

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HERITAGE HOUSE SCHOOL**

Chesham, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110582

Headteacher: Mr M Barrie

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004

Inspection number: 258915

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 special                          |
| Age range of pupils:         | 2 to 19 years                              |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                      |
| Number on roll;              | 77   |
| School address:              | Cameron Road<br>Chesham<br>Buckinghamshire |
| Postcode:                    | HP5 3BP                                    |
| Telephone number:            | 01494 771445                               |
| Fax number:                  | 01494 775892                               |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                         |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Chairman: Mr P D Thomas                    |
| Date of previous inspection: | 12 <sup>th</sup> January 1998              |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Heritage House is a mixed day community special school for 77 pupils of all ages, from the Foundation Stage to Post 16. Two of the youngest pupils are undergoing assessment, but all others have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Most have severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties, and 22 have autism. There are almost twice as many boys as girls. Most pupils are white; seven are of Asian heritage, three are black, and four belong to other ethnic groups. Overall, socio-economic circumstances are unfavourable. Attainment on entry to the school is very low. The school has a large number of links with the wider community, including schools, a college, other educational organisations, the local education authority, special needs groups, the Connexions service and the Education Business Partnership. It has joined a consortium of six schools to form a sports college. The school is involved in several initiatives, including the Leadership Development Strategy and the National Remodelling Programme, and is a Communication Assessment Project centre. Its work has been recognised through the Investors in People award and the Healthy Schools Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |               |                       | Subject responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---|
| 8810                           | Sue Aldridge  | <i>Lead inspector</i> | English;<br>Religious Education;<br>Special Educational Needs.  |
| 1228<br>9                      | Sue Burgess   | <i>Lay inspector</i>  |   |
| 1785<br>5                      | Gordon Gentry | <i>Team inspector</i> | Science;<br>Physical Fitness.   |
| 1826<br>1                      | Tony Hill     | <i>Team inspector</i> | Mathematics;<br>Personal, Social and Health<br>Education;<br>Citizenship.                               |
| 3055                           | Clive Tombs   | <i>Team inspector</i> | Foundation Stage;<br>Information and Communication<br>Technology;<br>Leisure, Sports and Creative Arts. |

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Ltd  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school.** Pupils achieve well in those areas that are most important for them, such as communication, and they are well prepared for adult life. They enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to their work. Teaching is good, with some very good features. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in music lessons and in personal, social and health education (PSHE) including citizenship.
- Excellent arrangements ensure that pupils have a trusted adult whom they can turn to.
- There is a strong commitment to staff training and development; the staff are the school's greatest asset and they work very well as a team.
- The school, which is on a challenging site, is a very safe environment, and high quality relationships help to create a most harmonious climate for learning.
- The school provides very well for pupils' individual needs. It is most successful in its development of a relevant and well enriched curriculum, but the subjects of science, geography and history do not meet requirements.
- The assessment, recording and reporting of National Curriculum subjects is not carried out as required.

There has been **good** improvement in the school's effectiveness since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements have improved in most subjects. Teaching has improved dramatically, as has the school's accommodation. The school is now better led and managed. In particular, staff development is much improved, and this is well supported by a system of staff appraisal, which was weak when the school was last inspected. Consultation with parents, other professionals and governors has resulted in the school setting out to develop a curriculum based on six areas of skills for life. Much development work has been undertaken by staff, who are committed to the approach and convinced of its value. This development is not yet complete, and plans do not yet reflect the full breadth of activities provided, or show how pupils can continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. Assessment arrangements have been established for each of the six areas of learning. The school makes use of a national system of assessing pupils, using P scales, though it uses these only for English, mathematics and personal and social development. Financial planning is now closely linked to the school's improvement planning.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Overall, achievement is good. Children in the early years class get a good start to their education and they achieve well. Pupils and students achieve well in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT); achievement in religious education lessons is satisfactory for pupils up to 16, but beyond this no judgement could be made because there are no records and no lessons could be seen. In science, there was not enough assessment information to make possible

a judgement on overall achievement, but achievement in lessons was satisfactory. Students over 16 leave school with suitable externally recognised accreditation and most move on to further education. Across the school, pupils and students achieve well in leisure, sports and creative arts, and physical fitness.

Pupils' attendance is good, and so is their behaviour. Punctuality is satisfactory. **Overall, the arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.**

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided is good. Teaching and learning are both good.** Inspectors saw a high proportion of very good teaching, and no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers are highly skilled, and the large numbers of skilled support staff make a significant contribution to direct teaching. Teaching of music is a particular strength. The curriculum and assessment arrangements are good in the Foundation Stage and at Post 16; they are satisfactory in Years 1 to 11. The school's accommodation is satisfactory, and learning resources are good. There are very good arrangements to ensure that pupils are healthy, safe and well cared for. The pupils are generally very well supported, though one pupil does not receive the speech and language therapy that is identified as a need on the statement. A very close watch is kept on pupils' progress and changing needs. Staff work most effectively in partnership with parents and the community. There are satisfactory links with other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership; they inspire and enthuse other staff, and teamwork is particularly strong. Governance is good. Governors' involvement in the school is very good, and they have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths. Although they do not meet their obligations in relation to the National Curriculum and its assessment, they generally challenge and support well. The school has developed its self-evaluation procedures very well. The school's finances are managed well, and there is an efficient administration team.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils alike have very positive views of the school. Parents find the staff particularly approachable; they are pleased also with the good teaching and with the information on how children are getting on. Almost all say that their children like coming to school. Pupils' views are sought most effectively through the School Council, and they have already had an impact on what the school provides.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that pupils receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum and religious education, and that all National Curriculum subjects are properly co-ordinated.
- Ensure that curriculum plans include all the activities the school provides, and show clearly how pupils will build on their knowledge, skills and understanding throughout their school career.

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Ensure that all National Curriculum subjects are assessed, recorded and reported to parents as required.
- Liaise with the local education authority (LEA) to ensure that speech and language therapy is provided as specified on the single statement identified above.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Overall, pupils achieve well. Although standards are well below those expected for pupils of a similar age, this is because of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Children at the Foundation Stage achieve well overall, and very well in creative development and physical development.
- Pupils achieve very well in PSHE, including citizenship.
- Achievement in English, mathematics and ICT is good across the school.
- Achievement is good in the school's own curriculum areas of physical fitness and leisure, sports and creative arts; achievement in music lessons is very good.
- Judgements on overall achievement in science and religious education could not be made, because weaknesses in assessment, recording and reporting result in a lack of evidence.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils achieve well across the school, and parents are particularly pleased with this; all those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children are making good progress, and almost two thirds strongly agreed with this statement.

2. Children get a good start to their education in the early years class. This caters for children at the Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). All in this class follow the Foundation Stage curriculum, and this is entirely appropriate as they all have complex needs. Although none are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they complete Year 2, they make very good progress towards their personal targets and achieve well. The good achievement is associated with skilled teaching, and teaching and learning are very good in creative and physical development. In creative activities, children's interactions and responses are particularly good. For instance, children were able to respond to the playing of a flute by touching, banging or rubbing a drum. Children's physical skills improve rapidly because there is a very strong emphasis on them, as well as a very good range of activities and good teamwork between physiotherapists and school staff.

3. Throughout the school, pupils and students achieve very well in PSHE, including citizenship. All that the school does touches upon this important area, which has been identified by parents and governors as a key element of the curriculum. The quality of the school's work in this area has been acknowledged through the Healthy Schools Award. The pupils are helped to make very good progress by precise target setting, linked closely to the needs identified on their statements, and by good support and careful assessment. By the time they reach school leaving age, pupils are confident members of the school community, and they use the local community safely and competently for shopping and leisure purposes. Many go on to continue their education at local or residential colleges.

4. The school sets challenging targets to raise whole school achievement. These are based on the Skills for Life learning outcomes, set at three levels. Targets for assessment in July 2003 were comfortably met or exceeded in almost all areas. Careful analysis of assessment information, some of which is analysed as part of a national project, supports the school's own evaluation of good achievement.

