

INSPECTION REPORT

RNIB RUSHTON HALL SCHOOL

Ash Green, Coventry

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 122155

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Judy Bell

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 8th – 10th March 2004

Inspection number: 258984

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:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	4 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	26
School address:	Wheelwright Lane Ash Green Coventry
Postcode:	CV7 9RA
Telephone number:	024 76369500
Fax number:	024 76369501
Appropriate authority:	RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind)
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Careen Bradbury
Date of previous inspection:	10 th November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

RNIB Rushton Hall is a mixed, non-maintained, day and residential special school for pupils from four to nineteen who are multi-disabled and visually impaired. It is located on the same site as a special school maintained by Warwickshire LEA. In January 2004, its residential provision was registered as a Children's Home for up to 16 pupils with visual impairment, physical difficulties, learning disabilities, sensory impairment, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, there were 26 pupils on the school's roll; none of these were in the Foundation Stage. Most pupils are white; a very small number of mixed-race pupils attend the school. Currently, there are no refugees, asylum seekers or travellers on the school roll, and no pupils who are from homes in which English is an additional language. Pupils come from all over the country, and socio-economic circumstances are typical of those found nationally.

In June 2002, the school relocated from Northamptonshire to its present site. From September 2001 until November 2003 there was a focus on relocation, establishing a largely new staff team, most of whom had been in post for a year or less. As the school provides 52-week boarding for some pupils, it applied for registration as a Children's Home in May 2002. Following weaknesses identified in a National Care Standards Council (NCSC) inspection in July 2003, the RNIB was not able to readmit a number of pupils in the autumn term. In an unannounced NCSC inspection of November 2003, a number of serious concerns were identified in relation to the ability of the establishment to meet the pupils' healthcare needs; the RNIB was therefore unable to re-admit pupils. In addition, following the suspension of the headteacher and head of care, an acting headteacher and an acting head of residential services, both seconded from the RNIB, formed part of the senior management team.

Since November 2003, the focus has been on securing changes necessary to satisfy NCSC requirements. This has restricted the school's capacity to develop in other areas and to become involved in new initiatives.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English; Personal, social and health education; Citizenship.
19557	Liz Halls	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
32055	Glan Davies	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education; Art and design.
2512	Brian Emery	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Information and communication technology.
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Although teaching and learning are good, pupils' achievements are satisfactory; this is because roughly a third missed a significant amount of schooling whilst procedures were put into place to ensure that National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) criteria were met in the residential accommodation. Pupils enjoy being at school, and behaviour is good. The acting headteacher provides good leadership, but management is unsatisfactory. Fees charged by the RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind) are low when compared with similar schools nationally, and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a skilled and committed team of teachers, who lead class teams well.
- Caring relationships between staff and pupils create a good climate for learning.
- Although resources for learning are good, the accommodation does not meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils receive good induction and are well supported in class.
- Parents receive good information about the progress their children make, but the school's prospectus does not meet requirements.
- Weaknesses in governance by the RNIB have contributed to the difficulties that the school has experienced since moving to the present site.
- School self-review and evaluation are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not receive sex and relationships education as required.
- Arrangements to support the transition of pupils as they approach school leaving age are not co-ordinated well enough.

Since the school moved from its previous site in Northampton two years ago, development has been slowed by the need to focus on meeting NCSC criteria, as well as suspensions or long-term absence of key staff. As part of the move, staff were successfully recruited, and training has been an important focus. However, because of the difficulties that the school has experienced, priorities have had to be revised. In particular, curriculum development has been curtailed. A programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been developed, but has not yet been implemented. Subject leaders do not have the time to develop their roles, or their subjects, although several have carried out work in their own time. Curriculum co-ordination was a key issue at the previous inspection. In this area and overall, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	satisfactory	satisfactory
Year 6	satisfactory	satisfactory
Year 9	satisfactory	satisfactory
Year 11	satisfactory	satisfactory
Year 13	satisfactory	satisfactory

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

Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In general, pupils of all ages reach the standards expected of those with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. **Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory.** Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Across the school, teaching and learning are good.

