

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLEDON SCHOOL

Wickford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115461

Headteacher: Mr J R Thomas

Lead inspector: Mr J Plumb

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th February 2004

Inspection number: 258881

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 pupils:	5 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	96
School address:	Bromfords Drive Wickford Essex
Postcode:	SS12 0PW
Telephone number:	01268 761252
Fax number:	01268 571861
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Lynch
Date of previous inspection:	February 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castledon is a special school, which currently educates 96 pupils aged five to 16, with one hundred places. Boys outnumber girls by a ratio of approximately 3:1. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and the levels of attainment of the vast majority are well below average. The school is designated as a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties with a resource base for autism. Since the last inspection the school has undergone a period of considerable uncertainty. During this time the governors considered positioning the school as one for pupils with severe learning difficulties and so began to admit pupils with considerably more complex needs. At the same time pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs were placed in the school by the local education authority. These pupils are mostly, but not exclusively, in the current Year 9. Consequently the range of needs for which the school caters is considerably more severe and complex than at the time of the last inspection. Recently, under the very effective leadership and direction of a consultant headteacher, the governors have placed the school on a secure footing as an outreach school and have secured high quality support for the pupils with severe learning difficulties by drawing on the expertise from a Beacon school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. At the time of the inspection the school was led and managed by a consultant headteacher working in an effective partnership with the headteacher of the neighbouring secondary school. A headteacher had been appointed but had not taken up post in time for the inspection. A number of new appointments had recently been made: the co-ordinators for science and music, both from mainstream schools. The senior management team had also very recently been restructured.

Approximately 31 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals: a high figure. The social and economic circumstances of the pupils are well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who come from a minority ethnic background is small. The school is now well positioned to develop as an outreach school and further improve inclusion opportunities for its pupils.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16930	Jeff Plumb	Lead inspector	French, physical education, religious education and English as an additional language.
9561	Husain Aktar	Lay inspector	
1224	Graham Todd	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology and design and technology.
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English, history and citizenship.
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design, music and special educational needs (including inclusion).

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **satisfactory** school which provides satisfactory value for money. Improvements in leadership and management have been satisfactory since the last inspection, so the school no longer has serious weaknesses. Teaching and learning are good for pupils with autism and satisfactory throughout the rest of the school. Achievement is satisfactory overall. The new leadership and management are good but some significant and recent changes introduced have not yet had time to make a significant improvement, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT).

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with autism, in reading throughout the school and in mathematics in Years 1 to 6 is good.
- Achievement of pupils with complex communication difficulties is good and achievement in mathematics is good in Years 1 to 6.
- Achievement in speaking and listening, writing and science, although satisfactory, could be better as could achievement for high attainers in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the consultant headteacher in partnership with the headteacher from the local secondary school is very good.
- A few pupils in Years 7 to 9 present very challenging behaviour that on occasions has a negative impact on their own learning and that of their peers.
- The financial information available to governors is not in a sufficiently clear format to enable them to make the best informed decisions.
- The provision for and achievement in swimming is very good.
- Links with parents and the community are good.
- The opportunities for the inclusion of the highest attaining pupils in mainstream schools are good and so their achievement is very good.
- The care and welfare of pupils is good.

The school's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The weaknesses identified in leadership and management and assessment at that time have been addressed. There has not been enough improvement in the provision for ICT.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	B	B
Year 6	C	C
Year 9	C	C
Year 11	C	C

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. The achievement for pupils with complex learning difficulties in Years 1 and 2 is good.

Achievement in reading is good throughout the school. Achievement in mathematics in Years 1 to 6 is also good. These are significant improvements since the last inspection. Achievement in Years 7

to 11 in mathematics is satisfactory overall although some high attainers in Years 10 and 11 do not always make enough progress because they are not always sufficiently challenged. In speaking and listening, writing, science and religious education, achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. In ICT, achievement is unsatisfactory across the school. Pupils with severe learning difficulties achieve well but sometimes the progress of pupils in Year 9 with emotional and behavioural difficulties is impeded by their unsatisfactory behaviour. Achievement in swimming by Year 6 is very good, as are the achievements of pupils in Year 11 on work experience. In art, a few pupils in Year 11 reach standards that are close to the national average. Because of good inclusion opportunities one pupil in Year 11 is in line to achieve well in GCSE results in English and mathematics.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and at play, but the behaviour of a few pupils, particularly in Year 9, can be difficult at times. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Relationships are good and pupils show good respect for other people's feelings and beliefs at a level appropriate for them. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good and throughout the rest of the school it is satisfactory, except in ICT where it is unsatisfactory. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school. Mathematics teaching is good in Years 1 to 6, but some in Years 10 and 11 lacks challenge. The teaching of swimming and personal, social and health education is good. Through inclusion experiences in mainstream schools the teaching of the highest attainers is good. Assessment is good.

The school provides a good curriculum. Teachers take good care of pupils and so they feel secure and safe. Effective partnership with parents ensures that there is a productive working atmosphere between home and school for the majority of pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The new leadership of the consultant headteacher working in partnership with the headteacher from the local secondary school is very good. Management is good. Governance is satisfactory. Most of the governors are new and they are at an early stage of looking at detailed costing of the school's provision. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers speak well of the school and consider that it cares well for their children. The pupils say: 'It is a school we enjoy coming to'. They consider that they are listened to and that their concerns are acted upon. A few parents and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour. Although behaviour overall is good there are a few pupils in Years 7 to 9 who sometimes disrupt their own learning and that of their peers by their challenging behaviour related to their special educational needs.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve quality of provision for and standards in ICT.
- Improve achievement in writing and speaking and listening in Years 3 to 11.
- Improve achievement in science in Years 3 to 11.
- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the quality of provision for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

- Provide the governors with clearer and more transparent financial information so that they can make better informed decisions to bring about school improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Because of the pupils' complex special educational needs, standards of attainment are well below those expected of pupils of the same age nationally. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this school caters against age related national expectations. This report will focus on achievement. Judgements about achievement take account of information contained in pupils' statements, annual reviews and individual education plans. In aspects of physical education standards are in line with national expectations and this is celebrated. Because of the very good inclusion opportunities that are developing with mainstream schools, individual pupils attain standards close to the national average in science, English and mathematics. One Year 11 pupil is on target to attain GCSE passes in English and mathematics at grade C/D.