5. Good teaching, and the provision of a wide range of relevant learning experiences, is associated with good achievement in English, mathematics and ICT. Since the last inspection, the school has developed specialist teaching for pupils with autism. As part of this, it has adopted a system of communication using pictures with symbols, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Pupils become particularly proficient in using this system to communicate, and several who are able to speak, but lack the confidence to do so in public, use PECS to shop in the local community. The system enables pupils to make their needs known by showing a single symbol card, such as a toilet, or to write simple sentences, which are built up with a sequence of symbol cards secured on a Velcro strip. The school also ensures that pupils who need electronic support in order to communicate are given suitable equipment. For instance, one older pupil has a *Lightwriter*, which allows typewritten sentences to be displayed on a screen and also to be converted into speech. In mathematics, pupils tackle a variety of practical tasks; for example, they shop at the school's own tuck shop before going on to do this in the local community. As pupils progress through the school they become more proficient in using computers, CDs, videos and the digital camera. Those at Post 16 compile and present their records of achievement by using digital and video technology.

6. Achievement in science lessons is good; no overall judgement could be made because of the lack of assessment evidence. Achievement in religious education lessons in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory; again a judgement on achievement overall could not be made because of the lack of assessment evidence. No lessons could be seen in Years 1 to 6 or at Post 16. The school does not meet requirements to report on these subjects to parents, so there was little evidence available to inspectors.

7. Two of the school's six curriculum areas, namely physical fitness, and leisure, sports and creative arts, were a particular focus for this inspection; in both of these areas, pupils achieve well. This is associated with good teaching and a wide range of relevant learning experiences. Both areas of the curriculum are emphasised well. For instance, the whole of Wednesday afternoon is devoted to a variety of leisure activities for pupils to sample. In music lessons, the specialist skills of the teacher are most successful in engaging pupils; as a result, pupils with complex needs achieve particularly well, for instance when they respond by tapping a drum.

8. Across the school, pupils of different genders, racial origins and special needs achieve equally well. This is because the staff are skilled in teaching pupils with different needs and because the provision made for pupils with additional difficulties is very good. In general, pupils are very well supported, although one pupil does not receive the speech therapy which is mentioned in the statement. However, staff are good at developing pupils' communication skills, so this pupil is not noticeably disadvantaged.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' and students' attitudes to school are **very good**, and behaviour throughout the school is **good**. Attendance is **good** and punctuality is generally **satisfactory**. Provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral and cultural development, is **good**, while that for social development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attitudes to school are very positive.
- Staff successfully promote very good relationships.

- Provision for pupils' social development is very good and has improved since the last inspection.
- Behaviour throughout the school is good.

## Commentary

9. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school in general are very good. Almost all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children liked coming to school, and this was evident during inspection week. Members of the student council said, or indicated, that they like the way the school encourages them to be as independent as possible and the means by which this is achieved.

10. In general, pupils are interested in their work and try hard to finish what they have been asked to do. They enjoy practical tasks and, with suitable support, sustain their concentration during lessons. Their enthusiasm was particularly evident in several of the lessons observed. For instance, in music a pupil initiated a rhythm exchange on drums, wheelchair users were delighted by the excitement of a race during an afternoon of sport, and some of the youngest pupils enjoyed the feel and smell of various herbs in their cookery lesson. Post 16 students are keen to achieve the various stages of their Safety in the Community and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, and persevere well to realise their aims. Older students willingly undertake responsibilities offered to them, such as organising their timetables, preparing photos for their home-school diaries, emptying bins, and tidying up at the end of the day.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 8.4 | School data          | 0.0 |

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

11. Behaviour in class, in assemblies, at lunchtime and around the school is good. In general, pupils get on well together and are tolerant of each other's difficulties. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Within their limited ability to communicate, pupils respond positively to their teachers and learning support assistants. The staff know their pupils very well and are therefore able to bring out the best in them. Although there were five fixed-term exclusions last year, the three pupils involved are no longer in school and none of the current pupils has such extreme behavioural problems. The school does show a willingness to take pupils who have not thrived in other schools; even when Heritage House is not an ideal placement for them, it provides education whilst these pupils await a place elsewhere.

## Exclusions

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         |
|---|
| White – British                                     |
| White – Irish                                       |
| White – any other White background                  |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background |
| Any other ethnic group                              |

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 59                   | 1                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    |                                   | 0                              |
| 3                    | 3                                 | 0                              |
| 7                    | 1                                 | 0                              |
| 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| 4                    | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

12. Provision for pupils' social development is very good, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection, when it was found to be satisfactory. The school's very positive ethos extends to all areas of its work and encourages pupils' confidence, self-esteem and awareness of others. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and self-motivation. Pupils are encouraged, particularly at Post 16, to be accepting, tolerant and supportive of the needs of others in school. Assemblies, in which the choir takes a prominent role, provide a valuable opportunity for the whole school to come together to celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils are encouraged to develop a growing awareness of their own self-image and to be able to make choices as a means of achieving greater confidence and independence. Their understanding of the wider world is enhanced by a varied range of educational trips, including residential opportunities, and by visitors to the school. The school makes very good use of both the immediate and the wider community to broaden pupils' experiences.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are good, and the curriculum is satisfactory. Standards of care, welfare and safety are very good. The school works very well with parents, who are partners in the education process. Parents and pupils have high regard for the school and its staff.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are both **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory** overall, and good at the Foundation Stage and Post 16.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Well developed teamwork and good staffing levels are successful in encouraging and engaging pupils and in maintaining a good pace in lessons, so that pupils are productive throughout.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils create trust and promote pupils' confidence and motivation, so they are keen to co-operate and do their best.
- Staff are particularly skilled in teaching music, swimming and art; they use the PECS system very well to develop pupils' communication skills.
- The extent to which pupils and students acquire new skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding is adversely affected by weaknesses in planning.
- Pupils with autism and students at Post 16 show an increasing ability to work independently.
- Planning for pupils' individual needs is very good; they are set clear, relevant and challenging targets.

### **Commentary**

13. Since the school was last inspected there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Staff training has been successful in increasing the expertise of teachers and support assistants, who make a significant contribution to teaching and learning. High staffing levels are an important factor in ensuring that pupils are engaged well throughout lessons. This is most noticeable in classes for pupils with autism and those for pupils with the most complex needs.

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 1 (2%)    | 21 (42%)  | 22 (44%) | 6 (12 %)     | 0 (0%)         | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%)    |

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

14. In the classes for pupils with autism, the strategies of Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) are used well. The provision has developed since the last inspection and is well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable head of department. Each class has a similar layout, with booths for individual work, an area for group work and a leisure zone. Visual timetables are used well by staff and pupils alike, and this helps pupils to move from one activity to the next. Classes are well staffed, so pupils have good support. Staff are thoroughly briefed, and resources are all well organised in accessible trays, so 'work sessions' proceed at a good pace. Staff move pupils on quickly from one activity to the next, with short spells in the leisure area in between; as a result, pupils are engaged well for much of the time. Assessment and recording are immediate, and records enable staff to present tasks that challenge pupils, who soon develop the ability to work independently. Pupils are clearly secure in classes; they know what is expected of them, and even when they are not working with an adult they exhibit little autistic behaviour. They get used to working with different adults, too, as there are deliberate changes in staff members supporting individuals.

15. Similarly, in lessons for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, good staffing levels help to ensure that pupils are well stimulated. Staff check that pupils are comfortably positioned, and medical needs are attended to discreetly. Familiar objects are used well to represent characters or events, and these support pupils' understanding well. Sensory resources, including those in two well-equipped sensory rooms, are used to good effect, and pupils' responses are carefully recorded. Staff work well as a team, sharing their knowledge of pupils' preferences well, so that the most successful strategies can be used to draw out responses.

16. Inspectors saw a high proportion of very good teaching. Particularly skilled teaching was seen in music, where the teacher is a trained music therapist and has an excellent understanding of how music can be used to encourage pupils' communication skills. Pupils are particularly responsive in music lessons. Skilled teaching of art, swimming and PECS was also seen. Teachers and support staff have been well trained to teach pupils to use the PECS system; pupils soon become proficient users of this system because they are set targets that enable them to build up their skills in small steps.

17. In general, pupils make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, in a few National Curriculum subjects, weaknesses in teachers' planning mean that pupils do not always continue to build on what they know, understand and do. This is the case in science, history and geography.

18. Throughout the school, common pieces of music signal the start of a certain lesson, so pupils know which subject is about to be taught. For instance, literacy lessons are heralded by the playing of The Beatles' *Paperback Writer*, and a set of plastic lips and ears is passed around for pupils to handle.

