

INSPECTION REPORT

JAMES RENNIE SCHOOL

Kingstown, Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112468

Headteacher: Steven Bowditch

Lead inspector: Adrian Simm

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th November 2003

Inspection number: 258926

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:	3 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	140
School address:	California Road Kingstown Carlisle
Postcode:	CA3 0BX
Telephone number:	01228 607559
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms P E Byers
Date of previous inspection:	13 th – 17 th October 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

James Rennie School educates 85 boys and 55 girls who have severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. It has grown considerably in pupil-numbers since the last inspection but is now declining again during a period when the local education authority is re-organising provision for special educational needs. Around six per cent of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), which is higher than at the last inspection. Pupils come from a wide area, which for some can be up to 40 miles away. A growing number of pupils come from areas of low social deprivation. Forty per cent of pupils on roll claim free school meals, which is slightly higher than expected. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low in comparison to their chronological age. Nearly all pupils come from white British ethnic backgrounds. No pupil has provision for English as an additional language. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school received Artsmark status in 2003 and is working towards Arts College status. The school is involved in a very broad range of other initiatives that include

- improving staffs' ways of checking on and recording Reception age pupils' starting points through a Foundation stage profile;
- developing ICT in special schools;
- the Comenius project involving links with schools in Slovenia, Germany and Rumania
- a Young Enterprise Scheme where pupils run their own business;
- the appointment of an inclusion and assessment manager.

Many pupils have a broad range of opportunities to work alongside pupils from local primary and secondary schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21138	Adrian Simm	Lead inspector	Geography Physical education
9348	Mary Le Mage	Lay inspector	
10228	Sue Russam	Team inspector	English Special educational needs
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education and Citizenship
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	Mathematics History Religious education
7994	Pam Weston	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Art and design Design and technology Music

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	17
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3, 4 and Post 16	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. The headteacher is very clear about what is working well and what else needs to be done to move on even more. Good leadership moved the school on rapidly as it grew in pupil numbers since the last inspection. The school has a very strong community spirit, which shows in the very good relationships pupils have with staff. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Governors do a lot that is effective. Financial management is very good. Pupils' achieve well throughout the school because of effective teaching. The school offers good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school sets out very clearly important priorities for development. This means that everyone in the school is working well towards the same goals for improving pupils' achievement. The school receives and uses very well extra funding to support developments;
- Very good provision in the expressive arts helps build pupils' self-esteem and confidence;
- Very good provision by the school's communication team ensures that those pupils in need of their support do very well;
- The school has impressive links with its local and wider community. These contribute significantly to pupils' preparation for life after they leave school;
- Staff are not quite as clear as they might be on the next really important step each pupil needs to move them on even faster in their learning. As a result, pupils' priority learning needs are not set out or checked on sufficiently in lessons nor the overall effectiveness of provision checked on throughout the school;
- The school's system of non-contact time for teachers to prepare for lessons is insufficiently monitored and evaluated.

Much more is expected of schools now. Staff have risen to the challenge very well. Teaching and learning has improved significantly because of the very good staff development offered by the school. The school building and grounds have improved significantly, helped by very effective fundraising activities within the local community. Staff recognise that further development is necessary to improve provision for those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Ways of checking on how well pupils are doing in their work has continued to develop well although the school's use of individual education plans (IEPs) could be more effective. The school's involvement in a range of initiatives is very impressive, particularly the impact they are having in improving pupils' achievement, personal development and self-esteem. The school has improved very well since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

All pupils, regardless of their differing special educational needs, achieve well in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Pupils achieve very well in areas of personal development and expressive arts.

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

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception year. Pupils develop good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in the broad range of subjects of the curriculum. Achievement in other subjects was not part of the inspection focus.

Pupils' attitudes to work and each other are **very good**. Their behaviour is **good** and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Attendance is **good** in comparison with similar schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good** for all pupils regardless of age or special educational needs.

Teaching is good because staff have very good knowledge of pupils' day-to-day needs. Pupils are expected and encouraged to join in and as a result, they do well. Staff are developing the sophistication of ways of finding out and checking on just how well the pupils are achieving. **Pupils learn well**. Good teamwork between teachers and support staff means that pupils frequently benefit well from individual or very small group support. However, pupils with very specific learning or behaviour needs could have these even more effectively provided for. Support staff are not yet used as fully as they might be in lessons to check on how well pupils are progressing or working out what they are finding difficult in relation to their priority needs. Individual education plans could still be more effective in targeting the next precise step for pupils with different priority needs. Pupils experience a good breadth of learning opportunities within a well-designed curriculum. This includes good links with other schools and very effective links with the community. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 benefit very well from a vocational curriculum through which they pass different units of work accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Businesses in the local community support the school very well financially and with the pupils' enterprise initiative of running a business. Links with parents are good and helped by outstanding Records of Achievement, which give parents a very comprehensive picture of their child's progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Governance is **good**. The school challenges itself to improve continuously. There are very clear plans to support this. The headteacher and senior managers use staff's strengths to build effective teams. All staff focus relentlessly on improving the quality of education for the pupils, which is already good. The governing body is very effective in the contribution they make in shaping the vision and improvement of the school. They support the school well in turning policy into practice. However, the school does not monitor or evaluate the use or cost of teachers' planning time during the school day when they are not in classes. Much of this time is spent at home. Systems are insufficiently in place to work out the effectiveness of pupils' IEPs.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are well pleased with the school. Those pupils able to express an opinion are very happy attending the school. Parents are particularly pleased with how well the school is led and managed, the good quality teaching and how well pupils are encouraged to become mature and independent.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure pupils' IEPs are used to plan more specifically for their priority learning needs and that the system is effectively monitored and evaluated;
- Ensure the school is very clear about the value it gets from its current system of non-contact time for teachers' planning and the carrying out of other responsibilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Boys and girls, regardless of their differing special educational needs achieve **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in their personal development;
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who opt to take part in the expressive arts course do very well;
- Overall, there is a strong upward trend in achievement since the last inspection;
- The school takes part in a very broad range of initiatives that benefit pupils' achievement significantly;
- Very good opportunities have been maintained for pupils in Years 10 to 13 to benefit from showing how well they can do on nationally recognised courses.