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. For pupils with autism achievement is good. The highest attainers within the school achieve very well because of the very good inclusion opportunities they experience in mainstream schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good for pupils with autism, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- In mathematics achievement is good in Years 1 to 6.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory over time, but beginning to improve rapidly now.
- Because of very good inclusion in mainstream schools the highest attainers achieve very well in English and mathematics.
- Achievement in swimming is very good and a significant proportion of pupils exceed national expectations by Year 6.
- Some pupils do not achieve well enough in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 because they are - too often - insufficiently challenged.
- Some Year 9 pupils with challenging behaviour underachieve in some lessons.

Commentary

1. In English pupils with autism in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in communication because of the good teaching they receive in a signing environment. The standards being attained by these pupils at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Achievement in reading is good throughout the school because of the consistency in developing pupils' phonic skills and enabling them to tackle new words independently. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Achievement in speaking and listening and writing is satisfactory for pupils in Years 3 to 11. Throughout Years 1 to 6, pupils' achievement is good in mathematics, an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall but the behaviour of a few pupils in Year 9 hinders their progress and that of others in the year group. In some lessons in Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient challenge for higher attainers and on these occasions their progress in mathematics is held back. As a result of very good inclusion experiences in mainstream schools the highest attaining pupils in all years achieve very well in both English and mathematics. A pupil in reception working in a reception / Year 1 class in a neighbouring primary school made very good progress with his writing because of skilful teaching and the excellent support he received from his outreach teaching assistant. A Year 11 pupil who made his way independently to the local secondary school was well ahead of his peers in his mathematics class and is on target to attain a good pass at GCSE.
2. Achievement in science is satisfactory throughout the school. The newly appointed specialist is working very hard to develop the curriculum to improve standards. At the time of the inspection

the new science room was near completion. Planning indicates that new strategies are likely to increase independent research and extend their use of ICT for recording the results of their investigations. In ICT achievement is unsatisfactory because over time teaching has been unsatisfactory. Very recent changes have resulted in rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. There has, however, not yet been sufficient time for pupils to catch up on the gaps in their learning in previous years. The consultant headteacher experienced a barrier in moving this subject forward as quickly as she would have liked to because of a staffing difficulty. To improve achievement further, additional staff training is required. Achievement in religious education is satisfactory and the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and also to raising their awareness of cultural diversity.

3. Achievement in physical education is very good. Because of very good teaching in swimming a significant number of pupils by Year 6 attain the national expectation and can swim 25 metres. A significant number exceed this distance and are competent swimmers using a very good range of strokes. A significant proportion of pupils have developed games skills in line with the national expectation by Year 9, because of good teaching supported by the deployment of coaches from outside the school. In art and design achievement is satisfactory and individual pupils achieve very well with considerable success in the GCSE examination. In aspects of personal, social and health education and citizenship, achievement is good. In particular pupils do very well in their work experience placements, and one pupil is doing exceptionally well on a long-term placement with a local fitted kitchen firm.
4. The few Travellers are fully included and their achievement is at least satisfactory. The few minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Boys significantly outnumber girls but no significant differences in achievement emerged during the inspection. There is good provision for pupils in public care. The achievement of pupils with autism is good overall and for those with severe learning difficulties it is at least satisfactory. A few pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties in Year 9 underachieve at times because the severity of their behavioural and emotional difficulties sometimes impedes their learning. Under the leadership of the consultant headteacher robust plans for managing behaviour have started to lead to an improvement in these pupils' conduct. Most of the pupils with moderate learning difficulties are in Years 10 to 11. Although the highest attainers achieve well because of very good inclusion opportunities, insufficient challenge in mathematics results in some underachievement in a few lessons for middle and higher attainers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and values are good. Behaviour is good. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils develop well morally and socially; their spiritual and cultural development, well supported by some areas of the curriculum, is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils willingly benefit from opportunities to learn and take responsibility.
- Pupils develop responsive attitudes towards others so relationships are good.
- Disruptions by a small minority of pupils slow down learning in some classes.

Commentary

5. Most pupils, including those who were often out of the habit of regular attendance and participating in lessons before they came to this school, show good interest in its work. This is evident in many activities and throughout the different age and ability groups. Pupils with demanding needs or circumstances respond positively to the tasks and challenges presented by the teachers. In most lessons where pupils are skilfully managed and engaged, they remain on task and work co-operatively, sharing resources and ideas. They take responsibility for thinking problems through for themselves, both in lessons and in activities outside lessons. However, a small minority of pupils with complex learning and behavioural difficulties,

particularly in Year 9, do not show such qualities. Their level of motivation, interest and effort is not high. Their disruptions tend to hinder other pupils' learning. Pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities and in off-site education is good. Pupils enjoy the community placements which enrich their experiences.

6. All staff work hard to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem by frequent praise and encouragement. Achievements are celebrated and good work is displayed around the rooms, creating a stimulating and rewarding environment. In subjects such as religious education and personal and social education pupils reflect on beliefs, feelings and nature but this is not so across the curriculum. Through personal example, direct teaching and counselling staff help pupils to develop an awareness of right and wrong, tolerance and correct ways to react when frustrated or angered. For example, music therapy helps to soften the mood of those pupils concerned. All pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, even if they do not always act accordingly.
7. For a school that has a significant number of pupils with complex behavioural difficulties, pupils' behaviour is good both in and out of the classroom and in all aspects of school life. In lessons, behaviour is mostly good when the activities engage pupils well and where teachers effectively manage any disruptions. A little improper behaviour was evident in the school but no evidence of aggression was seen during the period of inspection. Anti-social behaviour, including bullying, exists but is not a big problem and where it occurs, it is firmly tackled. The school's property is used with care.
8. Most pupils co-operate well with their teachers and with one another, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, including charity fund raising. They willingly participate in school council activities and community placements, where they show responsibility and are thoughtful. A productive competitiveness such as that developed in sport, emerges from the extra-curricular activities provided. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other and with adults. In the school council, pupils develop their understanding of democratic processes and their responsibilities.
9. Pupils show that they appreciate cultural traditions through art, geography, music and RE activities, which enrich their cultural experience. There are also opportunities in the curriculum areas like the cultural days to learn about lifestyles and traditions other than their own in multi-cultural Britain. However, wider cultural development is not sufficiently planned across the curriculum. Pupils work and play together happily.
10. Most pupils improve their attendance at the school. Attendance is close to the national average and is satisfactory in the context of the school. Authorised absences, which are widespread, are mostly due to illness or because of short family holidays during term time. Unauthorised absences are mostly contributed by a small number of pupils because of their personal circumstances, including home tuition which, until recently, was not marked as off-site education. There is also a little truancy and a few pupils are school phobic. It is because of these factors that procedures for monitoring and securing good attendance have not had as wide an impact as senior staff hoped. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	10.0
National data:	8.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	2.2
National data:	2.1

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

11. The number of fixed period exclusions is high but they have been for short periods and for good reasons. These exclusions ensure the safety of the pupils concerned and others. There were no permanent exclusions during the sample period.