19. Staff have very good relationships with pupils; they show that they care for them and value their contributions and responses. Justified praise is given readily, and staff are careful to give positive commands rather than critical comments. For instance, the instruction 'good listening' was successful in securing the attention of a pupil whose attention was wandering in one lesson. In their turn, pupils are well motivated and keen to please; they generally try hard to do what is asked of them. At Post 16, where accommodation is separate from the rest of the school, there is a more adult environment and students are expected to be more responsible and independent. They keep their possessions in personal lockers, and all have jobs to do. The telephone in this department is answered by students, and this develops their confidence and skills. Students are involved well in planning their work, and in assessing their learning. Their capacity to work independently develops well.

20. Planning for pupils' individual needs starts with the statement. From this, clear targets are identified, and these are reviewed at the end of each half term. Comments show clearly whether targets are fully or partly met, and digital photographs provide good evidence of achievement. These records are sent home to parents, who greatly appreciate them.

## Assessment

- Assessment in English, mathematics and PSHE is good.
- The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is very good.
- Record keeping in lessons is very good.
- Requirements to assess and report on all National Curriculum subjects are not met.

## Commentary

21. Baseline assessment is very good. All pupils are fully assessed within six weeks of entering the school, and personal targets are drawn up for them. These targets are reviewed twice termly and adjusted as necessary. This is a very thorough process. Many pupils know their targets and these targets are kept in personal folders on their classroom wall. The information is used effectively by all staff to cater for the needs of individual pupils. Recording by staff in lessons is very good, and they skilfully modify targets as necessary. The use of praise and well-developed communication skills enables pupils to know how they are progressing towards their targets and how they can improve. Evaluation and self-evaluation during lessons is well developed. Pupils enjoy being involved in this process.

22. Where assessment is good, this is because the school uses a national system of assessing pupils whose achievements fall below National Curriculum Level 1 (P levels), as well as National Curriculum Levels where appropriate. It also uses external accreditation for older pupils and students. In addition, it has developed a system of assessing pupils in its own Skills for Life areas, based on recently published guidance. Learning outcomes have been developed at three levels for each task or activity to be assessed, and the school makes use of this information to evaluate pupils' progress in the curriculum. However, statutory requirements are not fully met for pupils from the ages of five to sixteen. Here the majority of National Curriculum subjects, including science and religious education, are not assessed as distinct subjects. Thus the school does not report on them as subjects, or have the required information for parents on levels reached in Years 2, 6 and 9.

23. Assessment is regularly moderated by the deputy headteacher. Most teachers have non-contact time every Wednesday afternoon and are able to concentrate on assessment tasks. The school also has an annual assessment week when teachers are free from lesson commitments and give the time to reviewing pupils' progress and achievements. Despite the weaknesses, there has been a marked improvement in assessment since the last inspection.

## The curriculum

The school curriculum is **satisfactory**. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. The school's accommodation is **satisfactory** and resources are **good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses:

- In consultation with parents, staff, governors and the LEA, the school is developing an innovative curriculum which is highly relevant, because it addresses the individual needs of the pupils and students very well.
- The curriculum does not meet the National Curriculum requirements for science, geography and history.
- The curriculum for PSHE, along with citizenship, is very good.

- Curriculum planning does not ensure continuity of learning, in particular in geography and history, and in religious education at Post 16.
- In the classes for pupils with autism, the curriculum for science is too narrow.
- Levels of support staffing are very good; key workers ensure very good links between home and school, and these support learning.
- Opportunities to promote pupils' numeracy skills are not always taken.

## Commentary

24. The curriculum policy shows how the school has developed the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) model to distinguish between pupils' personal priorities (as indicated on their statements), the school's priorities, and wider priorities, including the National Curriculum. The curriculum is organised into six areas of learning under the general heading of 'Skills for Life'. This innovative approach has been negotiated in consultation with all stakeholders and is based on the identified need to ensure that pupils and students are prepared for life in the community in as practical a way as possible. The six areas are:

- \* effective communication;
- \* personal and social development;
- \* practical skills of independence;
- \* problem solving;
- \* physical fitness;
- \* leisure, sports and creative arts.

25. The early years class accommodates children from age two to age seven. It uses the school's own Skills for Life curriculum, which ties into the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, so that all areas of learning are covered. Those in this class have full access to all the school's resources, including the hydrotherapy pool, the gymnasium, the food technology room and the sensory room. Curriculum provision for children at the Foundation Stage is good.

26. In developing the curriculum, the school has ensured that the special needs of its pupils and students are met very effectively. Particular components of the curriculum, such as the provision to develop mobility, match very well the needs of those with more profound and complex special needs. In addition, the school provides music therapy and hydrotherapy for pupils who need these. Although effective use is made of the scarce provision for speech therapy, one pupil does not receive the provision outlined on the statement.

27. The curriculum for PSHE, including citizenship, is a strength, and is one of the few subject areas that is being very well co-ordinated. The Healthy Schools initiative has provided external evaluation and accreditation of the school's practice. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in discrete lessons, but also permeates the 'Skills for Life' curriculum and builds the foundation for purposeful and responsible life in the community.

28. The school's intention is that National Curriculum programmes of study provide the vehicle for the development of pupils' prioritised skills and understanding. However, some key National Curriculum areas, such as science, geography and history, have not been retained as specific subjects but have been subsumed within the six Skills for Life areas. This has led to a lack of breadth. In the classes for pupils with autism, science is reduced to a series of practical tasks that are presented when pupils work in their booths; there are no discrete science sessions for these pupils, as there are for subjects such as art. As a result, knowledge and understanding of science is neglected.

29. The lack of curriculum co-ordination, which is currently being addressed by the school, has in part been responsible for the failure of the curriculum to ensure that pupils have their full entitlement to the National Curriculum. It has also led to some loss of continuity in the learning process; for instance, the religious education curriculum in Post 16 does not build on what was learned in previous years. Similarly, students over 16 are not prepared well for finding their way around an unfamiliar site, using a simple map, because the school does not systematically develop this skill in earlier years.

30. The curriculum for students over 16 is a very practical one, with an accredited basis in the ASDAN awards. The ASDAN modules, which are used from Year 11, aim to foster independence in the direction of work experience and careers. The work experience is very well organised in three graduated levels that reflect the increased independence and responsibility required of students. Work experience is managed by a learning support assistant, in conjunction with the Education Business Partnership (EBP). The modules are repeated in each of the three Post 16 years, which take each module a step further towards independence and work. Some of the modules of study, such as the course on the use of mobile phones, have been designed by staff, whilst the initiative for others, such as the local Youth Club module, has come from the students. Students build up a photographic and a video Record of Achievement, which are presented to them when they leave. These are taken to work or further education placements and presented by the students. The Connexions personal adviser provides continuity of support for pupils from age 14 onwards, and for their families, in managing their post-school placements. As a personal touch, past students are invited to occasional student reunions.

31. The curriculum is enriched by a very good programme of visits and activities, including visits to museums and galleries in Paris and Amsterdam, the 'Hazard Alley' course in community safety, and residential activities courses. Links with overseas schools are being developed with a view to using e-mail contacts and exchange visits. There are two lunch time clubs; the choir club is particularly well managed and supported, and its performances have brought benefits to the community. The numbers of support staff are very good; they work with teachers in a productive partnership to support pupils' and students' learning. For instance, support staff release teachers on a Wednesday afternoon, so that they can prepare and record. There is also a most effective system of key workers, who form a link between home and school by writing in and reading home-school books each day. This system enables parents to become involved in their children's learning.

32. The accommodation is on a difficult site, but it is accessible and satisfactorily meets the curriculum requirements. The separate Post 16 accommodation is very good. The school's sensory room and hydrotherapy pool are a particularly high standard of provision. There are specialist areas for science, food studies and art, with plans to upgrade the present unsatisfactory food technology facilities in the Sixth Form. There is an area for ICT, but it is not well located or well used. The library in the upper school is unsatisfactory; there is too little space for more than one or two pupils to use the area at a time, and it is a cramped thoroughfare. The library for the younger pupils is better.

33. Resources are good. The hydrotherapy pool and the sensory and mobility provisions are particularly well resourced with adaptive and sensory aids. There are very good resources for information technology, including interactive whiteboards.

## Care, guidance and support

There are **very good** arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety, and for their support, advice and guidance. Pupils are involved **very well** in the work of the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- An excellent pastoral system ensures that pupils have a trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school.
- Induction of new pupils is very good.
- There is very good provision for child protection and the general welfare of pupils.
- The staff respect the personal dignity of pupils, and actively seek, value and act on their views.