Commentary

1. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 benefit very well from courses upon which they show how well they do on nationally recognised levels of work. This has been a strong feature of provision since before the last inspection. Those working on the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses 'Towards Independence' have achieved successes in a broad range of units of work. In 2002, these covered areas such as sport, a residential challenge, photography, meal preparation, ICT and practical workshops. Four pupils gained passes in the performing arts. Also, in the Assessment and Qualification Association units (AQA), pupils achieved passes in courses such as French, hygiene and shopping. Their achievement was good. In 2003, whilst the number of pupils in Years 12 and 13 was much smaller, far more pupils gained accreditation in the expressive arts, which is developing very strongly within the school.
2. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who opt to take part in the expressive arts course benefit considerably from the provision. They achieve very well. Boys and girls work very hard in their dance and drama workshops and produce very good results. The starting ability of lower attainers in this work points to pupils unable or unsure how to respond in movement and expression to their role within a story line. Higher attaining pupils are able already to make their opinion known and respond to others in an appropriate way. During the inspection, lower attainers worked hard on remembering quite difficult sound sequences expected of them whilst higher attainers expressed and communicated ideas and feelings very well. Many pupils are very clear how their performance can be improved and also offer very good advice to their fellow performers. Criticism is taken very well in the spirit that it is offered. The work has greater 'spin-offs' than just in the expressive arts lessons. Staff have seen pupils grow in self-confidence in many areas of school life. During the inspection, without direction, some pupils took part spontaneously in role-play during the telling of the story of Erasmus as part of a Comenius project lesson.
3. Since the last inspection, pupils' achievement has improved well in the Foundation Stage, mathematics, ICT and religious education. Achievement in these subjects and areas is now good whereas previously it was satisfactory. Good achievement has been maintained in literacy and science. All pupils achieve very well in their personal development, which is significantly further on than at the last inspection. Very good provision by the school's communication team ensures that those pupils in need of their support do very well. Many pupils rely on signing and the use of symbols as their main avenue of communication. The team of communication staff teaches this aspect of the curriculum very well.
4. Pupils make progress in very small steps. The school's ways of setting appropriate but challenging targets for pupils to achieve are becoming more and more precise. Also, the school plots pupils' progress against nationally recognised levels in a range of areas in the core subjects taught. This is monitored, analysed and discussed by staff to ensure good teaching and

learning. Data from the introduction of this system around three years ago is showing pupils sampled for this exercise as making good progress in elements of literacy and numeracy. The school's analysis of writing shows correctly that, whilst achievement is still good, a review of how pupils are taught would further benefit the improvement in standards. The school's systems for this have changed and improved recently in an effort to ensure data is as accurate as possible. The school is not yet able to compare its standards against similar schools but is working well towards this end.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are **very good** and their behaviour is **good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. As a result, pupils' personal development is **very good**. Pupils' attendance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships contribute to very positive attitudes and good behaviour;
- There is a clear structure for managing challenging behaviour;
- Pupils respond to the very good opportunities for personal development.

Commentary

5. Pupils and students say that they enjoy coming to school. Parents reinforce this view. Those pupils and students, who do not have language, indicate with bodily movements and very positive responses, that school is a good experience for them. The school provides a supportive, happy environment combined with interesting things for pupils and students to do. This results in pupils and students wanting to attend. Underlying this enthusiasm is the high quality of personal relationships that pupils and students form with the staff. Teachers and support staff take great care to understand the physical and emotional needs of their pupils. As a result, pupils are comfortable and rarely distressed. Because staff learn quickly how to communicate with pupils and manage any behaviour that threatens to disrupt the learning of others, a noticeable bond develops between the adults and the pupils and students in their charge. Most parents play their full part in ensuring pupils' regular attendance, which is good as shown in the table below.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.0	School data :	0.9
National data:	9.1	National data:	0.6

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

On occasions some pupils and students are late into school. There are usually good reasons for this. The main reason is that a good number of pupils and students live between 30 and 40 miles away. Winter roads and road works can very easily delay their travel arrangements. When this happens, the delayed arrival causes minimal disruption to others.

6. During lessons and at break and lunchtimes pupils are well behaved and socialise very well. Higher attaining pupils help those who are less able. Regardless of their ethnic background, all pupils are comfortable and at ease with school life. Most pupils do not discern racial differences and make no reference to these. There is general enthusiasm for celebrations deriving from a range of cultures such as Divali. Although the school has a very good range of strategies to help pupils who have difficulty behaving well, some pupils were excluded in the last school year as shown in the table below. The exclusions were given for appropriate reasons. All pupils benefit

from a positive atmosphere of security and care, enabling them to make very good progress and achieve very well in their social and personal development.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	131	4	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

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

7. The broad and rich curriculum, including for example expressive arts in Years 10 and 11 and activities such as the school youth club, make a consistent and very positive contribution to the pupils' personal development. Social development of pupils and students is a high priority throughout the school. As a result of this pupils and students develop a clear awareness of what is acceptable behaviour and try their best to conform to high standards set by all adults in the school. An example of this was when a Year 4 pupil, during a shopping trip, spontaneously offered to assist the lady in front of him at the cash desk. In a Year 5 class the pupils working hard to make a battery-operated toy were willing to help those who found manipulating thin wires difficult. Older more verbal pupils and students greet visitors politely and introduce themselves. Provision for spiritual education is very good. There are good opportunities within religious education lessons for all pupils regardless of their special educational needs. In their work on world faiths they learn about and experience the customs and traditions that feature in religion and cultures. They have good opportunities to study for example, cookery and textiles, from a range of other countries. This together with their very strong and creative response in arts lessons and the empathy they show to the needs of others, are examples of their very strong spirituality. Overall pupils' and students' personal development has improved very well since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided for the pupils is **good educationally** and **very good** socially. Because of this, pupils learn **well** in lessons and through other supervised time during the rest of the school day.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** with all year groups and with pupils with different special educational needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Support for pupils by the members of the communication team is very good;

- Teaching of the expressive arts offers pupils very good opportunities to improve their skills in dance and drama as well as significant development in self-confidence and personal development;
- Teaching and learning in physical education and hydrotherapy is very effective;
- Teachers have very high expectations for standards of pupils' behaviour;
- Teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection;
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils means that most staff are very clear about pupils' general special educational needs and what they need to improve. On rare occasions, teaching is unsatisfactory when lessons are not planned sufficiently to let pupils work at their own levels;
- Targets in IEPs are not always linked precisely enough to pupils' specific learning needs.

Commentary

8. A very high majority of teaching and learning is good or better. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. The improvement has been in the amount of both good and very good lessons taught. One example of this is teaching and learning in physical education including hydrotherapy which has strengthened and is now very good. The new hydrotherapy pool, which is very well resourced is providing many pupils with opportunities to develop movement skills, which they would otherwise not achieve as readily. The overall teaching and learning profile is shown in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 61 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1(2%)	22(36%)	30 (49)%	5 (8%)	3 (5%)		

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.