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	87	19	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are good for pupils with autism, but satisfactory throughout the rest of the school. The curriculum is good overall. The school provides good levels of care and guidance for all pupils. Links with parents and the local community are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is good overall and this is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of pupils with autism in Years 1 and 2 is good because of the focus on communication using pictures and signs.
- In reading, throughout the school, teaching is consistently good.
- The teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory but there have been some rapid improvements recently.
- The teaching of mathematics in Years 1 to 6 is good but a minority of teaching in Years 10 and 11 lacks challenge.
- Very good and excellent teaching in swimming results in a minority of pupils exceeding national expectations by Year 6.
- Occasionally the challenging behaviour of a few pupils in Year 9 is not effectively managed and so impacts negatively on progress in lessons.
- Assessment procedures are good and are beginning to help raise standards.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	5 (11%)	28 (63%)	11 (24%)	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.

12. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with autism in Years 1 and 2 is good. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is a very significant improvement since the time of the last inspection when 10 per cent of lessons seen were judged to be unsatisfactory. However, analysis of work in Years 3 to 11 indicates that teaching over time is

satisfactory except for in ICT where it is unsatisfactory. This is because the teaching seen during the inspection is as a result of significant improvements recently brought about. The consultant headteacher has restructured the senior leadership team and recruited subject specialists in science and music. Her valuable work is now having a positive effect and yielding significant improvements in teaching. She experienced a barrier in improving provision in ICT, which she has robustly addressed. Although good planning is now in place to raise the quality of teaching and learning this has not had sufficient time to raise standards in data-logging and control technology. Good behaviour management was seen overall, but a few pupils with challenging behaviour disrupt lessons at times, and particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' strategies for dealing with these pupils are not always effective and they too often spend valuable time attempting to deal with the problems, to the detriment of other pupils' learning.

13. In English the teaching of pupils with complex communication difficulties (autism) in Years 1 and 2 is good. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school. Pupils are given the phonic strategies they need to take off as independent readers. The teaching of speaking and listening and writing in Years 3 to 11 is satisfactory but the lack of a whole school approach to writing limits many pupils' progress. Teaching in mathematics is good for pupils with autism and is generally good in Years 1 to 6, a significant improvement since the last inspection. Throughout the rest of the school the teaching of mathematics is satisfactory. On rare occasions inappropriate behaviour in Year 9 which is not effectively managed impedes not only the learning of the pupils who disrupt the lesson but also the learning of others. High attainers are too often insufficiently challenged, which impedes their learning of mathematical concepts. The highest attainers throughout the school are well taught because of the inclusion opportunities they experience in mainstream classes where the quality of teaching is good. Science teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good but this is as a result of the very recent acquisition of a subject specialist. Over time the quality of teaching in the subject has been no more than satisfactory because, until recently, insufficient attention has been given to investigative work. Only very recently have improvements been brought about in the teaching of ICT and they have not yet had time to impact on raising standards. Not all teachers are confident enough to teach some of the very recently introduced curriculum experiences and require further training to gain in competence.
14. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, high expectations and a cracking pace as seen in a Year 6 swimming lesson. In such lessons learning is made fun and because of the enjoyment pupils experience they are motivated to improve. The support given by teaching assistants is good throughout the school, which makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They are very valuable in supporting those pupils included in mainstream lessons and this contributes much to their very good learning. Where satisfactory teaching has shortcomings, higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged and inappropriate behaviour is occasionally not well managed.
15. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are taught well and given good support by an outreach teacher from a Beacon school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Strategies for teaching pupils with autism are a particular strength. A few teachers are not sufficiently confident in the teaching of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties but their skills in doing so are improving.
16. The procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are good. The assessment records are thorough and well kept. The school has a good assessment and marking policy and training has been provided for staff, so they are implementing the policy well. For example, teachers use a common planning format and ensure that there are clear learning objectives for each lesson. Marking has improved significantly, but there are still a few inconsistencies; the best marking shows pupils how to improve their work and set future targets for learning.
17. A new computer program has been introduced to measure pupils' progress. It is being used effectively to assess pupils' achievement in all subjects. It is providing a rigorous system of

tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school, taking account of the P Scales and National Curriculum levels. The challenge for the teachers now is to incorporate this data more effectively into their planning and ensure that the learning targets set for some of the higher attaining pupils are more challenging.

18. The pupils' individual education and behaviour plans are of a good quality and are monitored regularly. This ensures that the majority of targets are relevant to the individual pupil. In most cases, teachers' daily lesson plans include pupils' individual targets. These targets feed into the annual review cycle and are a useful tool with which to measure the pupils' progress. However, the pupils are not sufficiently involved in the target setting process.
19. There has been good improvement since the last inspection when assessment was identified as a key issue.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides good learning opportunities for all pupils. Extra-curricular provision is good. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ICT curriculum has only recently been improved and is not yet sufficiently secure.
- A good programme prepares pupils in Years 10 and 11 for the next stage in their education.
- A comprehensive programme supports development of pupils' personal, social and life skills.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to externally accredited courses, but their access to GCSE courses is too limited.
- The school's provision for careers education and work experience is good.
- The communication needs of pupils with additional needs are addressed well.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Commentary

20. The school has made good improvements to the curriculum since the previous inspection. However, the weaknesses in ICT identified in the previous inspection have only recently been addressed. Taught time is sufficient and time is used well in lessons. Learning opportunities include all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 prepares pupils well for the next stage of their learning and for entering the world of work. All pupils have equal opportunities to access work experience and college placements, which are appreciated by the pupils. The good emphasis on vocational studies and the effective link with the local college enable pupils to choose from a wide, relevant range of subjects. Pupils are offered a wide range of accreditation including the ASDAN and Trident Trust awards for careers education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. However, opportunities for pupils to take GCSE courses in a wide range of subjects are too limited. The school has good links with the careers education service and provides a good programme of work experience.
21. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, including those with additional needs, and the school ensures that pupils of all abilities are included in all activities. The use of signing, symbols and the introduction of a picture exchange communication system has increased the options for pupils with complex needs to communicate. Learning opportunities for pupils of all ages are enriched by a good number of visits that support the learning done in the classroom and also by visitors to the school, such as drama groups. The school provides pupils with good opportunities for learning beyond the classroom, including sporting links with other schools and residential trips. Pupils have access to a good and varied range of activities at lunchtimes, including sport, music, crafts and computer games.

