

INSPECTION REPORT

HALESBURY SCHOOL

Halesowen, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103881

Acting Headteacher: Ms. T. Cutler

Lead inspector: Mrs. Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 5th – 7th July 2004

Inspection number: 258912

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:	4 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	99
School address:	Feldon Lane Halesowen West Midlands
Postcode:	B62 9DR
Telephone number:	01384 818630
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Paul Kisiel
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Halesbury is a mixed, day community special school in Dudley. It caters for 99 pupils from 4 to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. When they enter the school, pupils' attainment levels are below those of pupils of a similar age nationally because of the nature and extent of their learning difficulties. All of the pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs; 96 have moderate learning difficulties, and small numbers have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, autism or communication disorders. Most of the pupils are white; 11 are of Asian origin and 8 are of mixed race. None of the pupils speak English as an additional language. There are no refugees or asylum seekers, and only four pupils in public care. Numbers eligible for free school meals are not particularly high and overall, pupils' socio-economic circumstances are average. The school has links with a few mainstream schools and several colleges. At the time of the inspection, all Year 11 pupils had left school.

In the two years preceding the inspection, the school has experienced a period of considerable turbulence. Following the retirement of the substantive headteacher, the deputy became acting headteacher. Shortly after this, he became ill and ultimately resigned in April 2004. A lower school co-ordinator, who had been appointed as acting deputy headteacher, then took on the role of acting headteacher. At the start of the summer term 2004, the acting headteacher was suspended. Since then, an acting headteacher has been appointed to lead the school until a new headteacher takes up the post in September 2004. A temporary senior management team, made up of the headteacher and two subject co-ordinators, is to manage the school until September. Shortly before the inspection started, the chair and vice chair of governors resigned their posts. A new chair and vice chair were then appointed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	Lead inspector	Science; mode design and technology; modern foreign language; music; physical education.
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector	
16198	Carol Etherington	Team inspector	English; personal social health and citizenship education, religious education.
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; art and design; design and technology.
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology; geography; history.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory and their attitudes to their work are very good; they are well prepared for adult life. However, a lack of continuity in leadership during the last two years has resulted in serious weaknesses in leadership and management, and in the curriculum. The cost of educating pupils at the school is very high and financial management is unsatisfactory, so the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in information and communication technology; children in the Foundation Stage achieve well; achievement is good in music, and in science in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in science in Years 3 to 6, and in design and technology in Years 7 to 9; in English, mathematics and science, the achievements of a small number of older pupils are unsatisfactory because their examination courses are not challenging enough.
- Very good relationships between most staff and pupils create a good climate for learning.
- The staff team has worked hard to maintain the quality of pupils' education during the past two years when there has been a lack of continuity in leadership.
- The recently appointed acting headteacher provides a good sense of purpose for staff; she has raised their morale, and initiated monitoring and support for teaching.
- The curriculum is not broad enough; it does not meet requirements or the needs of all the pupils.
- Governors have given too little support to staff, and fulfil few of their statutory duties; staff confidence in governors is beginning to return as a result of recent changes in chairmanship.
- The school has very few ways of monitoring its work or evaluating its success as it does not collect assessment information or set targets for raising whole school achievement.

There has been insufficient improvement since the school was last inspected. The school day has been extended, but its length remains well below recommendations, particularly for secondary pupils. There are not enough full time teachers to co-ordinate all subjects, and co-ordinators have not extended their roles to include monitoring of teaching, learning and achievement. There are still subjects that are not planned well enough to guide teachers in preparing their lessons. Not all subjects contribute well enough to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Parents are no better involved in the life and work of the school than they were six years ago. No action has been taken to extend the school's role in working with mainstream schools to support inclusion.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. It is satisfactory overall in English, mathematics and science. In science in years 3 to 6, planning does not take account of the fact that some classes have four year groups in them, and so pupils repeat some topics and miss others out. In design and technology, pupils in years 7 to 9 do not build on their designing or making skills because the planning is

incomplete and there are low expectations of what pupils might achieve. Judgements could not be made on overall achievement in religious education or personal, social and health education as there was too little evidence of teaching, learning and achievement.

Pupils' behaviour and punctuality are **good**; their attendance is **satisfactory**. Arrangements for **pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness** are **good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good; weaknesses in the curriculum prevent pupils from achieving well. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory; it is not suitable for the age range of the pupils. The school provides well for pupils' care and welfare, but inspectors noted several health and safety concerns. There is good personal support, careers advice and guidance for pupils, but the school is only now starting to collect assessment information to enable it to formally monitor academic and personal progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Taken together, leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Governance is poor. In the past governors have not been supportive; they have no means of holding the school to account, and many statutory requirements are not met. However, following the election of a new chair and vice chair, there is a new determination and capacity to improve. A new headteacher has been appointed for September. The acting headteacher, who has been in post for five weeks, has a suitable short term action plan, but the school improvement plan does not provide a long term agenda for improvement or identify all the right priorities. There is no curriculum policy, and curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory. Arrangements to develop staff skills and expertise are unsatisfactory, and not all teaching staff are paid fairly for the responsibilities they carry out. There is a large budget surplus, and no plans for its expenditure. The application of best value principles is poor.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school; several noted that the school's difficulties have not adversely affected pupils. Pupils' views are very positive; they particularly like the visits out, residential school journeys and college links.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve planning, teaching and learning in design and technology;
- complete curriculum plans for science, religious education and personal social health and citizenship education;
- ensure that all older pupils are entered for suitable examination courses;
- broaden the curriculum by extending the school day and improving the accommodation;
- develop a long term school improvement plan that reflects the school's priorities and utilises the large budget surplus;
- develop procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work;
- ensure that staff are properly supported in developing their skills and that they are paid fairly for the responsibilities that they undertake;

- ensure that governors fulfil their duties, are supportive and have methods of holding the school to account;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- liaise with the LEA to ensure that the needs on pupils' statements are met;
- ensure that requirements are met in citizenship, a modern foreign language and science;
- produce policies for the curriculum and special educational needs;
- monitor the race equality policy;
- produce an accessibility plan;
- set whole school targets for raising achievement;
- ensure that the prospectus, governors' annual report to parents and pupils' annual progress reports contain all the required information.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Although pupils do not reach the levels expected for those of a similar age, this is mainly because of their learning difficulties, and overall, pupils' achievements are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in ICT and in the performing and composing element of music; they achieve well in personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage, and achievement is good overall in music, and in science in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils do not achieve well enough in design and technology; achievement is also unsatisfactory in science in Years 3 to 6.
- A small number of pupils in Year 10 do not achieve well enough because they are following an examination course that is not challenging enough.
- The school successfully returns a small number of pupils to mainstream schools, and all the present Year 11 pupils are going on to local colleges to continue their education.
- The school has not set whole school targets to raise achievement, and this is a breach of statutory requirements.

Commentary

1. Pupils get a good start to their education, and they achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Pupils achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development because of good teaching, a range of suitable learning opportunities and well established routines in the class. Achievement is good in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development; it is satisfactory in all other areas of learning.

2. Across the school, achievement in ICT is very good. This is linked to the quality of teaching by a subject specialist, who has successfully raised achievement since the last inspection by improving curriculum planning, staff skills and the school's resources. Because teaching is good and pupils are given a wide range of learning experiences, achievement in music is good, although it is very good in performing and composing; this is because this aspect is much emphasised in teaching, and is taught very well. Secondary aged pupils are confident when composing short pieces of music, selecting suitable instruments for playing, and then performing in groups. Good achievement in science in Years 7 to 9 is associated with good teaching, which is well planned and challenges higher attainers. However, in Years 3 to 6, pupils do not achieve well enough in science. This is because the plan that shows what each class should be taught each half term does not allow for the fact that there are some classes with as many as four years groups in them; this results in pupils repeating certain topics, and missing others out. Planning is not detailed enough to help non-specialist teachers plan their lessons. As a result, pupils do not build systematically on their knowledge, skills and understanding. In design and technology in Years 7 to 9, pupils do not achieve well enough because teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not extend their design skills enough in these years because planning is incomplete; in fact pupils are no better at designing by Year 9 than most are at the end of Year 6. Pupils' making skills progress, but they do not advance as much as they should because the teacher has low expectations of them using a range of machinery.