9. Teachers and support staff work closely together. They have very good relationships with the pupils and a good working knowledge of their individual special educational needs. This helps staff plan lessons that are frequently pitched at the right level and as a result, pupils learn well. Teaching and learning has improved well and is now good in numeracy and ICT and very good in physical education, expressive arts and PSHE. Teaching and learning have remained at a good level in literacy, science and religious education. One main development is that good teaching and learning predominate across the school whereas previously, it differed between subjects and year-groups. Staff strive hard to work out what pupils already know, understand and do. One difference between good and very good teaching is that in the best lessons, teachers are very clear about pupils' next steps of development including those particular to their specific special educational needs. This works for all pupils regardless of age, complexity of learning difficulty and language level. Whilst signing and symbols are often used well for those who need it, there is some inconsistency in use. Together with good subject knowledge, all of this ensures that teachers know realistically where they want the pupils to get to by the end of each lesson or unit of work. Consequently, pupils are as clear as they can be about what is expected of them. The difficulty of work is carefully matched to their needs. As a result they thrive on the challenge and put everything into their learning.
10. Staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The school has systems in place to support this. The staff's good use of ways of intervening and re-focusing pupils' attention exemplifies this when difficulties arise. They are well prepared for different levels of response. These include when necessary, quickly and quietly removing pupils to another classroom in the event of diffusing a situation, which may disrupt other pupils' learning. These very high expectations show clearly when pupils with a broad range of learning needs work well together, concentrate hard and build their learning during sessions that can last a long time. For example,

pupils thrive on the individual, small group and class practices in expressive arts lessons that at times extend to around two hours. Whilst these lessons last a long time, changes in the focus of the lessons happen at just the right time to maintain concentration and build on what has gone before. Also, in very good lessons in physical education, hydrotherapy and sensory sessions with pupils with more profound learning difficulties in the Rainbow Room, levels of pupils' concentration are remarkable. In the very few lessons, which were unsatisfactory during the inspection, they were not pitched at the right level for pupils to learn sufficiently. On these occasions, staff who were reasonably new to the class or were working part-time did not fully appreciate pupils' levels of understanding and made some of the tasks too hard.

11. A strength of the school is the work put into improving pupils' communication. For some pupils this is done through normal literacy lessons and by including the teaching and learning of literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For those pupils who in the past used just gesture or sound and gesture to show what they wanted, building a range of early vocabulary skills or expressing themselves independently shows good achievement. Members of the school's communication team add significantly to the school's overall strengths. Individual communication plans are of very high quality. Staff are very clear what they want each pupil to get out of the session. Meticulous records of pupils' learning or specific difficulties with learning contribute to staffs' planning for pupils' next stimulating learning sessions. In comparison, the school recognises that targets in pupils' IEPs are not consistently precise enough or measurable. Also, they are insufficiently linked to pupils' priority learning needs as distinct from general subject levels. Within teaching situations, support staff are part of the strong team. However, they are not systematically involved in recording pupils to situations, which would add an extra dimension to teachers' understanding of the success of their lessons.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. It provides a wide range of rich and relevant activities, which meet the interests, aptitude and particular needs of all pupils and enables them to achieve well. It provides very good opportunities for enrichment through support for learning outside of the school day. The very good accommodation, along with good staffing and resources allows the curriculum to be taught effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection;
- The 14 –19 curriculum is very good. It fully meets the priority needs of school leavers and prepares them very well for life after school;
- Pupils and students' personal development is promoted very well through a wide range of opportunities during and outside the school day;
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good;
- Within the overall very good accommodation are some shortcomings that limit pupils' comfort and progress.

Commentary

12. The previous inspection report was quite critical of several aspects of the curriculum. In particular the low amount of taught time for mathematics, the lack of religious education for students in Years 12 and 13, deficiencies in how the school checked on pupils' progress in part through pupils' IEPs and several issues concerning accommodation and resources. All of these shortcomings have been fully addressed with the exception of those concerning IEPs. These have developed but are still not as useful as they could be in supporting teaching and learning. Provision for inclusion is good. Every class in lower school has a mainstream partner school and pupils visit there once a week. Older pupils and students link with secondary schools and the local day centre and take part in community projects. Good schemes of work guide teachers' planning, and there is a consistent approach to teaching the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Accommodation has been transformed with a huge conversion programme.

Specialist, well-equipped rooms now support a secondary curriculum very well. Resources have also improved and allow the curriculum to be taught effectively. As a result of these improvements, pupils and students achieve well and make good progress in all subjects and courses inspected in detail. Important factors in the good improvements and coherence of the curriculum have been the role of the deputy head in overseeing and auditing developments and the enhanced role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work.

13. The well-developed curriculum for pupils and students aged 14 to 19 years prepares them very effectively for the demands of life after school. The key skills of PSHE, communication, application of number and information technology, are taught well. There is good provision for work related learning, life and leisure skills. Careers education and guidance, work experience, college links and the experience of running their own businesses through Team Enterprise promote students' personal, moral and social skills very well. Dance, drama and education through good links with the community improve pupils' and students' posture, confidence and self-image.
14. Pupils' personal development is promoted very well through a range of activities that include lunchtime clubs for computers, choir, football, gardening and separate evening youth clubs for pupils under and over 11. In addition, pupils go on residential trips, some abroad in connection with the 'Comenius' project and others on outdoor adventure activities. These experiences add richness and choice to the curriculum and make a consistent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
15. Provision for PSHE is very good and is central to the whole curriculum. It is built into all lessons in Years 1 to 6 and is guided by pupils' individual targets. They include pertinent activities such as feeding, behaviour and self-help skills. Pupils in Years 7 to 13 follow a newly adopted and well-taught programme, which includes sex and relationship education, attention to alcohol and drug misuse and elements of citizenship. Aspects of PSHE are reinforced throughout the day, at meal times, playtimes, on visits into the community and through links with other subjects, for example, careers and religious education.
16. The school accommodation is very good overall. However, the social area for the number of Post 16 students is small, the upper school ICT suite is small and poorly ventilated, pupils arriving in wet weather lack cover when alighting from school transport and some corridors are narrow for pupils in wheelchairs. The school now admits pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The specific provision for these pupils is recognised by the school as an important area for development.

Care, guidance and support

The school meets a **very high** standard in the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It provides **good** support, advice and guidance for its pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The school is **very good** at seeking the views of pupils and acting on them through the work of the school council.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high quality and extensive range of care and welfare initiatives in the school supports pupils' learning very well;
- Throughout the school pupils receive good advice to help them make progress in their education and personal development;
- Through the school council all pupils in the upper school have been involved in the development of the school over a number of years.