### Commentary

34. The school takes very good care of its pupils and has excellent support systems in place. A particular strength of the provision for pupils' welfare is the key worker system, which ensures a constructive working relationship between home and school and with the pupils themselves. Key workers maintain an overview of pupils' educational programmes and contact with outside professionals. If required, they may attend pupils' annual review meetings. The school very successfully encourages an ethos of mutual respect and this is evident in the way pupils respond to those who care for them. Staff know their pupils extremely well and work very effectively as a team so that pupils can get the most out of what the school has to offer.

35. Appropriate child protection arrangements are in place, and training for all staff is updated annually. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when staff training for child protection was judged to be unsatisfactory. Health and safety issues are given a high priority at all times and are very well organised. This is particularly evident in the frequent visits pupils make on foot into Chesham as part of their programme of safety in the community, and in their work towards independence. The way in which staff organise these trips is exemplary. Under suitable supervision, pupils and students are given every opportunity to take responsibility, as far as possible, for their own road safety. The last report remarked on problems with traffic congestion and the safety concerns arising from these. These have been fully addressed through site improvements; there is detailed co-ordination of pupils' arrivals and departures through the use of walkie-talkies. Another strong feature of welfare provision is the meticulous analysis of any incidents that have caused concern. In this way, the school seeks to make any necessary improvements and ensure safety. The school's good practice regarding health and welfare, as well as other issues, has been recently recognised by successful assessment for the Healthy Schools Award.

36. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence grows as a result of the respect that staff and pupils show for one another. Many pupils have acute communication difficulties but all are given an opportunity to express their views, through close and informed observation and the recording of their responses during the school day. The school council successfully gives pupils a more formal opportunity to influence what the school provides, such as additional activities for wet playtimes.

37. Arrangements for transition are satisfactory. The school does what it can to influence provision at local colleges, and works closely with the Connexions service and the Education Business Partnership (EBP). Its purpose in this is to secure work experience placements and

the necessary funding for students who wish to take up places at residential colleges. However, there are delays in securing funding, which are outside the school's control, and these cause some frustration for students and their parents.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are **very good**; those with other schools and colleges are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- Links with parents, and with the local and wider community, make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Although the school provides generally good information about pupils' progress, statutory requirements for annual reporting in National Curriculum subjects are not fully met.

### Commentary

38. Parents' views of the school are very positive. All those who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire said that teaching is good, that they are kept well-informed about how their child is getting on, and that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question, problem or complaint. In addition, replies to the school's own questionnaire sent out in November 2003 listed the best things that parents believed the pupils got from attending the school. These included the responsible, caring attitude of all staff, and expert teaching in skills for life, particularly self-help and learning how to behave in a community. Other comments, some during the inspection, indicated how important the school is to the families as a whole and how relevant parents feel the Skills for Life curriculum is to their child's needs.

39. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good. There are effective daily exchanges of information through the home/school communication books, which are often illustrated by digital photos taken during the day. These, and phone calls, are particularly valued because so many families live at a considerable distance from the school. Teachers and key workers make home visits before pupils start school, and during each spring term. Most parents, especially those of pupils just starting or nearing the end of their time at school, attend consultation evenings and annual review meetings. All these links make a positive contribution to pupils' learning through the opportunities to share advice, information and ideas. Parents like the format of annual written reports they receive and the inclusion of photographs to report on progress. However, these reports do not fully meet statutory requirements, as they do not refer to National Curriculum subjects by name or include levels as required in Years 2, 6, 9 and 11.

40. Parents of pupils in the TEACCH classes have their own well-attended group, which meets every half term to offer mutual support and give advice on such matters as behaviour management and access to additional support. A few parents assist with swimming sessions but a regular commitment to help in school is difficult for many. The active Parent Teacher Association organises a range of social and fund-raising activities over the school year. The substantial amount of money raised is spent on such items as equipment for the sensory room and upkeep of the pool; it also helps with the cost of residential trips.

41. Links with the local community are very good. Many local businesses and charitable trusts make donations to school funds. Pupils and students are well known in Chesham because the school makes very good use of local amenities to enhance the curriculum. Post 16 students, for example, are warmly welcomed at a local café where they regularly buy

refreshments, and many local shops in Chesham and surrounding towns provide valuable practice in money-handling and the whole process of travel and shopping. Other destinations include Chesham Leisure Centre gym, the local youth club, Green Park Outdoor Education Centre, parks and playgrounds, country parks and museums. Further afield, pupils have visited Oxford, Harrow, Reading, Ruislip, and the Festival Hall in London.

42. Links with other schools include flourishing sporting and dance links with a local high school, and a well-established annual project in conjunction with an independent boys' school, involving the construction of toys or activities suitable for Heritage House pupils. The possible closure of a partner school in Moscow has led to a search for a similar link with a school in India, New Zealand or Japan, and it is hoped that there will be an opportunity for staff exchange and possibly a similar facility for pupils. All these contacts make a significant contribution to pupils' experience of the wider world.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governance of the school is **good**. Leadership of the school by the headteacher, senior team and other staff with responsibility is **good**. The management of the school is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- The governing body influences the work of the school and its policies by offering challenge and very good support. However, governors do not ensure that the school provides the full National Curriculum.
- The innovative leadership and high aspirations of the headteacher and the senior management team have led to a drive for improvement and a clear purpose for the work of the school.
- The school's evaluation of many aspects of its work results in effective planning for improvement.
- Staff performance management has been effective in bringing about improvement in teaching.

### **Commentary**

43. The stable governing body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school and its successes. It is fully involved in strategic planning and formulating policies, and supports staff in putting them into practice. The governing body improves its own performance, knowledge and understanding through appropriate development activities, targeted training, and putting together important documents, such as the comprehensive governors' handbook. It has implemented a four-year rolling programme to monitor and evaluate all areas of school life. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are involved in a variety of its activities, including training, social events, and class links. In this way, they have a first-hand understanding of the school's strengths. Finances are well managed, and governors have used the budget well to improve resources and appoint and train a generous number of support staff. They have supported wholeheartedly the school's initiative in developing the Skills for Life curriculum. However, they have not ensured that the developing curriculum and its assessment meet statutory requirements in relation to the National Curriculum.

44. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's development in future years. This is based on ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement, in the best possible environment, following the most effective curriculum, and supported by the most appropriate resources. In an open management style, he has shared his vision with the staff and has empowered his well trained and qualified senior management team. As a result, there is a sense of ownership of the school by all staff, a commitment to its aims, high staff morale, and very good teamwork. The headteacher's innovations include setting up the successful department for pupils with autism, putting in place a career structure for support staff,

introducing remodelling of the workforce ahead of schedule, and initiating development of the Skills for Life curriculum. The latter is not yet complete but, thus far, guidance on planning the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties has not been followed closely enough. There has been no systematic audit to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met.

45. The school improvement plan is a clear document for leading the school forward. It identifies priorities, which are well supported by the budget. Very good progress has been made on most areas of the plan, in particular those concerning leadership and management, the observation of teaching, parental support, staff attendance and a safe and healthy environment. However, while the school collects, monitors and analyses a range of data to evaluate its effectiveness, it has not systematically audited the developing Skills for Life curriculum to check that it draws on the National Curriculum programmes of study in all subjects.

46. The school places a high priority on appointing staff, developing their skills and deploying them to best effect. As a consequence, achievement by all pupils is good. Performance management targets are set for all staff and relate closely to priorities in the school development plan. This is a very strong feature of the school and is evident in the consistently skilled teaching and the invaluable contribution made by support staff in meeting pupils' individual needs. There are good procedures for introducing and settling in new staff, so they quickly become effective. There have been significant improvements in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection.

### **Financial information**

#### ***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

| <b>Income and expenditure (£)</b> |              | <b>Balances (£)</b>                 |           |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Total income                      | 1,193,771.00 | Balance from previous year          | 56,697.00 |
| Total expenditure                 | 1,225,856.00 | Balance carried forward to the next | 24,612.00 |
| Expenditure per pupil             | 15,517.00    |                                     |           |

47. Financial resources are used to good effect to support school developments and are administered well by a bursar. The administration staff present a welcoming face to visitors and contribute well to the efficient running of the school. Best value principles are applied well, and the school ensures that purchases represent value for money. The school consults widely, challenges itself to raise achieve achievement, and compares its performance with that of similar establishments wherever it can.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Children enter the Nursery with levels of attainment which are very low, and with Statements of Special Educational Needs that identify complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties. None of the children are on course to reach the expected goals in each area of learning by the end of Key Stage 1, because of the extent of their learning difficulties.