3. Achievement in all aspects of English is satisfactory; although teaching in lessons is generally good, pupils do not read a wide enough range of literature. In mathematics, achievement is good in Years 1 and 2, where teaching is good, and satisfactory in Years 3 to 9 where teaching is inconsistent, but satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11, although teaching is good, higher attainers are not entered for a challenging enough examination course, so do not make the progress that they should. This also applies in science and in English. There are no differences in the achievement of girls and boys, pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, or those with additional special needs.

4. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a wider range of accredited courses, but there are still lost opportunities for pupils to receive external recognition for their achievements. For example, pupils achieve well in art, because they are taught well, but they are not entered for examinations in Year 11. The school is successful in returning a small number of pupils to mainstream schools each year, and this year's Year 11 pupils are all going on to follow general education or vocational courses at local colleges of further education.

5. Following advice from the LEA, the school has not set targets to raise achievement as legally required. As a result, achievement has not improved since the last inspection, although the hard work of staff has ensured that it has not deteriorated, despite very difficult circumstances.

6. Areas for further development are all included in the summary report.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is satisfactory, and punctuality is good. Attitudes to learning are very good, and behaviour is good in and around the school. Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- There are very good relationships, leading to confident pupils.
- Moral and social development are especially strong.
- There is little multicultural education or preparation for life in a culturally diverse society.

Commentary

7. Attendance has improved since last year, partly through a reduction in unauthorised absence, and is now satisfactory. Most pupils arrive on transport, so are usually punctual to school. Registration procedures are now brisk and efficient, so more time can be spent on teaching.

8. Pupils are keen to get to school and greatly enjoy what is offered. They are enthusiastic to try out different activities in the Foundation Stage, especially the wheeled toys, and clearly enjoy coming to the 'beach café'. The same group tried hard to participate and follow instructions in a music lesson, and showed clear enjoyment when hearing themselves played back on tape. Older pupils showed tremendous keenness to contribute in a history lesson about the Celts and the Romans, and were visibly proud to be asked to work independently. Relationships are carefully fostered, both between pupils, and with staff, and this mostly results in confident, happy pupils with high self-esteem. They are quick to applaud their peers in assembly, for example, for receiving awards, and work well together in the life skills course to identify and budget for their weekly purchases when at college. Information and communication technology lessons in particular generate terrific enthusiasm, and pupils respond brilliantly to the high expectations placed on them.

9. The pupils' moral and social development are especially strong. All pupils understand the school's code of conduct and most do their best to follow it, although it is not always applied consistently by all staff. Pupils are involved in charity fund-raising, thus learning to understand about those who are less fortunate than themselves. For example, they have participated in the shoebox appeal and gave flowers at Easter to the local hospice. The 'virtual baby' was used very well both to model good parenting and to reinforce the understanding that its needs must come before anything else, even lessons! Most importantly staff act as very good role models, in the way they treat pupils and each other. The school's culture, by and large, is one of courtesy and respect for each other, which in turn is reflected in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

10. However, one dimension missing is awareness of other cultures. Although there are a few books in the library about other religions and festivals, pupils do not learn enough about them, particularly through religious education. There are no black dolls or ethnic clothes in the Foundation Stage and no reflection in displays of the pupils who come from ethnic minority backgrounds, or of the fact that the area is culturally diverse. Thus pupils are not being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Areas for further development:

- strengthen spiritual and cultural elements in lessons and across the curriculum, for example by building on the existing good practice in music;
- include exposure to other faiths, beliefs and backgrounds, and reinforce this in a positive way throughout the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good, assessment is satisfactory, but the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for pupils, and has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Across the school, teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in ICT; it is good in the Foundation Stage, in English, mathematics, music and art, and in science in Years 7 to 9, but it is unsatisfactory in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils promote learning well; pupils are encouraged and supported well, so they are productive throughout lessons.
- Teachers know pupils and their abilities well, and they plan tasks that are generally well matched to pupils' abilities and provide a suitable challenge.
- Teachers do not make enough use of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.
- There is a whole school approach to recording what pupils know, understand and can do, but teachers are not all skilled enough in levelling pupils' work because they have been discouraged from doing this in the past.
- Weaknesses in individual target setting mean that the process is superfluous.

Commentary

11. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are both good; in personal, social and emotional development teaching is very good. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and suitable strategies are used to support those that find it hard to behave well all the time. Well established routines help pupils to settle quickly and to feel secure. Pupils are encouraged to make choices and they are given responsibilities, such as clearing away or taking the register to the office. As a result, pupils quickly develop their personal, social and independence skills.

12. Much of the very good teaching is by teachers who are subject specialists. This is certainly the case in mathematics, science, ICT and music. In ICT, for instance, a confident teacher has high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and provides interesting activities that motivate pupils well; he ensures that a lively pace is maintained throughout lessons and so pupils make very good progress in the time available. Similarly, in science in Years 7 to 9, expectations are high, and pupils in Year 9 start their examination coursework; this means that the most able are challenged well. In practical, investigative work, the most skilled are expected to work in a group with little adult support; they do this well, collaborating with one another, sharing ideas and learning from one another. The teacher questions pupils well to keep them thinking scientifically and to assess their understanding. In contrast, a specialist teacher of design and technology does not achieve the same results. There are low expectations of what pupils with learning difficulties can achieve, particularly in developing design skills and in using machinery. While plans for pupils in Years 1 to 6 are ambitious in their expectations, there are no similar plans for Years 7 to 9. Pupils' design skills are not systematically developed, and so they do not achieve well enough. Older pupils say that they do not enjoy design and technology, which is unusual, as other practical subjects are popular in the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4.4%)	14 (32%)	14 (32%)	12 (27.2%)	1 (2.2%)	1 (2.2%)	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.

13. A significant strength of teaching is the quality of relationships between staff and pupils. Mutual respect generates a good learning atmosphere in lessons; pupils behave well, and they are enthused and well motivated by the enjoyable and challenging tasks that teachers provide. Pupils are keen to do well, and staff are encouraging and supportive. Praise is given when it is earned, and pupils glow with pride when their significant achievements are acknowledged.

14. During the period of disruption in leadership of the school, some staff have had to relinquish teaching responsibilities in order to take on management responsibilities. Support staff have been called upon to teach some classes, and this is still the case, although the extent of this is less since the recent recruitment of some temporary teachers. In general, support staff make a good contribution to teaching. When they are well deployed, and well briefed, they contribute well by keeping pupils on task, questioning them to check their understanding, and keeping them thinking. In a Years 7 to 9 mathematics lesson, led by a member of the support staff, teaching was good. In contrast, a lesson where the teaching was poor was seen in this age range, taught by a qualified teacher. Pupils did not learn enough because there were low expectations; higher attainers were not challenged and the teacher was dismissive of pupils and their efforts, which resulted in a loss of their motivation.

15. When pupils enter the school in the Foundation Stage, there is a suitable assessment carried out. Those entering in later years have a mathematics assessment, but teachers mainly rely on the records and assessment results that accompany pupils. However, because numbers are small, the teachers quickly get to know the pupils and their abilities. Most teachers are skilled in setting tasks

that are well matched to pupils' abilities. Good use is made of grouping pupils by ability, which assists teachers in their planning. More difficult tasks are set for the most able pupils, and those pupils who need support are given this in a way that encourages them to do as much as they can themselves.