Commentary

17. The school has an extensive range of initiatives to ensure pupils gain maximum benefit from the educational opportunities offered by the school. The Communications team is an initiative to improve pupils' ability to communicate with adults and their peers via a variety of means, each tailored to the specific needs of the individual pupil. In some cases this may be via speech therapy, use of technological aids or via the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). The development of these approaches benefits the pupils involved by improving their access to the whole curriculum. Another major care initiative in the school is the full-time health care manager. This initiative ensures that a health professional is available to administer medication, advise teachers on health matters or pupils comfort and accompany pupils should they need to go straight from school to see a doctor. It also ensures that parents are informed at the earliest opportunity of any additional health needs their children might have. As a result, this enables parents to contact the necessary professionals at the earliest opportunity. Because the health needs of pupils are overseen so rigorously, minor ailments are spotted early and pupils' posture and comfort are given high priority. This ensures that pupils attend school as much as possible. Also, because pupils are as physically comfortable as possible, they focus more on their learning. Three staff have significant training in child protection procedures, which is very good. As yet, lunchtime staff have not received any formal child protection awareness information or training.
18. Pupils are very well known by staff especially those who work with them on a regular basis. Adults have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of the pupils, coupled with a similar knowledge of how to best support those needs. This results in the good support and guidance pupils receive throughout the school day and enables them to achieve well. The generally good use of the home-school diary of each pupil is an aid to inform parents and carers of the pupil's time at school and any strategies employed to overcome difficulties. It also ensures school is kept informed, on a regular basis, of how pupils' are coping at home. Throughout the school pupils have very good relationships with adults.
19. The school has a vibrant school council made up of a representative from every class in the upper school. They meet every two weeks and discuss all aspects of the life of their school. Through the school council every pupil in the upper school has a voice in the development of the school. Amongst a wide range of achievements, they have been responsible for the installation of the water fountain, a hot-drinks machine, speed bumps for traffic on site and improving the design of water taps. In addition, they are very active in deciding on the nature of their fund-raising activities and where the money should be spent. They are currently looking at ways to raise money for a school in Romania with which the school has close links through the Comenius project. The school council is also involved in interviewing potentially new staff and considers the strategic development plan for the school on an annual basis. All the pupils spoken to have a very strong sense that this is really 'their' school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and other schools and colleges. It has **very good** links with the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Records of Achievement are very well developed across the school;
- The school has good inclusion links with a number of schools;
- The school has very good links with the local community, which work to mutual benefit.

Commentary

20. Throughout the school Records of Achievement are very well developed. They contain a comprehensive record of each pupil's achievement from when they start in school. They are very well organised into subject sections, contain high quality photographic records of what the pupils can do and many examples of the pupil's recorded work. Detailed notes accompany

everything in these records explaining the significance of the evidence. The Record of Achievement forms an outstanding account of the pupil's progress at school and contains the statutory information, which the school has to report annually to parents.

21. The school has links with 18 local schools and colleges, which enable pupils to spend some time each week in a main stream setting. For the younger pupils in the school, the main benefits are in the area of social development, although they do take part in art and design, music and design and technology activities with the pupils from mainstream schools. These links are organised effectively by the school's inclusion manager. For the older pupils, they benefit academically from being able to follow courses of study in car maintenance, ICT, woodwork, music and art and design, in addition to the social development of being part of a large secondary school or college.
22. The school has very good links with the local community. Extensive use is made of the locality to extend and enrich the curriculum for pupils of all ages. The school also supports the community well by offering school premises for summer play-schemes and weekend clubs. The local business community is very supportive of the school, making significant donations of materials, expertise and money to develop the building and add to teaching resources. One local business makes an excellent contribution to the development of the oldest pupils in the school, by acting as advisors to the profitable business being run by these pupils. To be an observer at their board meeting was a privilege. The way in which they approached the pricing of their goods, eagerly tackling mathematical calculations, which may well have daunted them in the atmosphere of a lesson was amazing. In addition to personal development, pupils benefit significantly in their academic learning from this experience.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **good**. Very good procedures and systems are in place to ensure that the school is **very well** managed. The governors' input into the life of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school monitors its work very carefully and thoroughly. The school's strategic development plan is very focused and aims to bring about an energetic pace to change;
- The headteacher and senior staff provide very good role models for staff and pupils and ensure staff work very effectively as a team;
- The management team is very committed to providing an inclusive education for all pupils;
- The governing body are very effective in the contribution they make to shaping the vision and direction of the school. The school's finances are very effectively managed;
- Staff non-contact time is not evaluated for its effectiveness or in terms of value for money.

Commentary

23. The headteacher's plans for improvement, his high aspirations and commitment to inclusion for all pupils are clearly evident in all aspects of school life. The headteacher's clear vision for the development of the school is based on good evaluations of the current and projected needs of the pupils. Over time the school has been realistic in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. Very thorough systems for evaluating the school's work enable strengths and successes to be shared and celebrated and weaknesses to be addressed. Since the time of the last inspection the pace of change has been incisive and effective. The very good team spirit amongst the staff and their shared commitment to improvement have been fundamental to successfully bringing about such significant changes. Potential barriers to school improvement perceived by the school such as uncertainty regarding the future, falling roles or lack of specialist space for ASD pupils are part of the school's strategic planning and are being addressed effectively.

24. The headteacher is supported very well by the deputy headteacher. She is very influential through leading by example and demonstrating personal high standards of classroom practice. Her approach to management complements that of the headteacher very well. Phase leaders and subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and well motivated and, in the main, manage their responsibilities well. Staff with management responsibilities devise action plans which influence the shape of the school development plan. This is very effective in maintaining the profile of the ever-changing needs within the school. More recently staff have started to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The school is aware this needs further development in order to more clearly assess and track the progress that pupils are making. The headteacher has carried out lesson observations so that the quality of classroom practice can be evaluated and additional guidance is given to any colleagues who need advice.
25. The governing body is kept very well informed and has a good knowledge and understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are involved well in strategic planning, formulating policies and contributing to the school development plan. They support staff well through regular monitoring visits and are very influential in shaping the direction of the school. Individually, governors are knowledgeable about their role and responsibilities. Some have initiated extensive and wide-ranging community links, which are of significant benefit to the school. One governor has been very active in improving the school's accommodation. The governing body in its work meets all statutory requirements.
26. The school makes very good use of its available finances. Prudent housekeeping has enabled the school to fund significant developments over recent years. The governing body has good procedures in place to measure the cost-effectiveness of most major spending decisions. An exception to this is the amount of preparation time teachers spend during the school day. It is commendable to provide teachers with time out of class to prepare for their lessons. Much of this time is spent elsewhere other than in school. Insufficient thought has been given to the amount of time given to staff and how this balances out with their responsibilities in addition to those as a class teacher. No evaluation has been made as to whether for some staff it is excessive whilst for others it is inadequate. There are no measures in place to evaluate the financial implications of this arrangement. Nevertheless, the contribution to financial management by the bursar is very good. The school seeks well to ensure that the services it receives are provided at best value. Additional funding is very well used to support a range of educational priorities.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,793,961	Balance from previous year	61,126
Total expenditure	1,747,640	Balance carried forward to the next	107,447
Expenditure per pupil	12,394		

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

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects that reflect the standards achieved by pupils.