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- The Nursery is well led and managed.
- Teaching is consistently good, and occasionally very good, in all areas of learning. Children's needs are carefully assessed.
- The teamwork of the teacher and a large number of support staff is very good and supports children's achievement.
- The close co-operation with parents has a beneficial effect on the progress children make.
- The designated play area outdoors, due shortly to be improved, is unsatisfactory and limits children's learning opportunities.

#### **Commentary**

48. The leadership of the Nursery is good. The teacher and the support staff work well together. Each child has a key worker who offers a welcome at the start of the day and provides the necessary support throughout the day. Lesson planning is detailed and children achieve well because their needs and responses to teaching are carefully assessed. There are clear targets for children in each lesson and good systems to measure progress, however small. The staff work closely with parents, making home visits and ensuring a good flow of information from school to home and vice versa, via home/school diaries. In this way, information about matters such as diet and toileting is clearly conveyed. Assessment and planning are supported well by a number of facilities. These include the regular input from speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, and the music therapist. There are also sessions to improve co-ordination, provided by Positive Achievement inspired by the principles of Conductive Education (PACE) and Riding for the Disabled. All these also ensure that children follow an individual timetable that best meets their needs. The main classroom base is somewhat cramped, but children have access to another room for wet and dry play and painting activities. The play area outdoors is unsatisfactory, but improvements are imminent. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys or girls or of children with different special educational needs. Overall, there have been good improvements in the Nursery since the last inspection.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Children' social skills are promoted throughout the day.
- Relationships between children and adults are very good.
- Music and objects of reference are used to help children anticipate the activity.
- There are good opportunities for children to develop independence.

### **Commentary**

49. Children' achievement is high. Their social skills are promoted and reinforced consistently in lessons and on less formal occasions, such as snack times, play times and lunchtimes. There are familiar routines that help children to feel secure. Objects are passed round the group to help children understand characters and events, and suitable music is played to signal changes of activity. All children have a key worker, with whom they build a trusting relationship. In one lesson children were encouraged to brush the arms of a partner and pass a red balloon around a circle. In this way they developed the idea of friendship and sharing. They are encouraged to make choices and show preferences, and although they are heavily dependent on adult support they are encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Children' achievement is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- A range of strategies and resources is skilfully used to attract responses from the children.
- Circle time is effective in helping to develop the children's communication skills.
- Support staff are well deployed to maintain children' attention and ensure that they are fully involved.

### **Commentary**

50. Big books are used to good effect and read with great expression. Children experience the rhythm of the text when they are given hand-over-hand support so that they can clap in time. The imaginative resources enable children to follow and take part in stories. For example, the concepts of wind, rain and darkness are introduced with an electric fan, an umbrella, spray, and torches. Children show enjoyment through sustained listening, looking and feeling, encouraged by lots of positive comments such as 'Good listening, good looking'. A touch pad enables children to communicate simple responses, and pictures and symbols are used to help their understanding.

51. Every morning starts with 'circle time'. Children identify their own photograph, and with close support shake hands with the teacher while the song 'How do you do' is sung. Children press the Big Mack to say 'Hello' in return; they are given time to respond independently, but when necessary they are helped to do so. A large number of support staff make a consistent contribution to the quality of lessons. They are well deployed, supporting individuals and ensuring that they are fully included. The support staff help the teacher at the end of lessons to record any progress and the children's preferences.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

52. It is not possible to make a judgement on provision and achievement in this area as only one short part of a lesson was observed. Numeracy skills and basic mathematical concepts and language are taught through a wide range of classroom activities, including number rhymes, songs and structured play.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Activities are based on first hand experiences.
- Visits into the community make a valuable contribution to children's learning.
- Good use is made of the sensory room.

### **Commentary**

53. Children achieve well. They explore their immediate environment with daily visits to different parts of the school. A suitable range of activities enables the children to understand through smell, feel, sound and touch. For example, children explore simple bubble wrap or wet and dry play. Because staff make good use of photographs, children become aware of their own growth, and of relationships within the family. Trips out into the community, such as to the local park, toy library or garden centre, all help children's understanding of the world. Small groups of children regularly visit the sensory room to use the very good resources there. Over time they are learning that they can control events and their environment by hitting or pressing switches and pads.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for children' physical development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- The children's physical development is promoted very effectively by physical fitness lessons, swimming, riding for the disabled, and PACE sessions.
- The physiotherapist and occupational therapist make a very good contribution to those children who need their services.
- The current lack of an outside play area limits children's opportunities for informal play and exercise

### **Commentary**

54. Children make very good progress in this area of the curriculum; in spite of the restrictions imposed by the unsatisfactory outside play area. This is because the school places great emphasis on children's physical development and in meeting their individual needs. Most children have daily opportunities for one physical activity or another. Children take part in a range of physical activities to improve their control, posture, co-ordination and balance, such as horse riding or PACE. The hydrotherapy pool is used well to enable children to experience the pleasant effects of passive buoyancy, but also to follow varied and active movements as prescribed by the physiotherapist or occupational therapist. In all these physical activities, the quality of care displayed by the support staff, in lifting, handling and positioning children, is of the highest standard.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher and support staff make good use of simple resources.
- Thorough preparation beforehand ensures that learning is continuous.
- Music is well used in all areas of learning.

### Commentary

55. Children's achievements are very good in this area of the curriculum. In art, children were encouraged and supported to produce a summer collage from petals, flowers, herbs and leaves. They had the opportunity to feel and smell a selection of herbs, such as mint, chives and rosemary. With close support, repetitive actions, and unambiguous language they were helped to understand and complete the task. In cooking, in the food technology room, children enjoy feeling, smelling, and in some cases tasting, the ingredients of sugar and butter as, with hand-over-hand support, they mix the two together. Good lesson planning and preparation ensures that there is no break in learning. Music features in nearly all lessons; its skilful use promotes children's personal and social skills, as well as their communication and numeracy. Children enjoy singing or hearing jingles and songs, and they experiment and explore the sounds made by various percussion instruments. One lesson taken by the music specialist was full of interactive activities; for example, the teacher played the flute to each pupil in turn and encouraged them to respond by touching, banging or rubbing the drum in response.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

No modern foreign language was being taught at the time of the inspection. Photographic evidence shows that pupils are introduced to suitable experiences through theme days. For instance, they have been on simulated journeys to other European countries and North Africa.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils across the school achieve well in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- A system of using cards which feature symbols and text is used most effectively to develop pupils' communication skills.
- Staff are generally very well trained to teach communication skills.
- A particularly good range of literature is introduced to pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils are generally well supported in developing communication skills, although one pupil does not have the speech therapy provision indicated on the statement.

### Commentary

56. Teaching and learning are good; there is a good curriculum, and assessment is good, so pupils achieve well.

57. There are many opportunities for pupils to communicate throughout the school day. All staff have been well trained to use the PECS, and pupils themselves soon become proficient in using it. The least skilful pupils show that they wish to make a choice by selecting a picture card from a range presented to them. This is how pupils with autism indicate which biscuit they prefer at snack time, for instance. The most skilful users of PECS arrange a series of cards on a Velcro strip to make a complete sentence. For example, Post 16 students ask for their shopping in the community by using this method, and request a library book in the same way. Several pupils who speak indistinctly have chosen to use PECS to supplement their speech. Staff also make good use of music and objects to help pupils understand. At the start of each session, including break times, music is played that is common throughout the school. For instance, literacy sessions start with the playing of the Beatles' *Paperback Writer*. The signalling of changes in this way gives pupils confidence, and helps them to make the transition from one session to the next. For pupils with more complex needs, objects are used well to help pupils attach meaning to people, events or characters. This was evident in the early years class when they were preparing to go out to a local leisure centre. A model bus was passed round for pupils to explore with their hands. In a session for older pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, very well led by a learning support assistant, a plastic set of lips and ears was passed around to indicate that communication was the focus. Staff paid considerable attention to pupils' comfort, individual preferences and medical needs, and this helped to ensure that pupils were receptive. Pupils were well supported in making choices of songs, which were sung enthusiastically by staff as sensory resources were presented to the pupils. For example, a large hairy toy spider was used for *Incy, wincy spider*. The stimuli were most successful in drawing out a wide range of responses from pupils, including vocalisation, the lifting of a hand, playing on a drum, and making choices. During the lesson, detailed information on pupils' responses was recorded by a teacher, to be used in planning the next steps.