Teachers share targets with pupils at the start of each lesson, and review these towards the end. They use a good range of sensory methods and resources to ensure that pupils are engaged well throughout lessons. Although the curriculum meets pupils' special educational needs in a satisfactory manner, it does not meet requirements, and work is being carried out to strengthen it. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school maintains constructive links with parents. However, recent difficulties have halted development of links with the local community; a few links that had been initiated have had to be temporarily suspended.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The RNIB does not delegate any responsibilities to the school's governors, who act in an advisory capacity only. As the appropriate authority, the RNIB has insufficient means of holding the school to account, and statutory requirements are not met; **its governance is unsatisfactory.** Following the first NCSC inspection in the summer of 2003, several residential pupils were unable to return to school in September, and missed up to seven weeks of schooling; two have still not returned. The RNIB did not intervene swiftly enough to ensure that the appropriate action was taken. As a result, serious concerns were raised following the unannounced inspection of November 2003, and the suspensions of the headteacher and head of care followed. In December 2003, the RNIB appointed an experienced acting headteacher and an acting head of residential services; the residential provision successfully achieved registration as a Children's Home in January 2004. However, much energy has gone into this achievement, and implementation of the school's improvement plan has been limited. The school's deputy headteacher has been on sick leave since January 2004, and leadership of the curriculum and analysis of the school's assessment results have been curtailed as a result. Although the acting headteacher has successfully ensured the smooth running of the school, her energies have been required elsewhere and educational development has been limited. There are currently no ways in which the school measures its own success. **Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall.**

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Although parents are generally positive about the school, their confidence in its management has been dented. They were not kept well informed whilst the school faced its crises, although the RNIB has since acted to inform them of its plans for the school's future. Pupils clearly feel secure in the school; they enjoy their lessons, and a few identify favourite aspects of school life.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the governance of the school so that there are clear arrangements for accountability, including school self-review and evaluation.
- Improve the accommodation to address the weaknesses identified in the report.
- Implement the planned programme of PSHE.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the prospectus meets requirements.
- Ensure that transition reviews are carried out as recommended in the Code of Practice for special educational needs (SEN).
- Ensure that sex and relationships education is provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Although pupils do not reach standards expected for pupils of a similar age, their achievements are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good and occasionally very good progress against the challenging targets they are set in lessons.
- About a third of pupils have missed significant schooling as a result of the residential provision's failure to meet National Care Standards.
- The setting of targets to raise whole-school achievement is at an early stage of development.

Commentary

1. Pupils are multi-disabled and visually impaired; as a result, they do not reach the standards expected of pupils of a similar age. In fact, standards are very low: most pupils are working at levels below National Curriculum Level 1, and so there are no test results to report. However, pupils are set challenging targets, which are closely linked to the objectives on their Statements of Special Educational Need; they make good progress against these targets when they are in school. This is because they are taught skilfully. Unfortunately, about a third of pupils have been out of school for up to seven weeks during this academic year, and this has resulted in a slowing of their progress, which has limited their achievement.

2. Nonetheless, achievement in English, mathematics, science, art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship is satisfactory overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress against their personal and social targets; the school does not yet provide a full taught programme of PSHE. Insufficient evidence was available to make judgements about achievement in other subjects of the curriculum.

3. Pupils in Years 10 to 14 work towards accredited units which form part of the EQUALS 'Moving On' course. Several of these pupils have achieved between three and six units in the past year.

4. Last year, the school had sufficient assessment information from P levels to enable it to analyse pupils' progress in the subjects of English, mathematics, science, and personal and social development. A scoring system, using points, was devised, and this was used to set targets for whole-school improvement. These were in writing, science, and using and applying mathematics. However, teachers were not asked to take any particular action to boost achievement in these areas. In February of this year, the deputy headteacher, who led on this aspect of the school's work, was on long-term sick leave. As a result, there is no information showing whether targets were achieved or not. It seems unlikely that targets would have been reached.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are **good**. Under normal circumstances attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**, but a number of pupils missed significant periods of schooling during the autumn term. The provision for personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well most of the time, show good attitudes to work and activities, and enjoy being at school.
- Staff successfully promote good relationships and a harmonious environment in the school and in family houses.
- A significant minority of pupils missed school due to the circumstances prevailing earlier in the academic year.

Commentary

5. The table below shows the attendance figures for the school last year. However, these were reduced in the autumn term of the current year due to the residential provision for some pupils not fully meeting National Care Standards. Absence is often due to medical reasons. Pupils who are weekly boarders, and who travel long distances, arrive back in school late on Monday mornings, due to the need for a handover with their key workers in the residential establishment. This is outside the school's control; although a number of different approaches have been considered, no solution to this has yet been found.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	9.7%

