had learned to sew and were able to stitch objects such as a felt rabbit to a background of contrasting coloured card. Accommodation for the subject is good with a specialist room for both design and technology, and another for food technology.
73. In the three lessons seen in **music**, teaching and learning were good in one lesson and very good in the others. The teaching of skills and techniques was particularly good in all lessons seen. Teachers demonstrated their expert skills in one case, playing the violin and keyboard, and in the other, playing guitar and hand drum. The warmth of the relationships between staff and students and between students encouraged students to work diligently and to achieve well. Students were learning to play various percussion instruments like drums, bongos and triangle in accompaniment to well-known tunes like "The River of Babylon". They also learned about triple time, and to compare major and minor versions of "Shake, Rattle and Roll". Planning of work includes details of each student's individual targets and of opportunities for cross-curricular work so that all students, including those with more complex or multiple learning difficulties, make good progress. Assessment is very good and as students gain technical skills, these are checked off against a list of competencies. Certificates are awarded as students reach milestones of achievement, and celebrated at the weekly assemblies. The school does well in providing concerts, workshops and performances like the recent production of 'Grease'. A good link has been made with a local music college, which provides facilities for students who play less familiar instruments like the tuba. All these opportunities widen students' musical experiences and support their personal development.
74. The two teachers of music work well together and offer a consistent plan of approach to developing skills. They have not yet observed each other teach, but they meet regularly and share ideas and information. Next year, they intend to form a school choir and band, and provide opportunities for students to learn an instrument from a peripatetic specialist. These developments should add significantly to the provision.
75. In **physical education**, two lessons were seen. Teaching and learning were good in both lessons, which were for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. The teacher/coordinator is very well qualified in this subject and this showed in the way in which she carefully warmed students up before the activities and gave very clear explanations and demonstrations. The lessons both featured good planning, frequent feedback to students on how well they had done, and enjoyable activities – one based on classical Indian dancing and the other on zone hockey. All students, at every level of ability, were fully included in all the activities with due account taken of their particular needs. For example, the physiotherapist was present in these lessons in order to provide intensive therapy to students without removing them from their classes. This is the usual practice and a very effective use of her time.
76. The coordinator has maintained and improved the provision, by ensuring that there is a good range of activities, a very good assessment system and ample resources. Accommodation for the subject within the school is good, but there is very little opportunity for students to be taught outside in the school grounds. The school has compensated for this to some degree by making good use of off-site facilities such as a local leisure centre, a swimming pool and a fitness

suite. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities such as after-school indoor team games and the 'Fitbods' programme. The school offers all students the opportunity to participate in dance/drama performances. The school participates and achieves well in competition with other special schools in different sports like boccia, and athletics. The school has developed strong links with outside sporting bodies such as Sale Harriers and the Timperley Cricket and Hockey Club. These links widen even further the opportunities available to the students.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Work was sampled in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE).

77. The subject was not a focus in this inspection, and so not enough evidence was assembled to make overall judgements on the students' achievements. However, students make good progress against their personal targets in IEPs, and the school makes it a continuous priority to build up students' independence. Two lessons in citizenship were seen. The teaching and learning were effective in both lessons, and students made good progress in their personal development. In the first, Year 10 students with PMLD were given a good experience of Japanese culture while they listened to Zen meditation music and felt and examined a range of artefacts from Japan: a beautiful kimono, origami cranes, a teapot, a hand warmer and bath essence. Finally, the students were literally given a taste of Japan through a drink of miso soup and a cup of green tea. In the other lesson, students in the sixth form were sensitively introduced to the dangers of smoking, lung cancer and the work of the Marie Curie charity. In this lesson, there were good discussions about types of cancers and their causes, and the students gained a good understanding and a lot of new information, which they were able to relate to people they knew.
78. In addition to a taught programme, the school provides a good range of opportunities for personal development beyond the classroom. Students gain a direct understanding of how democracies work by participating in elections for the new school council. The council has been involved in debates about matters of importance like sorting out the broken computers, keeping the floor dry in the sixth form area during wet weather and replacing mirrors in the toilets. At lunchtime, visiting students from a local college come in to run a weekly 'Fit Bods' programme under the guidance of the P.E. specialist to encourage 15 students to attend a keep fit session. The session observed during the inspection week was very carefully planned, and full of pace and fun. The quality of the teaching was outstanding and the students were given a strenuous workout.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
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	2
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).