58. Teaching of reading skills is good. Pupils are introduced to a range of books from an early age, and their understanding is supported by symbols, presented alongside text. Letter sounds are carefully taught, and so the most competent pupils get better at reading words they do not immediately recognise. The most skilful readers use computer software to consolidate their skills; they identify stories that they particularly enjoy and can retell these, recalling the main events in the correct sequence. Although the upper school library is unsuitable, there is a good range of books in the school, including reading schemes, and books with props that help pupils to understand characters and events. The lower school library is a better resource. Older pupils and students make good use of the local library; those in Years 10 and 11 have borrowed books to research the history of Chesham, for example. Across the school, teachers devise plans to introduce pupils to a range of texts; the range is particularly good in Years 7 to 9. Here, pupils study five Shakespeare plays, and fiction, non-fiction and poetry. At Post 16, a few students choose to read as a leisure activity.

59. Teaching of writing skills is good, and pupils make good progress against their individual targets. Although the PECS system is used well to enable pupils to build up sentences by using cards with symbols on them, staff persevere with the development of pupils' handwriting skills. Older pupils and students learn to sign their names. Pupils increase their ability to write grammatically correct sentences. For instance, one moved from writing 'I played Sheba' to 'I played with Sheba' as a result of target setting. Software that enables pupils to write text with symbols is used very well. This makes it possible for pupils and students to write in a way that

is meaningful to them and to people in the community. Shopkeepers and librarians are familiar with the system, and pupils and students look business-like when they are out and about with their filofaxes full of PECS symbols. Pupils write for a satisfactory range of purposes; they contribute to a school magazine, and to their own records of achievement, for instance. At Post 16, students use symbols and text extensively to record their learning in lessons.

## **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

60. There are very good opportunities for pupils and students to practise and extend their communication skills in subjects other than English. Opportunities are seized at all times of the school day, including break times, lunchtimes and visits into the wider community. The opportunities for speaking and listening are particularly good. The use of symbols and text together helps pupils and students to read and write in other subjects. In general, pupils and students are well supported in developing their communication skills. The school is working in partnership with other professionals to develop a multi-disciplinary team of staff who will be able to assess pupils' needs for communication aids. The acquisition of a *Lightwriter* has enabled one student to produce a digital display of text, and improved her spelling skills. The scarce speech therapy resource is used effectively, although one pupil does not receive the provision identified as necessary on the statement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses:**

- The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of pupils and students enable teachers to get the best out of them.
- The very high quality of support from learning support staff enables all pupils and students to make good progress in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning engages pupils very effectively and challenges them well.
- The subject is not clearly co-ordinated, and this leads to a lack of direction.
- The subject has a very strong practical approach, which is particularly effective in developing independence at Post 16.
- Numeracy skills are not developed consistently across the curriculum, and this results in some lost opportunities to develop an understanding of mathematics.

### **Commentary**

61. Pupils and students achieve well in mathematics, because the subject is taught well in very practical ways. Higher attaining pupils and students learn to handle money, read both analogue and digital clocks, explore geometric shapes and forms, draw up tally lists, and count and calculate in simple numeric forms. Post 16 students put their learning to very good practical use when they travel and shop in the community, growing in confidence as they become more independent. Pupils with more complex and profound learning difficulties learn to make choices and investigate cause and effect through their sensory room sessions, although opportunities for them to explore number are limited.

62. The quality of teaching and of learning is good in all years. Teachers know pupils and students very well and are patient and skilful in drawing out the practical skills that are

important to them as they grow through the school. Very good opportunities are made available to the students, such as the tuck shop at break time, when they buy snacks with their own money and take turns to hand out goods and receive money under the supervision of a learning support assistant. The local community is a valued resource that enables the students to reinforce their learning and to gain an appropriate degree of independence. Good use is made of snack times when pupils make choices, using symbols or pictures or verbalising as appropriate. Learning support assistants are used very well in lessons, often taking a leading role in sensory room activities, where they use the resources expertly to teach pupils with more profound and complex learning difficulties to make choices and explore cause and effect. They evaluate and assess the progress of pupils very efficiently. The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of pupils and students create an enjoyable climate for learning.

63. 'P' levels are used well to monitor the progress of pupils and students and to make comparisons with similar schools nationally. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in teaching and learning, although ICT is still not used as extensively as it might be in mathematics.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. Overall, this is satisfactory. Mathematics has been successfully included in one area of the school's 'Skills for Life' curriculum, but provision for numeracy across other areas is inconsistent, leading to some lost opportunities to reinforce learning. Numeracy is well represented in the tasks that pupils with autism complete when in their 'work sessions' in booths. It is incorporated very well into visits out of school, when pupils get used to the idea of using money to purchase goods, and is built on at Post 16 when students gradually develop their money handling skills. All classrooms have clocks in them and pupils are encouraged to note the times when lessons start and end. Post 16 students become familiar with the digital times, as these are prominently displayed on their timetables. However, in a food studies lesson seen, there were no opportunities to learn from weighing and counting ingredients or setting oven temperatures. There were lost opportunities to reinforce number concepts in science. The lack of whole school co-ordination of the subject is responsible for the inconsistencies seen.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- There are no schemes of work or programmes of study specifically for science and no science co-ordinator. The subject is not monitored.
- There are no reports to parents on pupils' progress in science.
- Science is not assessed with the use of P scales in the same way as in English and mathematics.
- The subject lacks breadth throughout the school and also lacks balance in the classes for pupils with autism.
- Achievement in lessons is good; no judgement on overall achievement could be made because of a lack of assessment evidence.

## **Commentary**

65. It is not possible to report fully on science as a core National Curriculum subject. The subject does not have separate schemes of work or programmes of study. There is no member of staff to co-ordinate the subject. Any science mentioned in pupils' records is part of the curriculum area called 'Problem solving'.

66. Pupils are provided with some good learning experiences that are linked to the National Curriculum. In lessons observed, teaching and learning were at least good, and pupils' achievement was correspondingly good or better. However, over time, teachers do not plan a wide enough range of learning experiences, or assess pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding in a way that enables them to continue to make progress. In the classes for pupils with autism the curriculum is very narrow, and knowledge and understanding of science are neglected.

67. Five complete science lessons were seen for pupils from age five to fourteen. The teaching has a number of notable strengths. There is very good lesson planning, which incorporates pupils' individual targets. Staff have the ability to make science interesting and enjoyable. The management of behaviour is good, and there are very good relations between staff and pupils. Teachers have a good grasp of the science topics and are skilled in making them accessible to the pupils. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learnt how a small quantity of liquid can be made into large bubbles of all shapes and sizes and then suddenly burst and disappear in tiny droplets. This helped to develop the pupils' inquiry skills and also to make increasing use of their fine motor skills. In Years 7 to 9, pupils developed their knowledge of plant growth. They discussed how plants start as a seed or bulb, and were able to name the various parts of a plant. They followed up a classroom discussion with a visit to an adjacent horticultural unit which had an excellent range of plants in large greenhouses. The pupils chose and named their favourite plants. Their gains in knowledge were very good. In all lessons, teachers and support staff use practical approaches, and pupils make sound links between their class work and their life beyond the school. Pupils from 14 to 19 years follow ASDAN courses, which are closely related to their needs when they leave school. The courses have a limited scientific content. One task, recorded in students' folders, was to invent a cannon with an operating system. This illustrated chain reactions found in science and in daily life.

68. Teachers and support staff know individual pupils very well and have realistic expectations of what they can achieve. Wherever possible they draw pupils into discussion. The participation by pupils is very impressive. They enthusiastically involve themselves in activities. Use of praise helps them to gain in confidence, and to know how well they are progressing and how they can improve. Many join in self-evaluation sessions, which are a feature of most lessons.

69. The main reason for weaknesses in the science curriculum is the fact that leadership and management in the subject are lacking. Since the subject is not monitored in its own right, it is not possible to evaluate it and make any necessary improvements. The pupils' work in the subject is not assessed separately. Evaluation of their work takes place within the problem-solving area of the curriculum, but this does not identify scientific outcomes. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory and so was pupils' progress. Since then a specialist room has been provided, but the curriculum has narrowed and different groups of pupils are not equally well provided for. Improvement is unsatisfactory overall.