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses drawn from across the areas of learning

- Children are beginning to understand the routines for the day. Structured opportunities are provided for children to make choices, take turns and to learn to work together.
- Lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of the children
- The teacher plans a range of relevant physical activities.
- Children have access to very good facilities and specific resources.
- Children have opportunities to explore a good range of materials and develop their sensory and tactile skills.
- There is very good care and support for all children at all times. Children are secure and constantly supported by staff who strive to extend their learning experience.
- Children achieve well.

Commentary

27. There are too few children in the Foundation Stage and insufficient evidence to make a separate judgement in each area of learning. Provision is effective because, for example

- At the start of the morning and afternoon session in **personal and emotional development**, children take part in a short 'welcoming' period. They wait patiently while each child is welcomed in turn. There is good use of signing and the children are becoming familiar with this. They are beginning to respond to the familiar routines of the class. Children co-operate well with staff and at snack time some sign 'please' and make choices. One child serves the others with fruit and biscuits.
- In **communication language and literacy** few children are capable of verbal communication. Most verbalise sound but not words. Good use is made of picture symbols linked to pupils making choices from, for example biscuits, fruit and drink. All adults consistently reinforce the pupils' actions by using the same phrases for example, 'good sitting' and 'good pointing'. Nursery rhymes and songs are often used well during one to one activities. A good example of this is when children play in the softball playroom. Staff sing 'row, row, row your boat' as they gently move with children to the tune. Similarly opportunities are taken to familiarise children with **mathematical language**. Staff often recite numbers during physical activities.
- There are opportunities for the children to develop their **knowledge and understanding of the world** as they develop their natural curiosity building with bricks and playing with water and various small toys. When making icing for their biscuits they show an interest in what they see, hear, touch and taste. All make some attempt to mix the ingredients together to form the icing.
- Outside break times are structured so that pupils' activities are planned to achieve their targets in **physical development**, for example gaining confidence in climbing steps or use of the slide and climbing apparatus. Staff focus on developing the children's ability to take turns and move with control and co-ordination. Less confident children are given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the environment.
- In **creative development** the children explore colour. They explore various materials giving the staff the opportunity to stress, for example, the colour 'yellow'. With support some pupils produce their own finger painting whilst others manage to firmly grip the paintbrush and make firm strokes.

28. Teaching and learning are good overall because of the staff's knowledge and understanding of the children. The national expectations of what pupils will work towards in the Reception class are now an effective basis for planning lessons. Time is used very effectively to address specific needs of all children including those on the autistic spectrum. There are very good behaviour management techniques in place, which children are learning to respond to. The communication team supports staff and children very well. Checking how children are progressing happens continuously and shows that the children's achievement over time is good. The Foundation Stage has developed well since the last inspection as a result of good leadership and management.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3, 4 and Post 16 ENGLISH

Twelve lessons were observed covering all key stages.

Provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well from their different starting points;
- Pupils achieve well;
- In Years 7 to 11, whilst literacy skills are good, they could be promoted more in other subjects.
- Teaching and learning seen during the inspection were good;
- The use of signing is patchy and of an inconsistent standard;
- The contribution made by the communication team is very good;
- The full-time subject co-ordinator manages the subject very well and is well supported by her part-time colleague;
- There have been good improvements in provision since the last inspection.

Commentary

29. The school has made good progress in developing its provision for English since the previous inspection. All pupils achieve well including those with additional special educational needs. The school has not yet built up enough data, including from more specific IEPs, to make a judgement about any differences in achievement particular to those pupils with additional special education needs. Pupils' learning in lessons can be accounted for by the good support they receive from their teachers, support staff and classmates, which enables them to participate fully in activities.
30. English, literacy and communication are a constant focus for development. The school quite rightly sees these aspects of the pupils' education as the key to all other learning. Many pupils rely on signing and the use of symbols as their main avenue of communication. The team of communication staff teaches this aspect of the curriculum very well. However, it is not reinforced consistently in other lessons or activities within the school day. At times, adults fail to sign whilst communicating with pupils. Throughout the school higher attaining pupils engage well in a range of situations, which demand that they select and adopt formal or informal styles of speaking. Opportunities to participate in role-play, discussion and drama are particularly beneficial in promoting their confidence and self-esteem.
31. Staff in Years 1 to 6 are especially effective in developing pupils' pre-reading and early reading skills. Most have made effective adaptations to the National Literacy Strategy, and these enable pupils to access a wider range of pictures and stories. Pupils show an increasing awareness of familiar signs, symbols and texts. Higher attaining pupils read sequences of words, which form simple sentences. They recognise letters of the alphabet in both upper and lower case script together with some basic punctuation. The National Literacy Strategy has still to become more

effective in Years 7 to 9. Consequently teaching and learning are not as structured and systematic. Although the pupils' rate of learning is good, it is not as pronounced as in the earlier year groups. In Years 10 and 11 pupils have acquired basic skills which enable them to access books and information from the library. They extract a good level of information when material is read to them, but find reading for meaning and pleasure more challenging.

32. Throughout the school pupils' achievement in writing is relatively weaker than in other areas of the subject. This is more pronounced in Years 7 to 11. In part this is because many pupils have physical difficulties which affect their ability to hold and use pens or pencils. However, for others their slower progress is because teachers do not expect pupils to work hard enough, or too little thought is given to how best pupils can record their work using alternative methods such as ICT. The youngest pupils learn to copy and over-write letters, while lower attaining pupils explore early writing skills through sensory activities. As pupils move through the school few develop a writing style which goes beyond printing. The quality and range of pupils' written work does not accurately reflect their ability to be imaginative and inventive when asked to create stories and poems.
33. Teaching and learning are good. It is slightly stronger overall with pupils in Years 1 to 6 than in Years 7 to 11. Where teaching is strong it is characterised by good subject knowledge and understanding, effective use of the appropriately modified National Literacy Strategy, good preparation and planning for lessons and high levels of enthusiasm. Teachers are effective in ensuring that pupils' individual needs are provided for. Pupils know what is expected of them and are eager to demonstrate their new learning. Older and more able pupils work well independently. They also have good skills in working well with other adults in small groups and pairs. Throughout the school there is scope for improving the use made of support staff in checking on how well pupils are progressing.
34. The subject co-ordinator has a very good knowledge and understanding of how English is taught in the lower school. The upper school co-ordinator is aware of where developments are required in order to improve teaching and learning. Some formal lesson observations have been used to support and improve the teaching of literacy and more are planned.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

35. Many teachers are effective in the way in which they promote pupils' communication, language and literacy skills in other subjects. However, the use made of signing and symbols is inconsistent in spite of very good guidance provided by the communication team.