16. In the past, teachers have been discouraged from entering pupils for national tests, and from using the national system of assessing pupils below National Curriculum level 1 (P scales). As a result, teachers are not all able to accurately assess the level at which a pupil is working. While this does not adversely affect pupils' learning, it does limit the school's ability to collect accurate information for tracking and measuring pupils' progress. However, the system of 'First of the month' books is useful in English and mathematics, as it provides an informative monthly record of samples of pupils' work, which gives a picture of progress over time. There is a whole school approach to recording whether pupils have achieved learning outcomes in all subjects, but this is not linked into either P scales or National Curriculum levels, so it is not as helpful as it might be for measuring progress.

17. Individual targets set for pupils in English, mathematics and PSHE contribute little to learning or the tracking of progress. They are not always specific and measurable, so it is not always possible to say that they have been achieved. Occasionally, when they are reviewed, comments give little indication of progress. The most significant weakness lies in their origin; most are unrelated to pupils' Statement objectives, or priority areas identified at Annual Reviews; they arise directly from the curriculum plans, and are thus not *individual* at all, and it is a waste of time setting them. In this respect, the school is not following the guidance in the Code of Practice. By no means all pupils know what their targets are, either. Similarly, they are not consistently involved in assessing their own learning. In ICT, practice is good. Here, pupils are told at the start of each lesson what they are expected to learn and this is reviewed at the end. Pupils are thus able to take part in an evaluation of how well they have done. There is similar good practice in music. However, across the school, teachers rarely set different learning objectives for different ability groups within the same class.

Areas for further development:

- improve teaching and learning in design and technology;
- complete curriculum planning for science in Years 3 to 6;
- develop teachers' skills in assessing the levels that pupils reach;
- ensure that targets set for individuals are linked to their particular needs, are specific and measurable, that they are known to pupils;
- involve pupils in assessing their own learning in lessons so that they know what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school provides good opportunities for enrichment during the school day. Staffing and accommodation are unsatisfactory, while learning resources are satisfactory. Serious weaknesses in the curriculum limit pupils' achievements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lack of leadership means that the curriculum overall is inadequate and does not meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils do not all have the same opportunities to learn.
- Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is underdeveloped.
- Staffing does not meet the needs of pupils.

- There is good preparation for the transition to adult life.
- Inadequacies in accommodation restrict pupils' participation in some subjects.
- Visits out of school, including residential visits, enrich the curriculum well, but there are few opportunities for school based opportunities outside lessons.

Commentary

18. There is no curriculum policy, or rationale for the curriculum, reflecting the fact that there is no one with overall responsibility for the curriculum. Co-ordinators do not have time to carry out their monitoring roles. As a result, there has been limited progress with curriculum development since the last inspection. Although there have been some changes to the school day, the length of taught time is still substantially lower than recommended for pupils in Year 3 and above, which limits learning opportunities and, therefore, achievement. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have access to a modern foreign language, although there are plans to introduce this in September. There is no planned programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship, which mean that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop understanding in these areas. The requirements for citizenship are not met.

19. There is a variety of accredited courses for pupils in Years 9 to 11, including entry level and courses accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). However, there is no opportunity for higher attaining pupils to undertake suitable courses leading, for example, to foundation level General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). As a result, more able pupils do not have acceptable opportunities. In addition, a number of subjects have no accreditation opportunities, so that pupil's achievements are not always externally recognised.

20. In addition to the lack of curriculum leadership, staffing is unsatisfactory because there are insufficient numbers of teaching and support staff. Until recently, a few classes were being taught by nursery nurses and support assistants. In the last few weeks, several supply staff have been brought in, but some lessons are taught by unqualified staff. The situation should be remedied in September as a number of new teachers have been appointed to the school. One pupil's Statement describes a need for suitably trained staff to administer oxygen when necessary; there is only one member of staff trained to do this, so there are occasions when the pupil is sent home or when a parent has to come into school to ensure safety. On other occasions, there are insufficient support staff to deal with pupils with challenging behaviour who need time out of the class.

21. Most pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 11 go to one of the local further education colleges, while others go into work or to training centres. They are well prepared for these experiences, being advised both by school staff and by a representative of the Connexions service. College staff visit the school for a careers evening to talk about the courses. Pupils attend college for a day a week during their final years, for a series of taster courses, and to experience college life. Pupils are able to attend careers exhibitions such as Job Scene, to obtain further information about available careers. They also undertake work experience in places such as schools, shops, a garage and a veterinary practice. The school also provides opportunities to consider topics such as interviews and personal statements, and pupils draw together a record of achievement to show their successes. Pupils are encouraged to become as independent as possible through the development of skills, through opportunities to make choices and by activities such as travelling independently.

22. Despite some improvements, the accommodation has a number of features which limit pupils' access to the curriculum. The science room is not appropriate for older pupils, and neither the art nor the design and technology room has space for pupils to work as a group. Not all areas of the school are accessible to those with mobility problems, and the school has no access plans to address

these issues. The hall is too small for all the activities it has to sustain. The changing facilities are limited; as there is only one set of showers, pupils take it in turns to shower after physical education; one week boys do this, the next week the girls are able to shower. This is not acceptable. The library is based in a corridor and is unsuitable for pupils to use as a study area. Accommodation for pupils at the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory, particularly in the lack of a designated outdoor area. Accommodation for staff is unsatisfactory, as there are too few toilets for female staff.

23. Within the school day there is a good range of opportunities for pupils to go out on visits which both enrich the curriculum and develop their personal skills. Many visits are linked to different subjects and help to develop pupils' understanding. Such visits also give pupils opportunities to communicate with other adults and to develop their social skills. Pupils' self-esteem is enhanced by opportunities such as displaying artwork in various centres in the community. Visitors to the school also contribute to pupils' learning, with, for example, visiting artists sharing their expertise and a theatre company developing ideas about careers options. Many pupils also have the opportunity to take part in residential trips to outdoor activity centres. There are some informal lunchtime clubs for pupils, but no other extra-curricular activities to broaden their experiences.

Areas for improvement:

- develop a curriculum policy;
- lengthen the school day so that it meets recommendations;
- ensure that requirements are met in modern foreign languages and citizenship;
- develop planning for all subjects to guide teachers in preparing their lessons;
- extend the range of accredited courses for older pupils;
- improve the school's accommodation to rectify the weaknesses identified above;
- ensure that there are sufficient teaching and support staff to meet pupils' needs;
- extend the range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. There is satisfactory support, advice and guidance for pupils. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good arrangements for pupils to access a trusted adult that they can turn to.
- Academic monitoring and target setting for individual pupils is not working well.
- There are no formal mechanisms for identifying pupils' views or responding to them.
- Several matters of health and safety need attention by the governors.
- Attendance is not being effectively monitored.

Commentary

24. The care and personal support given by teachers and support staff is very strong. Each pupil is known by name along with their particular quirks and personalities, and greeted warmly on entry to school. Staff work very well together to settle the pupils and help them learn; they create a warm and supportive atmosphere in which pupils thrive and make huge gains in confidence and self-esteem through their time in school. Pupils are proud to receive awards in the achievement assembly and equally happy to applaud their peers who have done so. However, academic monitoring and target setting is much less strong, due to the lack of coherent leadership over time.

25. Because teachers have been discouraged from using National Curriculum levels or P scales to give an indication of pupils' attainment levels, the school has not collected assessment information, and has no formal means of identifying how well pupils are progressing. Thus staff have no information to analyse to see whether all groups of pupils are doing as well as they can. Without such information, target setting to raise whole school achievement is very difficult.

26. Little formal account is taken of pupils' views. Informally, teachers and support staff exchange banter and discuss matters with some pupils; their suggestions are welcomed in lessons by some teachers, but not all. However, there is no school council or similar mechanism for them to talk over matters in the school and make suggestions, although there are some opportunities on more informal social occasions.

27. Attendance is not being adequately monitored or action taken. Day-to-day procedures are satisfactory; registers are taken and staff know who is in or out at any one time, but longer-term systems are not effective. Due to the lack of continuity in management, various systems have been used and then abandoned, such as a 'first day call'. Currently, procedures are not effective. For example, absences are only monitored long after the event, and too late to take action over repetition or patterns of absenteeism.