70. There is a good science room, with good resources. The science room was not in use during the inspection, as some alterations were being made so that it can accommodate information technology groups for leisure time activities. It is planned to have the science room available for science teaching at the beginning of the new academic year.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses:**

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to help pupils communicate and to make sense of the world.
- Teachers have completed relevant training, which has improved pupils' achievement.
- Pupils in Years 10 to 14 follow a unit of work that leads to appropriate accreditation
- The range of both hardware and software has been greatly improved since the previous inspection.
- The subject is well led and has made a good improvement since the last inspection.

71. Pupils have a variety of sources that help them find things out. They gather information, for example, from objects of reference, picture cards, photographs, books and electronic aids. They have good opportunities to use a range of switches and touch screens in both classrooms and the sensory room to access information and make a contribution to activities. They learn to communicate, and to make choices and express preferences, through the use of touch pads with recorded voice. Pupils gradually learn how they themselves can control the environment by the use of switches, for example changing the colours in the sensory room, or by turning a television on or off. They exchange and share information in a variety of forms, for example gesture, pictures, symbols and speech output devices. As pupils move through the school they become more competent in the use of CDs, videos, tape recorders, letters, telephones and email.

72. The teaching of ICT is good. The school has ensured that all staff have completed the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training. This has improved staff skills and confidence and contributed to raising pupils' achievements. In addition, the school ensures that training workshops are held when

new hardware is introduced, for example the *Soundbeam*. The school has become a regional assessment centre for the Communication Aids Project (CAP). This enables more pupils to have quality assessments of their needs and to benefit from the allocation of the most suitable devices to help them communicate.

73. Older pupils and students follow a unit of work leading to accreditation in the Towards Independence award. In this unit of work, they confirm the way ICT makes their lives easier and how it can provide lots of information. They identify the many places where ICT is used in school, for example the electronic locks on the outside of doors and the interactive whiteboards, which are used to play games, view DVDs, and increase the visibility of the computer screen. The pupils then type up their findings, using Writing with Symbols, and make good use of the digital camera to show evidence of their research. They can then more easily identify the use of ICT in the home, and in the community, for example through microwaves and pelican crossings. Students are familiar with the internet and, with support, use it to gather information for a topic they are currently studying.

74. The school has invested heavily in ICT resources and access devices. Teachers now use digital cameras most effectively in lessons. Digital technology enables pupils to record their work to store in their record of achievement file. Teachers are already using the recently purchased interactive whiteboards to good effect. A technician has been appointed to help with training and also to maintain hardware in good working order. Future plans include the setting up of a lunchtime ICT leisure club to improve further the pupils' competence and confidence.

75. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator is aware that because ICT is taught mainly across the Skills for Life curriculum, rather than as discrete lessons, there is a need for a system to more easily map and monitor each curriculum area. This will confirm that the contents of the ICT programme of study are fully covered and are being taught and assessed. The subject has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

76. There are several good examples of the use of ICT in other areas of learning. In PSHE, for example, pupils in Year 10 and 11 use the visual and audio elements of *Powerpoint* to learn the importance of family life. They produce a slide show of family photographs and pupils' favourite toys. In English, pupils explore the computer and type up words and sentences from *The Iron Man*. In doing so they familiarise themselves with the keyboard and some basic functions. The teacher in Post 16 used a whiteboard to show students the targets to be achieved when using a telephone; a recorded video of one of their members answering the phone was shown through the whiteboard. Another student used a *Lightwriter* aid, which allows her to type in her message which is then reproduced as synthetic speech.

### **HUMANITIES**

77. No history or geography lessons were seen during the inspection, as neither subject was timetabled. The school provides incidental opportunities in both subjects. These include visits to museums, where pupils have entered into simulations of Tudor times, and visits within the local area. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are carrying out a study of their locality as part of a course accredited by ASDAN. However, there is no overview which shows how pupils are intended to build on their knowledge, understanding and skills in either subject, and neither subject meets National Curriculum requirements. In each, the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The subject contributes well to pupils' understanding of different cultures; it is supplemented well by a whole school programme of celebrations of festivals as well as by visits.
- Teachers do not use nationally available measures to find out how well pupils are learning, or to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- The curriculum in Year 12 and beyond does not build well on what pupils have previously covered.

### Commentary

78. Teaching and learning in lessons are satisfactory, and so are pupils' achievements in lessons. As there are no ongoing records, or assessments showing the levels that pupils reach each year, it was not possible to make a judgement on achievement over time. Teachers plan a suitable range of learning experiences, based on the locally Agreed Syllabus, from Years 1 to 11. There are many opportunities for pupils to find out about the main world religions, and adequate opportunities for them to learn *from* religion. In a lesson in Year 8, pupils were learning about leaders in the school, as part of a topic on *Special people*. The teacher presented pupils with photographs of staff in school and the places where they work. Through a series of increasingly difficult tasks and questions, pupils were led to a realisation that leaders in school are more likely to work in an office than in a classroom. A pupil with suitable reading skills was challenged by the task of looking up the meaning of the word *leader*. In a lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11, at the end of a particularly hot day, pupils were introduced to relaxation techniques. At the start of the lesson, a few were able to say how they relax at home; one enjoys taking a bath, for instance. By the end of the session, all had experienced a period of quiet and calm, as they stretched out on the carpet and listened to recorded pan pipe music. Pupils with autism find out about religion through sensory approaches. They handle artefacts from the main religions, and use their sense of taste and of smell. However, no direct teaching could be seen in these classes. Pupils make choices about which tasks they will work on each day, although teachers use guided choice to ensure that pupils do work on religious education tasks. Students in Years 12 and beyond have worked with an adult to write a school prayer. Their curriculum, however, is narrow; it does not build well enough on what has gone before, because world religions cease to be a focus, and topics such as loss and bereavement make up the religious education module. Whilst these are relevant to adult life, they do not enable students to increase their knowledge of world religions in the context of daily life.

79. In Years 1 to 11, there are good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and customs, so the subject contributes well to pupils' cultural awareness. There are also visits to places of worship. Visitors come into school, and there is a programme of celebrations, such as Remembrance, Diwali and Eid, all of which enrich the subject well. Records of achievement show that older pupils walked to a local church to celebrate Harvest. They took food to put on the table and joined in a prayer of thanksgiving; most sang in the choir. Prior to their visit they had worked on a piece of writing describing 'what Harvest means to me'.

80. The lack of ongoing records and assessment is a weakness that prevents the school from monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, learning and the

curriculum. Nobody in the school has an overview of the subject, as each head of department is nominally responsible for religious education in his or her own department. This weakness needs to be rectified.

## TECHNOLOGY

81. Only one food technology lesson was seen during the inspection; teaching and learning were very good. Pupils successfully followed instructions to make a pizza. Those who were able to read symbols and text followed a recipe, while others relied more on oral instructions. Communication skills were developed well in the lesson, but there were missed opportunities to consolidate numeracy skills, such as weighing and measuring.

## LEISURE, SPORTS AND CREATIVE ARTS

82. The provision for this area of the curriculum is **good**; teaching and learning are good, and so is the curriculum provided.

83. This area of learning forms one of the six that make up the school's Skills for Life curriculum. It includes the subjects of music and art, and a programme of leisure activities that take place on one afternoon each week. Inspectors observed three leisure activities: drumming, athletics and planning a leavers' party.

84. The drumming activity, by a specialist drumming instructor, was very good and made for a most impressive learning experience with a therapeutic content. The musician had a wonderful rapport with the group, who eagerly began to play a range of instruments which included bells, whistles, shakers, tambourines and drums. Behaviour was well managed, and the most withdrawn pupil was chosen to set the tempo. This raised his self-esteem. With the teacher's signals and instructions, pupils developed an excellent rhythm and the ability to build to a crescendo, dim, and stop altogether.

85. The athletics activity held in the gym concentrated on improving pupils' movement skills. There was a mixture of ages, as well as ambulant and non-ambulant pupils. Pupils took part in a range of relay activities, for example the egg and spoon and running races, and throwing a foam javelin, but there was too little emphasis on improving the quality of the movements or techniques involved. Teaching was more concerned with pupils waiting their turn and participating fully. Pupils obviously enjoyed the activities, and there was a look of absolute delight on the faces of pupils in wheelchairs as staff pushed them as fast as it was safe to go. The session finished with 'parachute' activities, where pupils relaxed and cooled down.

86. During this time, Post 16 students were busy planning a leavers' party. They discussed whom to invite, the format for the day, and the importance of the next step into the adult world. They shared and agreed ideas, and these were typed up on the computer. This was a relevant, well planned activity.