MATHEMATICS

Ten lessons were observed covering all key stages.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision has improved well since the last inspection;
- The leadership and management of mathematics are good;
- Overall, teaching and learning is good and as a result pupils achieve well and make good progress;
- National strategies are used well as a guide to good teaching;
- The way staff check on the rate of pupils' progress needs further development;
- During the week of the inspection ICT was underused in support of this subject;
- Classroom assistants are not used by teachers as effectively as they might be at the beginning and end of lessons.

Commentary

35. There have been good improvements in mathematics since the last inspection. Issues concerning time allocation, the scheme of work and short-term planning, have all been fully addressed. Pupils now acquire knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. This is as a result of good leadership from the two subject co-ordinators who monitor and evaluate teachers' planning and pupils' work. They have provided a clear action plan for moving the subject forward. This includes setting pupils in the upper school so that they receive a curriculum that best meets their needs. The principles of good teaching from the National Numeracy Strategies, allied to training with other special schools has improved teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics. There is a need now to share the very good practice that exists and ensure consistent high quality teaching across the school.
36. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In the very best lessons, learning objectives are shared with the class so pupils know what to expect. The starts of lessons are fun with quick-fire sums to work out mentally. They encourage pupils to listen and attend. For example, standing and sitting on odd or even numbers, spotting the missing number in a spoken series of numbers or identifying the number of beats of a drum. Good questioning is made suitable for every pupil's needs by adjusting the level of difficulty and time to reply. This helps pupils to fully understand what is expected and ensures everyone is included. The management of behaviour, including the idiosyncratic behaviour of pupils with autism, is positive, astute and effective so that the learning of others is not disturbed. Group work is well organised and allows for relevant, practical activities that challenge pupils at their level of learning. Praise is used effectively, so pupils grow in confidence and try harder. Throughout there is good reinforcement of literacy skills and pupils become familiar with the mathematical language of size, shape and position. At the end of lessons, learning objectives are reviewed – "Lets see how well we have done". Pupils share their work and learning is checked and celebrated.
37. As a result of this overall good teaching, pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6, for example, higher attaining pupils, count, order, add and subtract numbers when solving problems involving up to 10 objects; by Year 9, they compare, partition and order three digit numbers; and by Year 11, they give change from amounts up to a £1. Students in Post 16 play board games linked to spending money up to £5 or role-play in working behind the counter in a café. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties also make meaningful achievement. For example, they are aware of cause and effect when operating a switch to change the picture on a screen or the lighting effects in the sensory room. They show an awareness of the feel, shape and quantity of coins. Pupils' and students' achievements are accredited well through ASDAN 'Towards Independence' and AQA awards.
38. Procedures for checking pupils' progress, including marking are inconsistent. In the best lessons, targets in pupils' individual education plans are incorporated into place mats that pupils take with them to different lessons. In this way, pupils and other staff are better informed about the level and pace of individual learning. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to pupils' progress and achievement. For example, they model appropriate behaviour, maintain pupils on task and assist in the teaching of small groups. However, at the beginning and end of lessons, they are often insufficiently proactive and have no clear role. Whilst used well at times, ICT does not feature regularly in teachers' planning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

39. The school provides good opportunities to promote pupils' numeracy skills through other subjects of the curriculum. Good examples were seen in science, design and technology, religious education and ICT. These opportunities frequently arise informally and are not part of deliberate lesson planning.

SCIENCE

Seven lessons were seen covering all key stages.

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and teachers present activities that are challenging, relevant and well matched to pupils' learning needs;
- Pupils of all abilities, including those with additional special needs, across the school achieve well and make good progress;
- Pupils enjoy science and are well motivated and interested;
- Specialist accommodation is good and enhances provision;
- Provision has improved since the previous inspection. Learning resources are now very good;
- ICT is used well in science lessons;
- Science is well led and managed.

Commentary

40. Teaching and learning in science are good. Occasionally, some lessons are very good. This is good improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned and prepared with clear learning objectives. Planning, support and resources take account of the diverse learning needs so that every pupil is included. There are opportunities for all pupils to achieve well. For example in a Year 1 class investigating 'light', pupils went into the sensory room. Under ultra-violet light, pupils saw their fingernails glow on the hand they had painted with special nail varnish. In Year 3, pupils were astonished and enjoyed looking at their reflections in flat, concave and convex mirrors. Support assistants make a considerable contribution to the quality of learning. They model appropriate behaviour and maintain pupils on task with timely interventions and prompts. They ensure that pupils in wheelchairs or standing frames are comfortable and fully included in all activities. Good use is made of the digital camera to record pupils' experiences and achievement. Literacy, communications and numeracy skills are reinforced well and at regular intervals.
41. Pupils have positive attitudes to science because lessons are invariably exciting. They enjoy scientific experiments and investigation. As a result pupils achieve well against their science targets. In a Year 5 class pupils investigating the heart and pulse used 'pulsating' lights to replicate the blood flowing around the body. They measured their pulse and heart rate and entered their data into an ICT program. They printed their results as a graph. Staff use correct scientific language and as a result, pupils respond well and enjoy using correct language in their discussions and explanations.
42. Science resources have improved a great deal since the previous inspection. Resources are now very good, which includes a very well equipped science laboratory. Pupils enjoy being taught in this room. However, provision does not yet incorporate adjustable furniture such as benches and sinks to allow more disabled pupils better access.
43. ICT is used effectively across the school in science lessons. For example, in Year 5 pupils record data, input it into an ICT program and analysed their results by printing them in graphic form. Pupils in Year 9 used the Internet effectively to access information about the human body. Unfortunately, in one Year 8 lesson the ICT program was too difficult for the pupils' levels of understanding. The pupils could not read the content, which reduced the effectiveness of the work and diminished pupils' learning.
44. Science is led and managed by two teachers. One is responsible for the lower school and the other for the upper school. Together they show good teamwork resulting in the subject being

well led and managed. This enhances the progress pupils make and has impacted positively on the improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Five ICT lessons were seen and inspectors noted where ICT was used in other subjects.

Provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision has improved well since the previous inspection. Learning resources, hardware and software, are now very good;
- Pupils of all abilities and ages, including those with additional special needs achieve well;
- Teachers have completed relevant training, which has paid off in pupils' improved achievement;
- Progress is enhanced very well by lunch time clubs;
- ICT is well led and managed throughout the school;
- ICT is used well to record pupils' achievements particularly in their Records of Achievement.