28. The school environment is safe enough, as pupils are well supervised and staff are vigilant. However, a number of health and safety matters have been outstanding for quite some time. The caretaker does his best, and the acting headteacher has addressed such things as were urgent or could be done easily, but a number of matters await action by the governing body, such as the ramp to the cabin and the car park security gates. These will need financial planning and longer-term monitoring.

Areas for further development:

- put in place systems for assessing levels that pupils reach, and recording these so that trends can be analysed and targets set for improving achievement;
- set up systems whereby pupils have a voice in the day-to-day affairs of the school;
- set up systems for monitoring attendance and taking appropriate action;
- strengthen the involvement of governors in dealing with matters of health and safety, with a view to prioritising action on outstanding areas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Links with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views of the school are very positive.
- There are weaknesses and omissions in documentation given to parents.
- There is good preparation for work experience and life after school.

Commentary

29. Parents are in general very happy with what the school provides, although only a small number returned questionnaires. In particular, they praise good teaching, high expectations and settling-in arrangements, the range of extra curricular activities and the progress their children make. However, a minority were concerned about apparent under-achievement. Several written comments praised the staff and teamwork very highly and indicated their children had been made welcome and

were very happy at the school. They felt the turbulence in the senior management team had hardly affected the pupils, because of the care taken by staff working together, a view which is endorsed by the inspection team.

30. However, the information given to parents is lacking in several important respects. The governors' annual report is missing several pieces of statutory information such as reporting on the special educational needs policy. Similarly, the prospectus does not contain any information about special educational needs or disability. Annual pupil reports to parents are unsatisfactory. They do not make reference to levels of work (whether National Curriculum or P levels) nor any sensible suggestions as to how pupils can improve or move on to the next level. Language used is often bland and too brief for parents to get a proper picture of their child's progress at school.

31. Pupils are offered good work experience opportunities and preparation for life after school, whether at work or college. Pupils are prepared for work experience though learning about appropriate dress, social skills and workplace expectations. The ASDAN life skills course offers useful practical skills such as money management, and pupils also undertake mini-enterprises such as raffles and competitions to raise funds. Thorough and detailed work over a number of years has built up an impressive range of work experience placements, some of whom will *only* take pupils with special needs as a result of their very positive experiences with Halesbury pupils. Examples include a florist, mechanic and local supermarkets. Those who need a more sheltered environment are accommodated within school, working as catering assistants or helping the caretaker with gardening tasks. Year 10 pupils have also recently undertaken a first aid course, taught within school, and proudly received their certificates in assembly. Careers are well covered through visits from the careers advisor, individual interviews and an annual careers evening. Pupils are helped to produce a personal statement in English lessons, and considerable time is spent on mobility training to assist more able pupils to use public transport for school, work experience or college.

32. The school has links with local colleges such as Dudley (for courses in horticulture and fashion, among others) Halesowen, and Stourbridge, where they can study a range of practical courses. The net result is confident, well-adjusted pupils who can mix easily with others and have a positive attitude to work and study.

Areas for further development:

- ensure the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents meet requirements by adding the required statutory material;
- improve annual pupils' reports to parents by ensuring they contain detailed reference to the levels pupils are working at and focussed suggestions for improvement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall. The governance of the school is poor. The leadership of the acting headteacher is good. The leadership of other key staff is satisfactory. The management of the school is unsatisfactory. This is a serious weakness.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teamwork between staff and the sterling efforts of several senior teachers have kept the school going so that there has been the minimum disruption to pupils' education.
- The leadership provided by the temporary acting headteacher has been instrumental in providing much-needed stability and sense of purpose.
- Governors have been insufficiently involved in strategic planning for school improvement, finance, premises and curriculum, and there are several breaches of statutory requirements.

- The lack of substantive leaders in some subjects and whole-school aspects has resulted in weaknesses in the curriculum provided.
- Financial planning and management are unsatisfactory, leading to poor application of best value principles and the school giving unsatisfactory value for money.
- Although governance is poor, the very new chair and vice chair and recently appointed governors are determined to improve the quality of governance.

Commentary

33. The whole staff, including teachers, classroom assistants, office and site staff, have worked hard to keep the school running as smoothly as possible during a difficult period of time. Despite the many changes at senior leadership level, most staff have continued to provide good role models for pupils. Because good quality teaching and learning have been maintained, pupils have continued to achieve. They and their families report that they noticed little disruption. Although inexperienced in leadership, several senior teachers have taken on considerable extra responsibilities to ensure that the school has continued to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

34. The school has benefited from the very recent secondment of an experienced headteacher from a local primary school. Although not from a special school background, she has started many necessary improvements through her good quality short-term action plan. In particular, her very good vision, high aspirations and obvious sense of purpose have already inspired staff to make changes to the length of taught time and to the curriculum through additions to the timetable.

35. The governing body lacks awareness of its statutory duties and responsibilities and how to carry these out effectively. This has resulted in too little involvement at a strategic level of planning. School improvement planning is unsatisfactory, and there are weaknesses in targets set to raise pupils' attainment. Because little performance data is collected, the school's self-evaluation is poor. Although governors know the strengths of the school, they lack systems for monitoring provision and are therefore unaware of its weaknesses. Following inappropriate advice from the Local Education Authority (LEA) has resulted in delays in governors appointing a substantive headteacher, and in the school breaching the statutory requirement to set whole-school targets for improvement. In addition, governors have not given enough support to staff during the recent difficulties.

36. The many changes in senior management since the last inspection have left the school without designated leaders to take whole-school overviews on important aspects such as curriculum and assessment. Unsatisfactory improvement in subject leadership has led to the lack of suitable schemes of work and guidelines in some subjects, so pupils' achievement is not good, despite the overall good quality of teaching and learning. Some subjects, including English, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education, lack substantive leaders to monitor these subjects and ensure that they are consistent across the school. Weaknesses in formal assessment procedures and target setting at all levels means that more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and less able pupils are not always as well supported as they could be. Performance management of staff and continuing professional development have become fragmented because there has not been a senior manager to lead these areas. The lack of clarity in leadership and teaching staff roles leads to some staff having responsibility for several subjects, aspects or key stages while others have none or just one, for the same level of pay.

37. There has been no formal audit of the school's financial procedures since before the last inspection. The monitoring of the school's budget is unsatisfactory, and governors have not taken a sufficiently strategic role in financial planning. This has led to a substantial surplus, which is above the contingency needed to resolve ongoing staffing issues. Although there are many outstanding repairs and maintenance jobs, and aspects of the premises do not satisfactorily support the curriculum, for example the Foundation Stage play area and the school library, available monies were not used. The acting headteacher had to make immediate additions to the teaching staff on taking up her secondment, as there were insufficient teachers for the number of classes and groups, despite the budget surplus.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,084,043	Balance from previous year	46,266
Total expenditure	935,675	Balance carried forward to the next	108,608
Expenditure per pupil	9,851		

38. Although governance is poor, a new chair and vice chair were elected just before the inspection and they have already established good relationships with the school's senior managers. They are restructuring the governing body's committees and there are already projected improvements to financial planning and monitoring. A draft of the governors' annual report to parents shows that governors have a real commitment to improving their performance. The governing body has successfully appointed a new headteacher from September 2004.

Together, the new headteacher, senior leaders and governing body need to address the following priorities:

- clarify staff roles and responsibilities;
- introduce a whole-school curriculum overview;
- identify a leader to take responsibility for assessment;
- improve target setting for the whole school, subjects and individual pupils;
- establish rigorous systems to monitor the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning;
- ensure sound financial and school improvement planning and monitoring.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

39. Pupils in the Foundation Stage are taught alongside those in Years 1 and 2. These pupils have a wide range of difficulties, including some with complex learning and behaviour difficulties arising from their autism. Because of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties, none are set to reach the early learning goals by the end of their reception year. When children enter the school, their skills are at a low level in all areas of their development. However, because staff have a clear understanding of each pupil's needs, and teaching is good; pupils make good progress and their achievement is good overall. Very good relationships underpin the learning in the classroom and an interesting range of activities helps to engage pupils' attention.