22. The provision for the widening range and complexity of special educational needs that the pupils exhibit is very well planned. Their individual education plans have clear targets that all understand and are included in teachers' daily planning. Pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour have realistic targets in their individual behavioural plans. Teachers who have pupils with severe learning difficulties receive good advice and support in their lesson planning, particularly in mathematics and English, from a local Beacon school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Pupils with autism, particularly those with severe autism, are provided with very good support that includes speech therapy. Specialists work effectively with pupils with autism that have communication difficulties. Very good inclusion arrangements with local primary and secondary mainstream schools are currently meeting the needs of very high achieving pupils well. The use ICT for the additional support of pupils' learning and communication is underdeveloped, however.
23. There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The school has been successful in appointing subject specialists for science, art and design and music. Numbers of support staff are high, which is a well-planned use of funds. This is effective, since support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement throughout the school. Accommodation is satisfactory, apart from in music where there is no specialist provision. The imminent opening of a specialist teaching area will shortly enhance the provision for science. The resources are satisfactory in all subjects except ICT, where they are unsatisfactory and hinder the development of pupils' ICT skills. In music a lack of keyboards and percussion instruments limits the extent of pupils' skill building. Learning resources are good in physical education - particularly the swimming pool - and significantly contribute towards pupils' achievement. Good use is made of the community to support teaching and learning and in preparing pupils for their future.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is good. It provides them with good support and guidance and involves them well in all aspects of its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good induction process effectively supports admission to the school.
- Pupils are well looked after.
- Staff are vigilant about health and safety matters.
- Child protection arrangements are good.

Commentary

24. The success of the school's care can be seen in how much pupils like the school, a fact remarked on by parents, and in pupils' willingness to work. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare followed by all staff are based upon their detailed knowledge of them as individuals, including their medical and hygiene needs, and their genuine warmth of feeling for them. Good links with other schools help smooth transition. Pupils are effectively advised about personal matters, and, with the help of Connexions, about academic options and careers. They are helpfully integrated into mainstream education. The good personal social and health education provided raises pupils' awareness of relevant health, citizenship and social matters, such as the ills caused by drugs in society.
25. First aid procedures are good and fully in place, equipment is well maintained and there is good awareness of safety in the school. Risks are regularly assessed. Vulnerable pupils are warmly looked after. There is a designated teacher for child protection who understands agreed procedures and keeps others informed of issues, though there has been no whole school training about child protection issues, including child restraint. The school works closely and effectively with external welfare agencies that contribute information, advice and support which helps staff to meet the needs of individual pupils.

26. Teachers know their pupils well and are sensitive to their personal circumstances. Arrangements for assessing and reporting pupils' progress are sound. The systems for checking individual achievement against agreed targets and the use of this information to support pupils' performance are both good. The reporting system and exchange of pastoral information amongst staff provide further means of monitoring pupils' personal development. This, together with the system of rewards and sanctions, provides a deterrent for any oppressive behaviour such as bullying.
27. Good opportunities such as the work of the school council enable pupils to air their views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is good. Links with other schools and colleges are good. Links with the wider community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Partnership with parents is good and helps staff to meet the needs of pupils.
- Communication about pupils' progress is frequent and good overall.
- Links with the community are productive and effectively support the work of the school.

Commentary

28. Liaison with parents takes place on a regular basis both formally and informally. Parents are happy with many aspects of the school's work. They are provided with regular information to enable them to celebrate the achievements and deal with concerns regarding their children's performance. They are invited to individual and collective consultations. There are regular progress reviews which are usually well attended by parents. The progress reports provide good information about what pupils can do but not about what they ought to be achieving. Comments in the report are inadequate, hardly indicating what the parents can do to improve their child's performance. However, parents have opportunities at reviews and consultation meetings to discuss practical ways of helping their children. The school prospectus and the governors' annual reports are simple and useful for parents.
29. The school can rely on most parents' support in dealing with problems related to their children's learning and development, but not enough in keeping their children's absence to a minimum. Many parents work as volunteer helpers, for example, in the library. Parents satisfactorily support the home-school communication through diaries. Attendance at most meetings is good. The Friends of Castledon, the parent teachers association, is well supported by parents in its raising of money for the school's resources.
30. Effective liaison exists with feeder and receiving schools, supporting smooth transition and integration. Pupils benefit from residential visits and educational trips. Links with the community support pupils' welfare and integration and also enrich the curriculum. Good co-operation with organisations including Trident introduces pupils effectively to the world of work. The school has developed good links with industry and businesses to widen pupils' learning experiences. Employers support pupils' work experience willingly. The Year 10 pupils enjoy their community placements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

An unusual context:

During the inspection the school was without a substantive headteacher. The governors have appointed a new headteacher. She takes up post in April 2004. Leadership is provided by a consultant acting headteacher working in partnership with the headteacher of the neighbouring secondary school.

The school is well led and managed. The consultant headteacher in partnership with the headteacher from the neighbouring secondary school and members of her newly formed senior leadership team provide very good leadership. Management is good. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The serious weaknesses identified in management at that time have been successfully addressed.
- The leadership of the consultant headteacher working in partnership with the neighbouring secondary headteacher is very good.
- Governors need clearer financial information and need to become more involved in whole school decision making.
- The senior leadership team is effective.
- Management systems, including that of special educational needs, are good.
- Induction procedures for staff new to the school are good.