Commentary

45. The school has improved the quality and quantity of learning resources since the last inspection. All rooms have computers. Higher attaining pupils use computer keyboards and the 'mouse' to operate programs. Lower attaining pupils use a wide range of switches, touch screens, Big Macs, talkers and sound beams to access the curriculum. As pupils progress through the school they increase their ability to use commercial programs and the Internet. By the time pupils enter Year 7, higher attainers use word processing to record some of their work and with help, present it to others using 'PowerPoint'. Some pupils and students in Years 12 and 13 use the Internet, with adult support, for research. Lower attaining pupils use a writing and symbols program to record their work. Staff use programs well to prepare PECS cards to enhance pupils' communication in lessons.
46. The school has ensured all teaching staff have completed their New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training. Support assistants have completed basic ICT training and some have been successful in more advanced courses. Better-trained staff impacts positively on pupils' learning. The school runs ICT clubs four lunch times per week. Pupils volunteer to participate in these clubs as they find the work and games very enjoyable. Participation enhances pupils' competency and this impacts positively on the progress they make in class.
47. ICT is led and managed by two teachers overseen and supported by the deputy headteacher. One is responsible for the lower school and the other for the upper school. Together they show good teamwork resulting in the subject being well led and managed. This has a positive effect on the progress pupils make as well as having a positive effect on the improvement the subject has made since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

48. ICT is used effectively across the school. In geography and history, pupils use programs linked to the interactive white board. In science pupils use ICT to record and analyse data as well as the Internet to investigate topics. ICT is used effectively in numeracy across the school. In music pupils have great fun making music with sound beams. Older pupils use PowerPoint with adult support, such as in a Year 11 class researching into 'Logos'. Pupils discovered one of the most

popular logos was that of a premiership football club. In English, higher attaining pupils use word processing to record and present much of their work. This enhances their work and is good practice. Digital photographs are used well across the school to record experiences pupils have, and these build up into commendable Records of Achievement.

HUMANITIES

Separate judgements on the subjects of geography and history were not made because they were not part of the main focus of the inspection. However, the school is involved in the Comenius Project with pupils in Years 7 to 13, which includes aspects of geography and history.

The Comenius Project

One lesson was seen, the school's planning was discussed with staff and evidence of the effectiveness of the project was scrutinised.

The project is offering **good** opportunities for pupils to draw comparisons between their own country and culture and that of others. The school is linked with other schools in Slovenia, Germany and Romania. The work adds considerably to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have successfully bid for additional funding to support the project;
 - The link is with similar schools in Germany and Slovenia;
 - A small group of pupils have already visited Slovenia with staff and met their partner school;
 - Another small group will visit a school in Romania shortly;
 - Staff and pupils are working out how to achieve community participation in the project, which may be beneficial in supporting links with their Romanian school.
 - Schools have already exchanged calendars and photograph albums, which give a very good feel for 'Our school, our town'. These were of excellent quality and very relevant content.
 - Schools are now putting together a range of examples of festivals, songs and dances to exchange and teach each other in a forthcoming visit;
 - Following the exchange of recipe books representing local dishes, pupils in their respective schools will be part of an exciting 'shared meal' day on 24th March 2004, when all pupils will enjoy food selected from recipes from the other schools.
 - Those pupils not able to take part in the visits benefit from work on a wide range of resources for sending to the other schools, discussions on reciprocal resources and improving e-mail links. The schools look forward to video links in the future.
49. This is a good initiative that is developing very well and contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Those pupils who had visited Slovenia, experienced at first hand the differences in food, culture, day-to-day life and stories of historical interest such as those linked to Erasmus, the Slovenian 'Robin Hood'.

Religious education

Six lessons were observed covering all key stages.

Provision for religious education is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have significantly improved since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well;
- Teaching is consistently good with some very good examples;
- Very good resources are used well to motivate pupils and ensure their full participation;
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

50. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good. All pupils and students now follow a planned programme of religious education and the subject meets statutory requirements. There have been improvements also in pupils' achievement, subject leadership, planning, teaching and resources.
51. Teaching is good with some very good examples seen during the inspection. Typically, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils gain an awareness of the importance of special Hindu foods made for special occasions like Divali. Because of the teacher's very good planning, preparation, and the strategies she employed, all pupils are involved regardless of their different learning needs. For example, symbols, pictures and signing were used well to ensure that everyone was included and understood. Pupils studied a book on Hindu faith and learnt about parties and celebrations. Because pupils are asked challenging questions that encourage them to observe closely, they noticed that the people ate with their hands and that food was placed on a large leaf. Pupils shared ingredients, allowing them to smell, feel and in some cases taste ground almonds, coconut, nutmeg, sultanas, spices and icing sugar. There was a lovely atmosphere of anticipation and excitement. Higher attaining pupils were helped to read unfamiliar words on a recipe. Lower attaining pupils were given hand over hand support to stir and mix ingredients. The teacher checked pupils' progress noting small achievements, levels of participation, responses and reactions. The lesson was brought to a successful end with a softly spoken Divali prayer, a review of the learning objectives and then a deserved feast.
52. The subject is well led and managed by two co-ordinators, one of whom is a specialist and takes most of the religious education lessons in upper school. Together they monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work and provide advice and encouragement to colleagues on subject knowledge, teaching styles and resources. This includes suggesting visitors who would be useful to a particular topic and places to visit. The curriculum for Years 12 and 13 promotes pupils' understanding of aspects of citizenship. Students are provided with good opportunities to reflect on moral issues such as homelessness, refugees, care of the elderly, animal welfare and to think about what is right and wrong. Students are accredited in religious education through the ASDAN and AQA awards.
53. Resources for the subject are very good. In particular, in the sensory room, teachers provide a range of experiences that help pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties to achieve well. Switches that control the light, colour and sound in the room create a climate of peace and calm. Videos and an interactive whiteboard focus pupils' attention well. A range of textiles and different types of paper are readily available for pupils to explore and feel. Candles and incense grab pupils' attention. Higher attaining pupils listen attentively to religious stories and understand that these carry moral and religious meaning. They begin to realise the significance of religious artefacts, symbols and places. Lower attaining pupils begin to communicate intentionally, through eye contact, gesture or action. They participate in shared activities. They explore materials in increasingly complex way, for example, stroking, smelling and shaking artefacts. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Judgements on art and design, design and technology and music were not made because they were not part of the main foci of the inspection and insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection. Two lessons in Expressive Arts were inspected in Years 10 and 11 and one lesson in music. Four lessons were seen in physical education including hydrotherapy.

Expressive Arts

Provision is very good.