40. Pupils are assessed using the Foundation Profile, and a development of this provided by the local education authority is well used to track pupils' progress. Useful observation sheets have been introduced, but the basis of pupils' individual targets is not always clear. The teacher has done a great deal of work to plan the curriculum, but further development of this would support the planning of lessons. The lack of an overall curriculum leader or primary co-ordinator in the school means that there has been insufficient support for this development.

41. The accommodation for the class is unsatisfactory because the main classroom has no direct link to the smaller play room, nor is there a designated outside space for the youngest pupils. This inhibits freedom of movement between the areas, and limits opportunities for a wide range of activities.

42. The provision was not reported on at the last inspection, so it is not possible to evaluate improvements.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching establishes an atmosphere which gives pupils a sense of security and helps them to settle into the school and to behave appropriately.
- Pupils with more complex needs begin to take part in group and class activities.
- Independence skills are being well developed.

Commentary

43. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in this area of learning. Staff provide pupils with experiences well matched to their needs. For example, pupils soon begin to develop an understanding of the structure of the school day and of routines, as activities are named and symbols put on a board. Pupils with more complex needs are helped to understand changes by the use of symbols. Pupils are aware of expectations of their behaviour, for example, coming into the classroom and sitting in a circle at the start of each session, lining up in preparation for moving around the

building, or answering when their name is called at registration. Because staff have high expectations, pupils behave very well when they are in a different environment, for example, in the hall or having a lesson outside. For pupils with more challenging behaviour, there are clear plans about how they should be helped, and these are known to, and followed by, all adults.

44. Pupils such as those with autistic spectrum disorder are beginning to take part in a variety of activities. On many occasions, they are able to stay seated with their peers for activities such as music and assemblies, although this can be very difficult for them. Where pupils have difficulty in managing their behaviour there are good strategies for helping pupils to settle, for example, by providing secluded working areas and tray activities. Staff praise and encourage pupils and positive attitudes are consistently reinforced.

45. Pupils are encouraged to make choices, such as at snack time or at singing time, and this helps move them towards appropriate levels of independence. Pupils help to put away equipment in the classroom, and perform tasks such as taking the register to the office. They take these tasks very seriously and are proud to undertake them.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in communication, language and early literacy skills because of good teaching.
- More use of signing and symbols for those with more complex needs would further enhance opportunities for these pupils.

Commentary

46. Adults support the development of language as they involve pupils in activities, extending vocabulary and encouraging pupils to communicate in an appropriate way. The teacher consistently introduces new vocabulary and checks on pupils' understanding. Some pupils show an interest in looking at books and in listening to stories, which are enhanced by exciting presentations which engage pupils' interest. Some pupils match the letters in their names and are beginning to make marks on paper, while others are writing their names and copying under short sentences.

47. Good use is made of symbols to help pupils with complex needs to make choices, and to help their awareness of the activities for the day. However, there is insufficient use of symbols and signing as part of the whole class environment. As a result, some opportunities are missed to help those with more complex needs to communicate, for example, by using symbols to construct simple sentences.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in developing their awareness of shape, size, order and number.

- Opportunities are taken outside the timetabled numeracy sessions to reinforce pupils' learning and support the overall progress they make.

Commentary

48. Lessons include different activities to reinforce concepts such as number, shape, and capacity; for example, pupils match numbers and then learn to count to 3, 5 or 10. They match colours and shapes. They learn mathematical language, such as *long* and *short*, *light* and *heavy*; more able pupils sort objects by length, height and weight. Some are beginning to record their answers to calculations by making marks or circles on paper. Learning in mathematics is well supported by the use of counting rhymes and songs; these help pupils to remember the numbers and make the learning an enjoyable experience.

49. Many activities throughout the day support mathematical development, for example, sequencing the day's activities or counting. When pupils play in the sand tray they learn about concepts such as *full* and *empty*. They role play a café scene and match cups and saucers to the correct number of people.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for the development of knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory.
- Progress in this area is effectively developed through a variety of practical activities which broaden pupils' experiences.

Commentary

50. Pupils begin to learn about the natural world as they look at the weather, plant seeds and watch them grow, study mini beasts and investigate floating and sinking. At the time of the inspection, they were basing work on a seaside topic, and prepared sandwiches for a picnic, paying careful attention to hygiene. They chose the fillings and, with appropriate levels of support, made the sandwiches and shared a picnic. Pupils are beginning to use the computer, mainly for interactive programmes which help to develop knowledge of aspects such as number. More able pupils know how to use the mouse to move items around the screen.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have many opportunities for creative development and they enjoy participating in these.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory.

Commentary

51. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the different activities in which they participate, and this enjoyment helps their learning. They take part enthusiastically in singing, both in music lessons and

at other times of the day, for example, singing number songs in maths. They join in action songs linked to their sea theme and listen to music. They learn about untuned percussion and begin to understand playing loudly and softly, and the need to start and stop together. Display shows that they also have many opportunities in art, for example, paintings and collages.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their physical skills throughout the school day.
- Opportunities for outside experiences are limited by the lack of outdoor apparatus suitable for young children.

Commentary

52. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory. Pupils learn to manipulate materials and objects by playing with different equipment, and using paintbrushes, crayons and pencils. In the hall, they learn to move at different speeds and in different directions, and begin to develop an awareness of space as they avoid others. They learn to throw, kick and catch a ball, and their language is further developed as they learn about parts of the body and moving over and under apparatus. Although the school has recently invested in some outdoor equipment, this is insufficient, and is not easily accessible to pupils. As a result, pupils are not able to play regularly with items which would further develop their physical skills.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

53. The school does not teach a modern foreign language in Years 7 to 9 as required. However, since the acting headteacher arrived, plans have been made to introduce this from September 2004. In preparation for this, Spanish is being taught in Year 6. One lesson was seen, and in this the teaching and learning were both good.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most lessons have good quality teaching and learning.
- The National Literacy Strategy has been well implemented, though there is too narrow a range of literature studied.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have increasing opportunities to gain nationally recognised awards but higher attaining pupils need a wider range of accredited courses.
- The use of language and literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory, but pupils' individual targets are not sufficiently precise to identify the next steps of learning.
- The school library is well stocked; however its unsatisfactory position limits how it can be used.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

54. There is satisfactory achievement in the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some examples of very good teaching were seen with both primary and secondary aged pupils. The most effective teaching was characterised by very good planning, including work that was well matched to pupils' varied abilities, and had well deployed support staff making strong contributions to pupils' learning. Teachers shared the learning objectives with pupils at the start of the lesson, so that all were clear what was expected of them, and reviewed progress towards achieving the

objectives at the end of the session. Good choices of resources and innovative activities ensured that pupils were keen to participate and enjoyed their learning. Where teaching was satisfactory, planning did not build closely enough on pupils' prior learning and opportunities were missed to ensure that pupils achieved well in all of the basic literacy skills. There is no substantive subject leader in post, so this weaker teaching has not been identified through monitoring, and no support and advice has subsequently been given.

55. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully implemented the National Literacy Strategy, suitably adapted to pupils' special educational needs and to the range of pupils' abilities. For example, pupils with autism are sometimes provided with special workstations so that they can write independently or read one-to-one with an adult, without the distractions of working in a larger group. Older pupils are sometimes grouped with others of similar ability in sets, so that their English work can be better focussed at the right level of challenge. Teachers follow school guidelines on what phonic skills and which aspects of grammar and punctuation should be taught to each year group, and many choose appropriate texts to share with their classes. For example, in a very good lesson for secondary pupils, the teacher used a modern fairy tale to focus pupils' attention on how capital letters, speech and exclamation marks can be used by an author to signify different types of language. Pupils were then asked to write their own version of the story using these to make their own writing more interesting. Similarly, in a very good lesson for Year 9 pupils, the teacher used fiction from another culture to show pupils how an author uses adjectives in character descriptions. However, because there is no subject leader in post, there is no overview of the literature pupils have opportunities to study during their time at Halesbury. Consequently, monitoring has not identified that too narrow a range of texts is used, and this limits pupils' achievement, although it is satisfactory overall.