Commentary

31. The consultant acting headteacher works in an effective partnership with the headteacher from the neighbouring secondary school. Together they provide very good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school. The aims of the school are clear. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The consultant headteacher has successfully re-structured the senior leadership team. The newly appointed deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are confident about their roles and responsibilities. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The serious weaknesses in management identified then have been successfully addressed. Management is now good. The consultant headteacher has skilfully managed change through a very turbulent and uncertain period and has established a firm position for the school as an outreach centre within the context of the local educational authority's strategy for special educational needs.
32. The pace of change has been slower than the consultant headteacher would have liked. She had to overcome barriers to move key developments such as whole school assessment and provision for ICT forward. She has been very successful in the way she has created a strong team spirit amongst the staff. Morale is now good and there is a shared commitment and enthusiasm for the school's development. The newly appointed deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher also provide very good leadership and effective management. There is now a real team spirit. They have been successful in bringing about significant improvements in whole school assessment and better inclusion of pupils into mainstream schools. The deputy headteacher has identified the problems with ICT and has drawn up a robust action plan to address them. The inspection came too early to see what impact this action plan is likely to have.
33. Some subject co-ordinators, for example in science and music, are newly in post, come from mainstream schools and so have had to learn a lot in a short time. However, all subject co-ordinators are developing their roles well. The consultant headteacher is very astutely helping the new staff to develop their expertise in working with pupils with complex special educational needs. This is achieved through professional development courses and targeted staff

meetings. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good and teachers are sharing good practice with one another.

34. The management of special educational needs is good. Liaison with outside agencies contributes well to pupils' achievements. Support staff are effectively deployed and supported, and their performance also justifies the higher spending that their numbers demand. The school possesses good expertise in working with pupils with autism and also with pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. Whilst the school was uncertain about the part it had to play within the LEAs strategy for special educational needs the governors considered developing the school as a centre for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Governors began to admit some such pupils before providing training for the staff. The consultant headteacher has addressed this issue through using the expertise of a specialist teacher from a local Beacon school and teachers are now confident in working with these pupils and manage them well. At the same time governors admitted pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties (EBS) and these pupils, now largely in Year 9, present very challenging behaviour and have proved extremely difficult for a school geared up for working with pupils with autism and pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The governors are beginning to realise that they need to be more firm about controlling admissions whilst the LEA's strategy for EBS remains somewhat unclear. Nonetheless an improved behaviour management strategy introduced by the consultant headteacher has improved the quality of provision for pupils with EBS.
35. Governance is satisfactory. Many governors are new and are rapidly establishing themselves. They are supportive and a number visit the school regularly. Financial planning is satisfactory. The priorities on the school improvement plan are costed and focus on raising pupil achievement. However, governors are only at an early stage of engaging in serious cost benefit discussions, for example about the benefit of the swimming pool for pupils measured against the excessive costs of keeping it running smoothly. Similarly they have not examined robustly the cost of the farm against its benefits in raising pupil achievement. Finance figures are neither sufficiently clear nor transparent to governors. The larger than average carry forward is accurately targeted for planned refurbishment. There is evidence, for example, of the new accommodation for science benefiting the pupils. Now that the governors have an agreed platform on which to build it is essential that they become more actively involved in whole school financial planning. This is very important in the context of funding made available for a consultant headteacher having to be clawed back once the substantive headteacher takes up post. Overall the school provides satisfactory value for money.
36. Performance management is good and equitably involves the teaching assistants. The consultant headteacher and the deputy headteacher are currently the trained team leaders. Since it is recognised that the workload needs to be better shared, there are already plans for the assistant headteacher to be trained for the role. External courses for training new teachers who join from secondary schools, for example in working with pupils with autism, are prohibitively expensive. The plan is for one new teacher to go on an external course for teaching pupils with autism and the to develop staff development back in school. One of the speech therapists allocated to the school already runs a signing course after school for teachers, teaching assistants and parents. Two significant barriers to improvement, difficulties within the senior management team and uncertainty about the school's future, have been overcome, thanks to the hard work and skill of the consultant headteacher.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	908,386
Total expenditure	913,573
Expenditure per pupil	9135.73

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	67,945
Balance carried forward to the next	62,757

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION FOR INCLUSION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

As specifically requested by the school this section on the quality of provision for inclusion in mainstream schools and colleges has been written up as a stand alone feature within the report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inclusion of the highest attaining pupils in mainstream primary schools and the neighbouring secondary school are very good.
- Because of these very good experiences some students achieve very well in English and mathematics.

Commentary

37. Provision for pupils who achieve exceptional well is very good. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 benefit from mainstream inclusion, mainly for literacy, numeracy, art and ICT for sessions varying from an hour to half a day as deemed appropriate. The outcomes of such provision are very encouraging with several pupils attaining in line with national expectations. One Year 11 pupil is expected to achieve a grade C or D in GCSE examinations in English and mathematics and one pupil has transferred back to mainstream education. College links also enable pupils to continue their education on leaving school.
38. Pupils respond to such provision very positively. They settle well and are confident members of their mainstream classes. For example, in one Year 11 mathematics class the included pupil was the first to solve a problem set by the teacher. Most pupils also respond to the provision with increased self-confidence and esteem. The parents of included pupils say they appreciate the opportunities that such provision gives their children in enabling them to achieve to the full extent of their ability.
39. The leadership, management and vision of the provision by the assistant headteacher is very good. Very good professional relationships have been built up with the special needs co-ordinators in the mainstream schools involved and the increasing number of such inclusions is a direct result of this. The very good action plan and documentation that the co-ordinator has produced provides a very clear structure for the process of inclusion. The very good support that the inclusion teaching assistant provides in accompanying and supporting pupils further enables the inclusion process.
40. Further thought now needs to be given as to how such learning can be supported through teachers' planning, such as in '*Using and Applying*' in mathematics when pupils return from their placements in mainstream schools.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

*English was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. As agreed with the school, **French** was not a focus for inspection. Only one lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in that lesson. There is insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on the quality of provision and standards achieved.*

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The reading programme has improved, and is now good.
- The teaching of speaking and listening and writing could be better in Years 3 to 11.
- All pupils do not have the same opportunities to take GCSE examinations.
- The school provides good speech and language therapy support for pupils who have specific problems or additional learning difficulties.
- The provision of drama for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 promotes their speaking and listening skills very well.
- There is no whole school approach to developing pupils' writing skills.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