87. It is not possible to make a judgement on provision or standards in art, as only one lesson was seen. However, in this lesson, teaching was very good and pupils achieved well. The very good features of the lesson included the teacher's expertise and her skills in the management of behaviour, thorough planning and preparation, and effective use of support staff. As a result, pupils made good progress in learning how to paint with silk paints; they began to understand the effect of salt on wet silk paint, and noticed what happens when two paints are blended. The displays across the school, but particularly in the senior school, are good; they reflect high standards in the subject. Pupils have the opportunity to experience a range of media and techniques and to work in the style of famous artists in the past and present. For instance, senior pupils' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Van Gogh's work was reinforced by a visit to the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam.



## Music

Provision for music is **very good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher is a specialist and has a good understanding of the needs of pupils. She brings quality and high expectations to the subject.
- A rich range of musical experiences is offered outside lessons.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

### Commentary

88. Lessons are well planned and pupils are immediately engaged by cheerful introductions. Very proficient use of voice, piano and auto harp brings lessons immediately to life. In a Year 4 group, for example, pupils used a variety of percussion instruments. They tapped out rhythms on a wooden block, bells, tambourines, chime bar and drums. The teacher changed the pace of the lesson very effectively with a samba CD to show pupils a different rhythm and pace. She gave very good encouragement and praised pupils' responses, however slight. In turn, the pupils showed sustained concentration, maintained eye contact with the teacher, and took part with obvious enjoyment. In this lesson, as in many others, support staff played a significant role, giving physical and moral support whilst encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible. In this school, music gives pupils motivation and a desire to communicate through the enjoyment of shared activities. The quality of relationships is excellent and greatly enhances learning.

89. Music makes a very good contribution to the personal development of pupils. Every lesson or activity ends or begins with a piece of music that signals the next activity. Lunchtimes, for example, are signalled with *Food Glorious Food*, and mornings begin with the *Hello* song. Over time, pupils begin to anticipate what comes next and in this way learn the routines of the day. Assemblies are also enriched by music as pupils enter or leave the hall. The school has a choir that meets and practises one lunchtime; it has performed at the Christmas service at a nearby church and sung in a local secondary school's concert. Senior pupils have made a trip to the Royal Festival Hall to see and hear first-hand classical music played by a full orchestra. There are other musical events that enrich the curriculum and give pupils opportunities to listen to a range of musical styles. These have included a visiting jazz, violin and piano artist, a concert which featured a flute and harpist, a trip to hear a woodwind ensemble, and a workshop on Taiko. *Soundbeam* equipment enables pupils to use new technology to make music. In addition, a number of pupils receive music therapy. Pupils are assessed for music therapy at the request of parents, staff or paramedical staff, and there are established criteria for judging priorities for this service. Music therapy sessions are most successful in calming pupils with challenging behaviour and encouraging them to respond with musical instruments.

90. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the last inspection, a dedicated music room has been built where the very good instruments and equipment can be safely stored and easily accessed. A suitable scheme is used to help plan lessons. Assessment arrangements are secure and include continuous records for each pupil and video evidence of pupils' progress. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the subject.

## PHYSICAL FITNESS

Provision for physical fitness is **good**. This forms one of the six areas of the Skills for Life curriculum; it includes physical education and specialist programmes to meet pupils' physical needs.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Lessons and other activities are well planned to address the needs of individual pupils.
- The range of activities for physical fitness is good.
- Physical fitness is well assessed and thoroughly recorded. Use of self-evaluation is good.
- Pupils make very good gains in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Specialist programmes such as Mobility Opportunities via Education (MOVE) and hydrotherapy are successfully incorporated into this area.
- Relationships are very good.

### Commentary

91. Achievement in physical fitness is good throughout the school. There is a wide range of learning and therapeutic experiences for pupils of every age group. These include many elements of the National Curriculum, swimming, hydrotherapy, MOVE, residential activities with outdoor pursuits components, Tai Chi, rock climbing, and others. A number of lessons and sessions were observed during the inspection, a large amount of photographic evidence was studied, and pupil records were scrutinised. It is clear from outcomes that teaching and learning are at least good overall and that the progress made by pupils matches this. Common features throughout all activities are very good relationships and the very significant growth in pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

92. Five sessions which were fully or partly devoted to physical fitness were observed during the inspection. A number of common strengths were noted in the work of teachers, therapists and support staff. These included a thorough knowledge of the needs of individual pupils, the ability to plan sessions rigorously to accommodate these needs, great skill in enabling pupils to produce their best, and the informed use of outcomes in evaluation of each session. Pupils' targets were continually reviewed. Pupils made impressive progress in each of the sessions observed and thoroughly enjoyed their success. They were encouraged to help one another and they did this well. A particularly good swimmer assisted the teacher with equipment and aids. In one lesson, a physically able pupil offered to teach better manual dexterity to a less able member of the group. The therapeutic outcomes of physical fitness sessions were easily identified. In one MOVE session, pupils made tremendous efforts to make movements against the restrictions of their physical impairments. All members of the class managed planned tasks such as rising from a seat, standing, pivoting and walking. They showed great pride and delight in their achievements. In an athletics session in the hall the pupils, including several in wheelchairs, showed similar delight at their success.

93. Physical fitness plays a very important part in the classes for pupils with autism and there is a session for this every day of the week. In one lesson, pupils went for a walk around roads in the locality and combined their physical activity with excellent lessons in road safety. Pupils were allowed to make considered choices about crossing roads safely. Most of the group have additional special educational needs; they responded well to the plans, which they helped to develop, and their attitudes and levels of co-operation were excellent.

94. The range of physical fitness activities extends across the whole school, and all pupils, irrespective of age, gender or needs, are making at least good progress in this curriculum area. They have the advantage of very good facilities within the school and a whole range of activities outside the school. There are good links with local leisure centres, with a local mainstream

secondary school, and with a range of 'providers' who come into the school to lead specialist activities, e.g. dance and Tai Chi. The programmes for physical fitness are very well thought out. Leadership and management of this area of work are good. All the work is well assessed, and the information collected is used well to plan the next steps in learning.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

The provision for PSHE and citizenship is **very good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses:**

- The very good curriculum permeates the life of the school and ensures that pupils and students receive a supportive and maturing education; it is particularly well organised at Post 16.
- The leadership and management of PSHE and citizenship have ensured high quality provision throughout the school.
- The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of pupils and students support their learning.
- The graduated test of 'Safety in the Community' is a valuable and innovative element that has the support of parents and the local community.

### **Commentary**

95. This is a subject that has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator has worked with staff, pupils and parents to develop a very good curriculum that forms the foundation of the school's 'Skills for Life' curriculum. She is a very good leader and manager and a very good role model for pupils and staff colleagues. The curriculum incorporates accredited ASDAN modules from Year 10 through to Year 14. Students and staff have developed modules such as the mobile phone module and the community youth club module. The curriculum is reinforced throughout the school day, including lunch and snack times, and in extra-curricular areas, such as residential visits, clubs and work placements. Citizenship forms an integral part of the overall programme, and it meets requirements.

96. Pupils and students achieve very well in the subject, showing a developing independence as they work their way through the school's curriculum programme. Their very positive attitudes and very good behaviour in lessons ensure that they make the best use of taught time. They apply themselves to their studies and are keen to take their place in the school and in local communities. The planned time for key workers at the beginning and end of each day is managed well by support staff, and the valuable contact between school and home enables teachers and support staff to reinforce and extend learning. Post 16 students achieve very well in understanding and managing their roles in the community. A few of the higher attaining students pass the school's own 'Safety in the Community' graduated tests, whereby they gain the privilege of unsupported access to the local and nearby communities. They travel, shop and enjoy leisure time independently, using the skills and knowledge acquired through the personal and social development programme.

97. The quality of teaching and of learning is very good. Teachers and support staff plan lessons very well from the very good curriculum. They have an excellent understanding of the particular needs of pupils and students and develop excellent relationships with them. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of good behaviour in and out of lessons.

They treat students as young adults, enabling them to discuss important issues such as drug misuse and sexual relationships, in an open and supportive classroom environment. The teachers invest trust in the students when they travel, shop and work in the community, and this raises their self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff strike a good balance between support and encouraging independence, so pupils and students learn to be self-reliant. Support staff play a crucial role in all aspects of the pupils' and students' personal and social development, and they are valued by teachers, pupils and parents for the role they play.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENT**

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

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

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