56. Despite the absence of a designated subject leader, some teachers have introduced improvements in provision. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 now have more opportunities to gain recognition of their achievements by being entered for national examinations and awards. However, these are at too low a level for a few higher attaining pupils. Some Year 9 pupils were observed in lessons working already at higher levels than those required to gain success at the end of Year 11 in courses currently available. The school has identified that it needs to look for more accredited courses in English for its lower attaining pupils, but there is also the need to ensure that more able pupils have access to appropriate courses, either at Halesbury, or by seeking partnerships with other local schools.

57. Another area for development rightly identified by staff is the need to improve assessment procedures so that pupils' progress can be better tracked and their attainment more accurately recorded. Work on this has already begun, with more detailed recording sheets devised for all basic skills, showing pupils' progress towards levels described in the National Curriculum. The 'first of the month' books are effectively used to show pupils' progress across the year. These are well marked, with detailed annotations of what the task was, how much help was needed by the pupil, and how work could be improved, as well as with good work stickers and comments. However, not all teachers are consistently noting the National Curriculum or 'P-scale' level reached by the pupils. Because assessment procedures need improvement, pupils' individual literacy targets drawn from assessment information are insufficiently precise to ensure that pupils can reach the next step of learning. Some teachers just pick the next objective from the literacy planning, regardless of whether the pupil needs this as a focus or, in some cases, whether they have successfully achieved their last target. As a result, target setting is not as useful as it might be.

58. The school library has a good range of books but is sited along a raised walkway adjacent to the hall. Stock is well organised and displayed, and much effort has been put into making the best of

its situation. However, its unsatisfactory position, in a corridor alongside the hall, means that it is unsuitable as a place for encouraging reading for pleasure, for independent study, or for reading for information in a range of subjects. It has no computer to use for research. It cannot be used effectively as a place where small groups can work away from the classroom.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Overall, there is satisfactory promotion of pupils' literacy skills across other curriculum subjects, but some teachers do this more effectively than others. Drama is used increasingly to help pupils to become more confident with their speaking and listening skills, for example in history, careers and personal, social and health education as well as in English. In art, ICT and science, teachers focus on the meanings of key subject-specific vocabulary. However, when pupils write to record their science work, errors in spelling are not always marked. In design and technology, though pupils learn the names of some tools and equipment, opportunities are missed to encourage them to read instructions and safety information by displaying them prominently around the workshop, and there is too little writing up of design ideas and evaluations of their own and manufactured products. Some teachers remind pupils of their current literacy target at the start of lessons, but these are not always shared with teachers of subjects other than English. There is a need for a whole-school focus on the promotion of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum, and on how their skills can be used to support learning in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of mathematics is good but insufficient time is available for effective management.
- Teaching is inconsistent.
- Opportunities for accreditation have improved but are not sufficiently challenging for the highest attaining pupils.
- Assessment is not used well to plan individual education programmes.

Commentary

60. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve the provision in mathematics. The long and medium term planning is good, and the monitoring and supporting of teaching and learning were in place prior to the school's recent difficulties. As a result of the difficulties in whole school leadership, the co-ordinator has been given senior management responsibilities which leave her with insufficient time to fulfil her role in mathematics effectively. Since a number of staff contribute to the teaching of mathematics, the inability to monitor and support has led to inconsistencies in provision.

61. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, and so are pupils' achievements. The teaching observed during the inspection ranged from excellent to poor, with six out of the eight lessons seen being at least good. In the best lessons, clear understanding by teachers of the subject and good knowledge of pupils' abilities led to very good planning, high expectations and very good achievement.

62. Occasionally, teachers' lack of experience resulted in inappropriate activities and insufficient challenge, while in the poor lesson, inadequate planning and teaching confused pupils so that they made no progress at all.

63. The teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 has improved since the last inspection and pupils achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. Good support is given to less able pupils and higher attaining pupils are challenged by appropriate targets. They learn to sequence events, add and subtract numbers to ten, handle money to ten pence, recognise time to the hour and half hour, and name a variety of shapes.

64. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 varies because some teachers are very new to the school, but relationships are very good, and examination of work shows that pupils have made good progress over the past year. The range of ability is very wide. The more able pupils are confident in dealing with numbers to 1,000, money, time, and measurement, work in fractions and decimals, and can sort, classify and organise information using tables and graphs. Less able pupils need one to one support for addition and subtraction to 20.

65. The impact of inconsistent teaching is most apparent in Year 9. The rotation of teachers across sets has helped to limit the impact of weak teaching by one teacher, who is not trained to teach the subject. In one lesson seen, higher attaining pupils were not challenged and made insufficient progress. Pupils of average attainment are working very hard to counteract the effects of poor teaching last year. Lower attainers, who are taught by a member of support staff, make good progress because of meticulous planning and recording. Teaching in Year 10 is very good and pupils learn to use their mathematical skills in real life situations, such as shopping, in the college canteen, and budgeting when planning for college life next year.

66. Pupils work towards accreditation of Entry Level GCSE and ASDAN. This is appropriate for most pupils, but is not sufficiently challenging for a small number of more able pupils. Year 9 test results for last year show that some pupils, now in Year 10, are capable of gaining higher accreditation, and should be given the opportunity to do so.

67. At present, the school cannot evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, learning and achievement in order to improve provision because it does not have sufficient information on the levels that pupils have attained. Individual target setting is not helpful in supporting pupils, and targets are rarely taken into account in lesson planning. Informal assessment, and teachers' knowledge of pupils' abilities, is usually very good, and has resulted in appropriate setting and very good group planning in most lessons to meet pupils' wide ranging needs. A whole school approach to formal assessment is needed to support inexperienced or temporary teachers, to improve individual targets setting, and to make sure that the most able are sufficiently challenged and gain the appropriate accreditation.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Most teachers take opportunities to reinforce mathematical knowledge and understanding in other subjects, though this is more often incidental rather than planned. In science, one pupil learned to find averages for the first time. The mathematical teaching in a Year 6 information technology lesson was impressive as pupils learned to create shapes, measure length, use angles and discover the effect of changing them.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, because teaching is good; those in Years 3 to 6 do not achieve well enough because there are weaknesses in planning.
- Most pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11, but the most able pupils are not following a suitable examination course so they do not achieve well enough.
- The science room is unsuitable for secondary pupils.
- Pupils' numeracy skills are developed well in science, but homework is not used well enough to deepen pupils' understanding or develop literacy skills.
- The co-ordinator knows what needs to be done, but has not had time to develop the subject because of the need to take on other management responsibilities.

Commentary

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 1 to 6. Pupils in Year 1 build on what they have learned at the Foundation Stage, and teaching through topics helps to make learning meaningful. In a lesson where the teaching was successful, Year 1 and 2 pupils made simple observations as part of their topic on the seaside. Good questioning by the teacher encouraged pupils to describe what they saw, and they learned from one another and from their mistakes. One described sand running through a sieve as *melting*, for example, and this was corrected by the teacher. Pupils explored buckets of wet and dry sand, and noted differences in feel and colour, although the pace slowed at this point because pupils needed to wait their turn. When the teacher showed pupils how wet sand could be made into a 'shape' one pupil was able to explain that this was because 'wet sand sticks'.

70. Since the school entered a period of considerable turbulence, the science co-ordinator has had to take on additional management responsibilities and so has been unable to devote time to co-ordinating the subject. For example, the subject development plan identifies the need to complete the planning for Years 3 to 6, but there has not been time to do this. As a result, non-specialist teachers have little to guide them when planning their lessons, and one lesson seen had too little scientific focus. The overview plan that exists for this stage is not suitable either, as it does not take into account the fact that one class has pupils from four year groups in it. As a result, pupils repeat certain topics and miss others out, and so although classroom teaching is satisfactory, pupils do not achieve as well as they should at this stage. Although leadership is satisfactory, management is unsatisfactory.