Expressive Arts was introduced to the Years 10 and 11 curriculum as an option in 2003. There are 16 pupils taught by two teachers who specialise in drama and dance. Pupils are encouraged to communicate without needing words and to explore symbolism.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Self-esteem is raised significantly as pupils perform for an audience;
- Very good opportunities to boost their cultural understanding and empathy with others;
- They develop physical abilities and awareness as they practise their dance and comment for example on their increased heartbeat;
- Skills learnt in expressive arts are transferred across other areas of learning;
- Lessons are fun and enjoyable.

Commentary

54. Teaching and learning are very good. The pupils have opportunities to develop an understanding of their own movements and to project their own personalities through drama and dance. They work very well together, are encouraged to make suggestions, contribute their own ideas, create, learn and perform. In lessons seen both teachers and teaching assistants were very good role models. They demonstrated to pupils, for example, how to co-ordinate moving their arms in a circular movement whilst also moving around the room. Warm-up sessions help pupils to listen to the beat of the music and to reinforce their understanding of symmetry as they work with a partner. They work in groups and perform for each other. When asked to suggest how they could improve their performance pupils are quite analytical and critical of themselves and others. For example one pupil suggested that when turning with arms outstretched, pupils should lift and turn their heads following their arms with their eyes. The pupils accepted and treated this advice as helpful. There are good links to other subject areas. The pupils are developing their skills of communicating ideas and feelings to others. For example time is spent discussing with pupils, the effective words that they might chant to show how the Nordic farmers, in the topic Rites and Rituals, would feel at the end of the harvest. Pupils suggested impressive words such as hallelujah and hooray.
55. Sessions are much longer than normal yet pupils show no sign of tiring or boredom. They are fully engaged in the activities and this is because of the very good relationships enjoyed by all. Staff make every effort to make sure that the sessions are fun and enjoyable, yet challenging. Two very committed teachers lead expressive arts. A great deal of thought has gone into this programme with the aim of enabling the pupils to ultimately have a significant role within both the creative and social environment. The two-year programme makes provision for all pupils to take part and is fully inclusive.
56. Music is an alternate option to the expressive arts. The school has a strong choir and drum club. Music is invariably very well linked to other work going on in school such as the Comenius Project. Currently, pupils are preparing well for performances involving pupils from linked schools. Music covers a broad range of areas such as sound exploration, instrumental and vocal skills, self-evaluation and the use of ICT through 'soundbeam', keyboards and the Internet.

Physical Education

Physical education was not a focus of the inspection. However, from those lessons seen, teaching and learning were judged very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The hydrotherapy pool is an excellent resource that is used very effectively;
- Together with knowledgeable teaching and excellent relationships, pupils experience opportunities in the pool that they would not otherwise have. Pupils' confidence, skills and self-esteem benefit significantly;
- Pupils are very clear about how and why they need to warm up at the beginning of physical education lessons. Their understanding of this is very good;
- Teaching and learning have improved very well since the last inspection.

Commentary

57. Staff expertise is significant in the strengths of the very good teaching and learning in the hydrotherapy pool and in physical education lessons seen with pupils in Year 3 and Years 10 and 11. Exciting lessons keep pupils' interest throughout. Skills build step by step and these are recorded and evaluated in a simple but effective way. The result of this is that lessons meet the exact needs of the pupils. Pupils repeat activities when they need extra practice and they fully understand why they need to do this. Teachers act as excellent role models both from the relationships they build with pupils and from the demonstrations and lead they give to pupils in their activities. Each lesson seen made very effective use of music. Pupils moved in time to the rhythm exceptionally well whether as part of the hydrotherapy or in very active warm-up sessions in physical education. At other times in the pool, calmer music added atmosphere very well to the pupils' therapy. Positive links between pupils' success in these activities and achievement in dance and drama were obvious. Pupils focus for considerable lengths of time because of appropriate changes in activity at the right time. Also, boys' and girls' willingness, regardless of special educational need, to perform together in pairs or small groups was outstanding. There was no embarrassment. Where, a pupil in Year 3 experienced some difficulty in joining in as expected with the rest of the group, staff's skills and teamwork ensured good quality activities were followed if at times separately, until support ensured a full return to the group. All lessons seen were full of fun and packed with physical activity.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Seven lessons were seen. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

Provision is very good. As a result pupils and students of all abilities achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for learning during the school day supplemented by opportunities outside of school;
- A range of initiatives such as the school council, Healthy School award scheme and Business Enterprise support pupils' and students' development very well;
- A good quality programme of work, which includes PSHE and citizenship, and day-to-day activities, permeates the whole school;
- There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection;
- Procedures of assessment have improved and are now good.

Commentary

58. All staff are very aware of the importance of promoting pupils' and students' personal development. Because they understand the pupils and students very well, they are very good at doing this, in lessons and in other activities. Each pupil and student has a target for personal development on their IEP and a strong emphasis is placed on helping them achieve it. Consistently good and occasionally very good or excellent teaching and support promotes the development of social and self-help skills very well. For example, in the primary assembly, pupils were taught the importance of helping each other and sharing. They all knew the school rule of 'we help each other'. Examples of how they helped each other during the week were celebrated in assembly. Post 16 students on their visit to the local college were extremely supportive of each other entering the college, finding their ICT room and at break time going to the refectory for coffee and cakes. One particular student was very helpful to the inspector and guided him through a maze of corridors and up several flights of stairs to their ICT room.
59. The school runs a very successful school council. Pupils' and students' views are taken very seriously and acted upon. Pupils and students themselves are very proud of their work in the council. Several members approached inspectors to ensure that at least one inspector would attend their council meeting. The school is rightly proud of its Healthy School Award. Much of this work permeates the curriculum, such as in science where pupils and students investigate the effects of healthy eating in their lessons.
60. The Business Enterprise Scheme is excellent. The Board of Directors meet regularly with a clear agenda for meetings. Meetings start with coffee being served. The meeting is chaired by one of the students who calls for reports from other board members. A detailed discussion ensued because production targets for the Christmas cards had not been met. Very good business advice is always readily available from the school's close links with a local building society. A representative frequently attends board meetings. This is a first-class enterprise.
61. A very good example of the success of the school citizenship programme was illustrated by one of the younger boys shopping in a local supermarket when he insisted on helping an old woman put her shopping items onto the conveyor belt to go through the till. He even offered to pack and carry her bags to the car. He clearly illustrated the school motto of 'help each other'.
62. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. PSHE is now well established on the timetable and well led and managed with clear assessment of progress. The school uses a commercial package PIVATS, to track pupils' progress. This allows staff to analyse strengths and weaknesses across the school and adapt the programme as necessary. This works well. By Years 11 to 13, students work well on their accredited work for their ASDAN awards. These lessons are well supported by the school's Connexions (careers) adviser and give students opportunities to build on their understanding of different jobs and courses, which are available to them.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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 in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.