41. There has been a satisfactory improvement in standards since the last inspection. In reading pupils achieve well throughout the school because of the effectiveness of the strategies to support the teaching of reading. Achievement is satisfactory in writing and speaking and listening. This reflects the overall satisfactory teaching and learning in English throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2 the quality of teaching and learning is good. Consequently those pupils with complex needs (autism) in those years make good progress in their development of communication skills in a picture and signing environment. Some of these pupils are beginning to make independent choices and have the necessary skills to communicate their choices. This demonstrates good achievement.
42. Pupils enter school with low levels of ability in reading but the results of annual reading tests indicate that the majority soon begin to make good progress. This level of improvement is usually maintained, so that by the time they leave school a significant number of pupils are independent readers. Pupils' progress is good because when they enter school teachers place strong emphasis on developing their phonic skills. They teach pupils how to tackle unfamiliar words and provide them with frequent opportunities to read during lessons. For example, in a good Year 9 ICT lesson, pupils used their knowledge of initial letter sounds effectively for word processing.
43. As they move through the school, pupils' speaking and listening skills become more developed and achievement is satisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff are particularly supportive and patient with pupils who have difficulty in expressing themselves, which helps them to develop confidence. The good support from the speech and language therapists and the speech and language therapy assistants for those pupils who have specific problems or additional learning difficulties contributes effectively to their good progress. Communication

systems such as signing, which are needed to reinforce communication for a small number of autistic pupils, are being used consistently and contribute well to their learning.

44. The drama option for a number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 enables them to work successfully in groups. In performing a scene from "Romeo and Juliet" they practised independently and went through a scene three times without prompting until they were word and action perfect. Because they value each other's contributions, pupils applaud spontaneously when others perform a scene. The lack of opportunity for all pupils to participate in such experiences in drama prevents them from achieving better in speaking and listening.
45. Pupils make satisfactory progress in improving their written work and their folders show evidence of a wide range of writing. By the end of Year 9, pupils express their thoughts and viewpoints in non-fiction writing, such as book reviews. However, the lack of a whole school approach limits many pupils' development in writing.
46. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress working towards completing ASDAN challenges and they produce neat coursework. Although higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to follow a GCSE examination course at the local secondary school, opportunities for other pupils to access a more challenging range of examinations are currently limited.
47. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The new co-ordinator has good subject knowledge. With the advice from the local education authority and senior staff he/she has begun to identify effective monitoring procedures. Subject plans have recently been reviewed and are being improved further. Assessment of pupils is regular, and pupils' main areas for development can be tracked from their statements through to their individual education plans. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, and frequently does not help pupils to improve their work. The subject development plan recognises where there can be improvements. The library is well situated at the centre of the school and is well managed by two enthusiastic parents. It is well stocked with a comprehensive range of fiction and non-fiction books.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Language and literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory. This area is not more effective because the subject manager has not yet had time to work with her colleagues to promote pupils' achievement in literacy more rigorously throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good because of the good teaching and learning.
- Management and leadership are good.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- There are good opportunities for inclusion.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is well established.

Commentary

49. Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good. Good teaching that always considers pupils' individual mathematics objectives and individual targets ensures that tasks are well matched to their ability. This is reflected in teachers' adaptation of their direct questioning to pupils' ability and age. These strong features, together with teachers' good relationships with their pupils, encourage and enable their learning. As a result, pupils' attitudes towards their learning are

generally good. They listen well and are keen to respond to their teachers' questions and engage well in set tasks. For example, in a class of pupils with severe autism, pupils showed their enjoyment and participation, by beams of joy on their faces, in learning number sequencing to 10 through the teachers' very good use of "10 green bottles" with both class and staff singing the song.

50. Pupils' achievement in Year 6 to 9 is satisfactory. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good, a minority of pupils with challenging behaviour upset teachers' lesson planning and disrupt the learning of others. This is preventing pupils' learning from being better than satisfactory. Although teaching in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory, poor lesson pace and timing, at times, leave little time at the end to consolidate and assess pupils' understanding or new learning. Although one high achieving pupil's needs are being met by inclusion at a local mainstream school, high achievers are not always sufficiently challenged. There is too little adaptation of tasks to suit average and higher achieving pupils. Consequently, pupils' learning and achievements remain satisfactory and have not improved since the previous inspection. In all lessons observed, teaching assistants provided very good individual support, particularly to lower achieving pupils.
51. The management and leadership of the subject and vision for its development are good. A new, more appropriate, subject policy has been produced by the subject co-ordinator. In consequence, all pupils have been assessed against the key objectives of the National Numeracy Strategy to decide on the most appropriate year group to use. Monitoring of teaching and lesson planning is taking place. The commercial assessment system adopted by the school is well established and used, providing informative three-year tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' work showed that teachers' marking and use of guiding comments, although good in some years, is inconsistent, with little evidence of AT4, data handling. This latter is also reflected in the little evidence available of the use of generic ICT applications in general and data handling in particular.
52. The national strategy is firmly embedded and used in teachers' planning and teaching. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teachers were observed not to be following it. Resources for the subject are good, with several new schemes having been purchased.

Mathematics across the curriculum

53. Mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Several uses of pupils' mathematical knowledge were observed, for example weighing ingredients in food technology, and in science, where pupils produced a graph of the effect of differing weights on a piece of elastic. However, the planned use of mathematics into teachers' subject planning is largely underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning observed during the inspection were good.
- Insufficient effective use is made of the farm.
- Teaching assistants support different groups of pupils very effectively.
- There are strongly inclusive links with neighbouring secondary school.

Commentary

54. Throughout the school pupils achieve satisfactorily. They enjoy the work in science, particularly the investigations that they find interesting and great fun. For example, when studying forces, Year 6 pupils were really excited when lying flat on the floor, blowing on a round chocolate

sweet and watching it rise into the air. This practical experience helped them to have a better understanding of upthrust.

55. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. During the inspection the teaching was consistently good. However, the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with the co-ordinator show that teaching over time is only satisfactory. There is still insufficient emphasis on investigative science. The farm is an underused resource; opportunities are missed to link the teaching more closely to the science curriculum and to develop an accredited course for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The pupils' books indicate that in a minority of classes the curriculum is not adapted and modified effectively enough for the higher and lower attaining pupils. The marking of pupils' books is satisfactory, but there are inconsistencies. The best examples of marking explain to pupils how they can improve their work. Assessment procedures are much improved and are now good. It is now possible to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Better use of the data to inform teachers' planning is an area correctly identified by the school for improvement. Teaching assistants support the pupils very well. They have clearly identified roles and provide a high level of care.
56. The facilities for science are due to be improved shortly when the new science laboratory opens. Currently the science teacher leads a 'nomadic' life, and teaches science in different classrooms without proper equipment. The new facilities have been planned to provide the opportunity to enhance pupils' learning and raise standards, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Currently there is one Year 7 pupil successfully integrated at the neighbouring secondary school for his weekly science lessons.
57. The recently appointed specialist teacher is working hard to develop a better and more practical curriculum. His work in this area is already helping to improve the learning opportunities for pupils. However, he has not been in post long enough to monitor teaching, assess standards and work with teachers in the lower part of the school. He is conscious that ICT is not being used enough for research and recording the results of investigations. However, he already anticipates being well placed to address this issue, because the new science laboratory is due to be well equipped with computers.
58. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching observed during the inspection was good.
- Good use is being made of digital cameras.
- Insufficient use is being made of the computers.
- ICT is not used enough to support learning in different subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

59. Throughout the school pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and their skills are underdeveloped. This is particularly noticeable in Years 7 to 11, where, until recently pupils have been underachieving and have been subject to a very narrow curriculum. Pupils are very reliant upon staff and need constant reassurance and help when using the computers. Many of the pupils in Year 11 are likely to leave school without the necessary skills required in the world of work or in further education.

60. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. During the inspection the teaching observed was good overall, but teaching over time is unsatisfactory. Until this term, key elements of the curriculum, such as control technology, data-logging and modelling have not been effectively planned or taught. Recent developments include improved networked access to ICT and much improved planning that takes account of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The good teaching is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. They enjoy their lessons, behave well, respect the equipment and are keen to learn new skills and techniques. Some very good teaching was observed in Year 11. Pupils were able to enter information into a spreadsheet, add captions and change the width of columns. In this lesson effective use was made of the interactive whiteboard to reinforce the lesson objectives. Most teachers are making good use of digital photography to record achievement. However, further staff training is needed to address unfamiliar elements of the curriculum that have been introduced this term. The computer club is very popular with the pupils at lunchtimes, but apart from in discrete lessons, insufficient use is being made of the computer suite and interactive whiteboards for whole-class teaching.
61. The deputy headteacher has taken on responsibility for this subject and has quickly come to grips with what needs to be improved. A good action plan addresses the main issues. She has correctly identified the need to purchase more hardware and software to help pupils communicate better; for example, concept keyboards, switches and voice activated software. There are good links with the neighbouring primary and secondary schools where a number of pupils are included for computer lessons. Some good technical support is also being received from the neighbouring secondary school.
62. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. The use of ICT in different subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The majority of teachers are not building upon the skills being taught in discrete lessons. However, good practice was seen in mathematics in Year 2 where autistic pupils were using ICT when matching numbers to objects.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. It was agreed with the school that geography and history would not be an inspection focus. Only one lesson was seen in history and so no judgements are being made about these subjects.

64. Humanities topics are covered on a termly basis, for example with the current term's **history** focus on the Vikings. Displays of pupils' work indicate that pupils understand why the Vikings wore armour and the function of a shield and helmet. Higher attaining pupils have completed work on why people have invaded and settled in Britain in the past.
65. In the one history lesson seen during the inspection, most pupils understood that the Vikings left behind a great number of documents in stone, wood and metal, all written in symbols known as runes. The teacher used a wide range of strategies to keep the pupils on task, including a video clip. Pupils enjoyed writing their names using the runic alphabet and their learning was good. The classroom assistants gave good support to pupils with additional special needs, enabling them to fully participate in the lesson. Higher attaining pupils were encouraged to translate a sentence using the runic symbols.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory because of satisfactory teaching.
- Not all teachers are secure in their subject knowledge.
- Assessment is developing well but is in need of further improvement.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Religious education contributes well to raising awareness of cultural diversity in Britain today.

Commentary

66. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The best improvement has been in the beginning of the use of assessment.
67. Teachers now track pupils' progress in the subject and use data to inform subsequent planning to improve their standards of attainment. The range of methods used for teaching the subject remains as it was at the time of the last inspection. The use of a commercial scheme for pupils with autism in Years 1 to 6 is good practice, as is the decision to teach religious education discretely and base it on the locally agreed syllabus in Years 7 to 9. Although the subject is delivered through personal social and health education in Years 10 and 11 the programme has not been planned in strict accordance with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, which is unsatisfactory.
68. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with complex learning and behavioural needs in Years 1 to 6 learn well through a sensory approach. Through tasting and smelling foods shared during religious festivals within different faiths they have first hand experiences of people who eat different foods from themselves. In this way their awareness of cultural diversity is raised. They make satisfactory gains in learning to take turns and to share, through well-structured and planned play activities in lessons. By the end of an observed lesson for pupils in Years 1 to 3, satisfactory gains were made in personal development. One higher attaining Year 3 pupil said: 'I like sharing my train set with my friends'. This demonstrates good achievement for a pupil with autism. By Year 6 pupils have a reasonable understanding of stories Jesus told, given their complex learning needs. Achievement in the lesson observed in Year 9 was good because of the good teaching which grasped pupils' interest at the start and kept them on task throughout using a range of stimulating activities. By the end of this lesson, which focused on the prayer wheel used by Buddhists to send prayers out into the wind to spread into the world, the highest attainers constructed independently kind thoughts that they would like to spread out into the world. However, although this made a valuable contribution to their moral development only a few pupils by the end of the lesson had grasped that Buddhists' actions are triggered by their beliefs. No lessons could be seen in Years 10 and 11 but planning indicates that pupils in these year groups learn about world faiths and apply their learning to important issues. These include respecting those who are different from themselves and challenging racism.
69. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teaching and learning observed in lessons were good. Careful analysis of work shows that over time the quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory throughout the rest of the school. Where teaching is at its best, good use is made of open questions to gather pupils' ideas. However, even in a good Year 9 lesson the teacher did not write down some of the pupils' lovely responses about prayers they would like to send out to the world, before setting them off on a writing task. Consequently some of them really struggled in writing a simple prayer on their prayer flag. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to manage challenging behaviour and to bring pupils back on task when they wander away. Subject knowledge, although satisfactory overall, is variable as is teachers' confidence in teaching the subject. Good use is made of visual cues and religious artefacts to raise pupils' curiosity and to grasp their interest. Very good use is made of visitors such as the local vicar and Muslims living nearby to bring the teaching alive and make it relevant.
70. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Resources have been built up well since the last inspection. Assessment is developing well but is in need of further improvement. Because the co-ordinator is not directly monitoring the quality of teaching and

learning she is not confident about how well the subject is being taught across the school and recognises that this is an area for improvement. Teachers recognise gaps in their subject knowledge. It is a long time, if at all, since some of them had any formal training in religious education and this is a weakness.