71. The science co-ordinator is a subject specialist and teaches secondary pupils well. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Here pupils are taught in year groups and teaching ensures that most pupils are challenged well. The most able are required to work as independently as possible, and those that need support are provided with this. In Year 9, pupils start the course that they will follow in Years 10 and 11. Teaching challenges pupils as there are high expectations and a good pace in lessons. A particular strength is the emphasis on learning the meaning of scientific vocabulary, although the teacher does not take the opportunity to get pupils to learn how to spell words for homework. The homework tasks set are not as challenging as they might be for higher attaining pupils; one had come up with the answer before he left the classroom. Before pupils leave the science room, each has to answer a question correctly; the teacher makes sure that each question is challenging; pupils enjoy this exercise and enter into the spirit of it well. It helps to keep them thinking until the very end.

72. Teaching and learning are good in Year 10, and most pupils achieve well. However, a very small number of able pupils follow an examination course that is not challenging enough, and so achievement overall is satisfactory rather than good. In a lesson where teaching was good, pupils were busy working in groups to find out how the height of a slope would affect the distance that a toy car travels. The unsuitability of the accommodation was most apparent in this lesson. Pupils crouched in the limited space between the desks in the room, even though one group worked in an adjacent room. The metal strips across joins in the flooring had to be avoided as they would impede the passage of the car. Time was wasted overcoming such logistical problems. Nonetheless, careful monitoring by the teacher, and good support from an assistant ensured that pupils got on as quickly as possible and the teacher's questioning kept them thinking about the task and particularly the fairness of the test. More able pupils learned how to calculate averages in this lesson, and this was shared with others at the end. Although the more able pupils should be entered for GCSE science, the school's accommodation prevents this; there are only three gas taps, no low voltage electrical supply and no fume cupboard. There is no technician to support the teacher in preparing practical lessons, although the school has tapped into some technical support from a local mainstream school to re-organise the science prep room.

73. Learning resources for science are satisfactory, although the data logging equipment is not compatible with new computers and so this activity cannot be carried out; as a result, the subject does not meet requirements. There is only one computer in the science room, and this is used well in teaching, but pupils do not have access to ICT to support their learning in the science room.

74. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; standards and quality have been maintained despite considerable difficulties.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Assessment is good.
- Leadership is good.
- Use of information and communication technology in other subjects is inconsistent.

Commentary

75. Pupils in all year groups achieve very well because teaching is adapted to meet the needs of different ages as well as individual ability. The teachers' use of the interactive whiteboards is very effective, illustrating each step, and retaining reminders, vocabulary and examples. Lessons are fast paced and exciting, and enthuse and motivate pupils to improve their skills. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well in every lesson and pupils behave responsibly and maturely in response to the teacher's high expectations. By Year 6, pupils are building on the keyboard and mouse skills learned in earlier years, and can programme an on-screen turtle to produce complex patterns. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils learn the skills necessary to use packages for word processing, publishing and presentations. They transfer the skills learned from one package to the next, are encouraged to anticipate, explore and experiment, and produce highly individual work. Year 10 pupils use digital photography and learn to manipulate images and incorporate them in their work.

76. Assessment is good and based on a skill-based scheme so pupils know what they have achieved and what they need to learn next to improve. The assessment information is used well in planning both the task and the amount of individual support needed in each lesson.

77. Leadership is based on clear vision, sound knowledge of the subject, very good planning and a lot of enthusiasm. The co-ordinator has made very good improvements in the curriculum planning and assessment during the year he has been in post. This has improved achievement, which was judged to be satisfactory at the last inspection. Resources are good, and planning for future development is very good. Good resources and training for teachers and support staff has been provided. More needs to be done to encourage all teachers to use their skills to enhance teaching and learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is not consistent, but is satisfactory. It is dependent on the skill and enthusiasm of the teacher. Very good examples were seen in Year 6 where books were made by pupils in literacy and history, and in music, where pupils' compositions and performances are recorded on to CDs. Year 9 pupils used word processing skills to illustrate poems. In mathematics, computer assessment, and number programmes are used. Technology makes a significant contribution to the teaching of music. Several teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards to focus attention and improve the pace of the lesson. However, in secondary science there is too little pupil use of ICT because there is not enough room for more than one computer in the science room.

HUMANITIES

79. Neither history nor geography were a focus for this inspection. The school teaches these two subjects as *Integrated studies*; one of these lessons was seen, and this had a history focus. Year 6 pupils were looking at why people invaded and settled in Britain. Very good teaching, and in particular a rapid pace and high expectations, enabled pupils to learn a great deal in the session. A crystal clear introduction placed the task in context and reminded pupils of their previous learning. Good use was made of artwork, such as collage and models, to remind pupils of the Romans and Celts. Pupils then worked in two groups to look at the two different viewpoints in the conflict following Boudicca's revolt in AD60. Pupils were able to empathise with both sides, and to produce a written account of each perspective. Literacy skills were well incorporated into the lesson, and ICT skills used well to present booklets about Boudicca and the revolt.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**. Improvement since the last inspection is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is unsatisfactory; there is no subject leader, and no curriculum planning to guide teachers in preparing their lessons.
- The acting headteacher has identified the subject as a priority for development in the action plan.
- Inspectors were unable to make judgements on teaching and learning, as no lessons were taught during the inspection period.
- As there is no system of assessment or recording, and little evidence of achievement, inspectors were unable to make judgements on achievement.

Commentary

80. There is no subject leader designated to lead subject development and manage provision for religious education. There are no guidelines for teachers on what should be taught to each age group and how. The acting headteacher identified this subject as a priority for development on her arrival at Halesbury, and ensured that all classes have it on their timetables. However, there has been insufficient time for this to result in improvement. The quality and quantity of work that pupils produce varies from class to class, and there is too great a reliance on photocopied worksheets to record what pupils have learned. There is no system of assessment in place, therefore it was not possible to make a secure judgement on pupils' achievement in religious education.

81. No lessons were taught during the inspection as all classes are timetabled for the subject on a Friday. The acting headteacher has rightly retained religious education as a high priority in her action plan, identifying the need to designate a subject leader who will provide appropriate guidelines for teachers based on the locally agreed syllabus, develop a suitable assessment system, and monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that it is consistent across the school. At present, management is unsatisfactory, as none of this is happening.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress in lessons; this is an improvement since the last inspection.
- There are limited opportunities for accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum and assessment are in process of development; further improvement and monitoring are needed to ensure that pupils have the necessary experiences in the curriculum.
- The subject provides good support for pupils' cultural and personal development.

Commentary

82. The school benefits from having a specialist teacher who teaches secondary pupils and who is able to advise colleagues teaching younger pupils. Teachers enable pupils to grow in confidence, knowing that their efforts are valued. The appreciation of pupils' work is also shown through the displays of art work throughout the school, of which pupils are very proud. Through the good quality teaching, pupils learn to work in a variety of styles, using a range of materials, and producing two and three-dimensional pieces. The aims of lessons are clearly shared with pupils so they are clear what is expected of them, and they are encouraged to be as independent as possible. The use of key words on the board develops their understanding of the language of art and helps them to recognise and read terms.

83. Younger pupils produce drawings and paintings; they make collages and three-dimensional objects, such as for a display of the seashore. They explore colour, texture and shape through activities such as painting, printing, using clay and play-dough. Pupils in Year 6 copy Celtic designs, linked to their history topic, and use simple stitches to outline these. They begin to understand the idea of symmetry. Older pupils learn to work in the styles of well-known artists such as Beryl Cook.

They learn how to observe carefully and to draw or paint what they see. They have sketch books in which they practise their drawing, learning the effects of using different sized pencils, for example, when drawing still life or facial features. They are introduced to the art and design of different cultures; for example, that of Zanzibar. They use information and communication technology to change the colour and size of pictures, both of other artists and of their own work.

84. Since the last inspection, art has been added to the timetable for pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, while there are some opportunities for pupils' work to be acknowledged through the ASDAN course and through college taster courses, there are no arrangements for pupils to have their work recognised by taking nationally recognised qualifications in art, and this limits their opportunities to show their skills.

85. The curriculum is planned in outline to give pupils experiences of different aspects of the subject. However, lack of detailed planning guidelines makes it difficult to plan for lessons, ensuring that the aims for pupils of all abilities are clear. The co-ordinator has developed an assessment document, which will help to track pupils' progress over time, once it is used regularly. The co-ordinator is also attempting to monitor the curriculum to ensure that all aspects are covered, but lack of time for the role means that she is unable to carry out this task regularly, or to support colleagues in their teaching. Leadership and management are both satisfactory.

86. Through the different topics in art, pupils are learning about the work of different artists, both from the West and from different cultures. There are many opportunities provided to enrich the curriculum, for example, through art days, when pupils are able to work with visiting artists, and an Arts Week, when art activities are included in the range of options. Pupils visit local art galleries as part of their courses, and several have exhibited their work in places such as the local library and a local department store. A group of pupils in Years 9 and 10 gained an award for their design of a 'You2Me' logo for Mencap. Others have made model animals to display at the local hospital fete. These opportunities both support pupils' cultural development and raise their self-esteem.

Design and technology

87. The subject was not a focus for the inspection, and too few lessons were seen to make an overall judgement on provision. However, evidence shows that the provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. As a result, pupils do not achieve well enough by Year 9; in particular, their design skills have not increased. There are good planning guidelines for pupils in Years 1 to 6, and these emphasise both designing and making skills. In Years 7 to 9, pupils do not build well enough on what has gone before. This is because there are no planning guidelines (schemes of work) for the subject at this stage, and because the teacher has low expectations of what pupils might achieve, particularly in relation to designing, but also in terms of extending making skills by using a greater range of machinery. Several older pupils said that they do not enjoy design and technology lessons. In the single lesson seen for Year 9 pupils, teaching was unsatisfactory. The teacher did not monitor pupils' well enough and there was some unsafe practice, as a result. Pupils were making similar artefacts, and there was very little design incorporated into the task. The level of challenge was far too low for the majority of pupils. In a Year 10 lesson, teaching and learning were satisfactory; here pupils were making wooden products to sell at the school's summer fete. However, in this session too, the teacher had low expectations of pupils' working with machinery. It was not possible to look in detail at provision in Years 10 and 11, particularly as Year 11 pupils had already left and were not available to discuss their work with inspectors. However, all pupils follow the same examination course in Years 10 and 11, and this is not suitable for several of the lower attaining pupils. As a result, they get little out of the two year course.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in performing and composing.
- A good range of learning experiences is provided, and pupils enjoy music.
- Good leadership, by an enthusiastic music graduate, has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

88. Achievement is good overall; it is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 9. Pupils achieve particularly well in performing and composing music. This is because these skills are very well taught.

89. Teaching, which is good overall, is mostly by a musician, who has a very good understanding of how to make music accessible to pupils with learning difficulties, and how to make tasks enjoyable and challenging. Planning is good; it is constantly evaluated and revised in the light of its success in the classroom, and it helps to ensure that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding as they progress through the school. Lessons proceed at a very good pace, so pupils are busy throughout. Timed tasks are used most effectively. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were successful in making simple graphic scores on the theme of a rocket launch. In the first part of the lesson, the teacher ensured that pupils were reminded about notation and the use of symbols. The class brainstormed ideas for representing the sequence of a rocket launch, such as the countdown. Pupils then worked in groups, on a series of timed tasks; these gave the pupils a sense of urgency and encouraged them to work co-operatively, which they did very well. Instruments were then selected from a good range available, and scores were translated into performances, which were recorded electronically. Pupils evaluated each piece, saying what they liked about each one, whether the instruments selected were appropriate, and what could be improved. Good assessment through questioning, combined with support and prompting, ensured that all pupils were kept thinking throughout and were reminded of musical terms and principles.

90. Similarly, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils composed, performed and recorded a piece of Indian music, made up of three elements, a *drone*, *Tala* and an *improvisation*. Pupils selected instruments well; for example, a metallophone was chosen to play a drone. By the end of the session many pupils were able to name the three elements of Indian music used in their compositions, and a few recalled the meanings of terms. For instance, one knew that the drone is an ostinato 'because it repeats'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their music lessons; they rise to the teacher's high expectations, and achieve well as a result.

91. In addition to their lessons, pupils have a good variety of opportunities to listen to others perform music. The school has a productive link with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), and there are regular visits to the school from a range of different musicians; experiences have included a brass concert, a jazz concert and a mini-production as part of an Arts Week. Pupils also have the opportunity to perform in public, singing at a local shopping complex, for example. Music is recorded electronically, and CDs compiled as records of pupils' achievements. Pupils are proud to take these home. A small number of Year 9 pupils have instrument lessons; one on the flute and another on the keyboard.

92. The subject is well led by a skilled and enthusiastic co-ordinator who has made good improvements since the last inspection. Since then, planning and teaching have strengthened the provision for pupils' understanding and use of musical vocabulary, assessment procedures have been developed and resources reflect a wider range of cultures than previously. Resources have been improved, particularly the electronic recording system, which is of high quality.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social health and citizenship education (PSHCE)

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education is **unsatisfactory**. There has been a decline rather than an improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no subject leader, although two teachers have begun to develop plans to guide teachers.
- The requirements for citizenship are not met.
- A 'virtual baby' is used well to teach older pupils about the responsibilities of looking after a small baby.
- Inspectors were unable to make judgements on teaching, learning and achievement.

Commentary

93. The school has a policy for the teaching of personal, social and health education that appropriately includes sex and relationships education and drugs education, but this is out of date as it does not yet include citizenship education. There is no designated subject leader, but temporary members of the senior leadership team provide satisfactory leadership and have made some recent improvements to provision. They have drafted a new policy, but this has not yet been reviewed and adopted by the governing body. They have begun to create guidelines for what should be taught and how. Those for secondary pupils are furthest developed, and are already having a positive impact on what pupils learn, as reflected in the analysis of pupils' work during the inspection. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to study a range of aspects of PSHCE through nationally accredited modules, including on the world of work, citizenship and home management. Pupils of primary age have only recently had PSHCE introduced onto their timetables, and there is little work resulting from this, as yet. There is no system in place for assessing and recording pupils' progress in this aspect of the curriculum. It was, therefore, not possible to make a judgement about pupils' achievement across the school.

94. There is a satisfactory range of resources available to support pupils' learning, with plans to extend these. One particularly successful purchase has been a 'virtual baby' that is computerised and can be programmed to react in a very realistic way. The baby has its own buggy, nappy changing equipment and feeding bottle; older boys and girls take it in turns to be the baby's parent for a full day. Pupils respond very maturely to the challenge of caring for the baby in all of their lessons and activities that day, including break and lunch times, and learn valuable parenting skills for later life. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development.

95. Only two lessons were seen, so it was not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching and learning across the subject. However, teaching in both lessons observed was of very good quality. In a 'circle time' session in Year 9, pupils were encouraged to discuss their relationships with others, and to be aware of how people's feelings can be hurt. The teacher managed the session sensitively, and reinforced the need to bear in mind what was learned, for example when

relating to others around school. In a home management session, pupils in Year 10 considered how they would need to manage their money when they move on to college after leaving school. By the end of the lesson, pupils were confident that they knew what demands there would be on their funds, and understood the need to plan for some savings by spending carefully, for example by looking out for ‘Buy one, get one free’ offers.

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	5
How the school’s effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils’ achievement	4
Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
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	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils’ needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils’ care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils’ views	4
The effectiveness of the school’s links with parents	4
The quality of the school’s links with the community	4
The school’s links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	5
The governance of the school	6
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	5

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*