TECHNOLOGY

*Insufficient lessons were observed in **design and technology** to make a judgement about the provision for the subject. In the two lessons sampled, teaching was good and pupils achieved well.*

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Physical education was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. Art and design and music were sampled.

71. One lesson of **art and design** was seen in Year 9 and pupils' work in Year 9 and Year 11 was studied. In the Year 9 lesson teaching and learning were judged satisfactory. In Year 11 pupils are provided with the subject curriculum in good depth and breadth. Most pupils show a good understanding of such skills as using colour, texture, line and tone and they gain good experience of materials and processes. However, there was little evidence of pupils working in clay.
72. The co-ordinator, a subject specialist, was not available during the period of the inspection. Assessment procedures are well established and used. Where suitable, pupils are included into mainstream lessons and accreditation in GCSE art challenges the high achievers.
73. No lessons of **music** were seen. From talking to staff it is evident that pupils' progress in subject learning has suffered due to the lack of a subject specialist. However, the present subject co-ordinator, a recent appointment, is a subject specialist and has already shown good vision for the development of the subject. A new scheme of work is shortly to be introduced, since teachers find the present scheme of work difficult for non-specialists to teach. As part of the subject's comprehensive action plan meetings are to be held with staff to introduce the new scheme.
74. A good additional feature of the subject is the provision of music therapy for selected pupils. Both accommodation and resources for the subject are unsatisfactory. There is no appropriate specialist accommodation, and the lack of sufficient keyboards and percussion instruments prevents pupils' individual use of such instruments, limiting their skill building opportunities.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 6 many pupils attain national expectations in swimming and a few exceed them. Standards in games for many pupils by Year 9 are in line with national expectations.
- Achievement is good because of the demanding teaching.
- Pupils make valuable gains in confidence and their personal development through a range of interesting and fun activities.
- Pupils with autism learn the importance of stopping at the appropriate time in a safe and secure learning environment.

Commentary

75. Achievement is good. Because of very good and sometimes excellent teaching in swimming a significant proportion of pupils are able to swim the nationally expected 25 metres by Year 6. A few exceed the expectation and are competent swimmers using a range of strokes and good breathing technique. Demanding teaching results in the majority of pupils having games skills in line with the national expectation by Year 9. Effective teaching is based on good subject knowledge and is well supported by external coaches effectively deployed during an after-school club. It was not possible to observe lessons in Year 11 and so a judgement cannot be made about these pupils' achievement. Photographic evidence and records show that pupils in Years 10 and 11 experience a rich curriculum including dance as well as competing in various sporting events with other schools.
76. Pupils with complex communication and behavioural needs are fully included in activities such as experiencing going under and over apparatus. They are skilfully supported by their teacher and teaching assistants on a one-to-one basis. Pupils with autism learn the importance of stopping at the appropriate time during an activity and the higher attainers amongst them are beginning to work together with other pupils. This demonstrates particularly good achievement. Planned activities within the curriculum focus on pupils' personal development and, wherever possible, all pupils are encouraged to undress and dress independently when they go swimming. Fun, enjoyment and excitement are contributory factors to pupils' good achievement in gymnastics, games and swimming lessons. Teaching provides pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop teamwork and focuses on pupils' individual needs such as the importance of making eye contact with the ball.
77. Teaching and learning are good overall. In swimming they are very good and one excellent lesson was seen. Teaching assistants are very effectively deployed to work on an individual basis with pupils who have very challenging and obsessional behaviours. They also implement physiotherapy programmes as part of lessons so that pupils in need of them are fully included in activities. The teaching of games successfully results in getting pupils' hearts pumping and so contributes significantly to their fitness. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge in swimming enables pupils to put into practice the superb advice they get about turns and the positioning of the mouth. In this way they improve their technique and swim faster with more confidence. High expectations, cracking pace and an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils' needs makes for successful teaching of this subject and this in turn contributes to pupils' good achievement. The gorgeous smiles on pupils' faces when they experience success are a joy to behold.
78. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Good practice is shared and effective use is made of assessment to inform planning so as to improve standards. The swimming pool is a very valuable, albeit costly, resource and the pupils benefit enormously from its use. Good use is made of the field in the summer months to support the subject. Improvement in the subject has been good since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship were sampled. Two lessons were seen. Pupils' work was considered and a discussion was held with the subject leader.

79. Learning opportunities in the personal, social and health education lessons seen were good. The programmes of study for both subjects provide pupils with good learning opportunities that are relevant to their lives and experiences. They also include suitable modules about sex and drugs education. There are good opportunities for pupils' learning to be recognised. Pupils gain credits for their achievement up to Year 9, which lead to the ASDAN bronze award. Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successful in gaining credits for the silver award. There are good links with the 'Connexions' service, which support Year 11 pupils in their preparation for leaving school.
80. In a well-planned careers education lesson in Year 10, pupils were fully engaged in discussing their work placement experiences with a representative from the 'Trident Trust'. They listened

attentively and spoke very positively about their personal placement experiences. The good relationships between pupils and the teacher ensured that pupils participated fully in the lesson, knowing that their contributions would be valued. The school makes good use of the local community and there are good links with services and organisations such as the local college as well as work placements.

81. The curriculum is planned effectively. The subject leader only took over very recently and has not had a great deal of time to monitor the subjects rigorously. Assessment is good and the relationship between the various targets set for pupils and their work in personal and social education and citizenship is clear. The subjects make a good contribution to pupils' cultural and personal development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).