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0%

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

6. The generally positive picture found at the previous inspection has been maintained. The majority of pupils behave well and respond well to the caring ethos of the school. There are a few pupils who display challenging behaviour, but staff work well together consistently to reinforce good behaviour. Pupils with behavioural difficulties have behaviour management plans, which staff implement faithfully. However, these plans do not help staff to identify which strategies work well, as there is no means of evaluating their success. Pupils respond positively to the clear routines, and enjoy the range of activities planned for them. They enjoy school and being members of the school community. Exclusions do not occur, and there is a marked absence of bullying. Good relationships contribute to a harmonious environment, in which pupils are respected and are shown consideration. They respond by co-operating well with the adults who support them, and this helps to promote learning. Parents are very supportive of the school, and very happy with the values the school promotes.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching, learning and assessment of pupils' work and progress are good, but the curriculum does not meet requirements. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory, and the school has satisfactory links with parents and with the community.

Teaching and learning

Across the school, teaching and learning are **good**, and so is assessment of pupils' work and progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is very good; pupils are set individual targets, and these are reviewed with pupils at the end of each lesson.
- Teachers are skilled in using sensory approaches to engage pupils successfully throughout lessons.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good, so pupils are usually well motivated.
- Staff know pupils well, and they maintain detailed records showing their progress.

Commentary

7. Although there is no formal baseline assessment when pupils enter the school, the speech therapist carries out a speech and language assessment. All pupils have communication passports, which quickly give others an insight into how each communicates, and how they are best approached. In addition, teachers make good use of information in pupils' statements to set suitable targets.

8. The quality of planning promotes learning very well. When teachers plan their lessons, they are guided well by subject plans that have been developed by most subject co-ordinators. These plans take into account the organisation of pupils in classes of more than two year groups, and help to ensure that pupils do not miss out or repeat topics. As classes are small, staff know pupils well. Their assessment of pupils, using P levels, is accurate, and teachers plan suitably challenging tasks. Each lesson has one or more clear subject-specific objectives, as well as individual targets for each pupil. For example, in a good literacy lesson, the objective was to develop early reading skills using sequencing activities. The most skilled pupil in the group was set the target to read and make the words *sun*, *fur* and *moon*, using Moon blocks. The least skilled pupil's target was to accept physical prompts to move along a sequence box, placing the objects on the table as he removed them. These targets were shared with pupils at the start of the lesson, and then reviewed with them at the end. All staff play a part in recording pupils' progress toward the end of the lesson, and this forms a useful record that enables teachers to complete a summary sheet. These show at a glance which P level pupils are working at; they also indicate clearly what the next small step in learning should be. In this way, teaching ensures that pupils continue to build well on their knowledge, skills and understanding.

9. Teachers are skilled in teaching pupils who are multi-disabled and have visual impairment. Sensory methods are used to good effect. Teachers work hard to collect sensory resources that are meaningful to pupils. For example, when stories are read, they are accompanied by resources that are linked to the characters or events in the story, and as the story unfolds, these objects are passed around for pupils to explore. In a Native American creation story, a spray container of water was used to squirt 'rain' onto pupils; they were able to explore a model crawfish with their hands, and feel a long bird feather, which represented a buzzard. A lighted candle was used to represent the sun, and this was carefully held where pupils could feel its warmth, or see its light. Teachers are equally inventive when creating records for pupils themselves. At the end of an independent living skills lesson, one pupil who had been busy mopping the floor was able to affix a miniature 'mop', made from a wooden spatula and strands of thick wool, onto his 'diary'.

10. Staff get on well with pupils; they show that they both respect and like them. Late arrivals get a warm welcome, and staff are always careful to warn pupils of their movements, as many cannot see them. Pupils clearly feel secure, and appear keen to do well. The good adult to pupil ratio ensures that pupils are well supported in class. Pupils co-operate well and this helps to ensure that they are engaged throughout lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	7 (23%)	20 (67%)	3 (10%)	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.

11. Few weaknesses in teaching were seen. Occasionally, the passing of a single resource around members of a class group slows the pace of a lesson. Staff generally have high expectations of pupils, but occasionally the language used is difficult, and too little explanation of this is given.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** because it does not meet all statutory requirements. There are **satisfactory** opportunities for enrichment. Resources are **good**, but the school’s accommodation is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good number of skilled teachers, and learning resources are good.
- The school does not provide sex and relationships education in Years 7 to 9 as required.
- Curriculum development has been curtailed by the school’s recent difficulties.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with no suitable facilities for physical education and sporting activities.
- Pupils approaching school leaving age do not have sufficient preparation for the next stage.

Commentary

12. For most pupils, the curriculum is satisfactory, as it incorporates all National Curriculum subjects, as well as religious education. Pupils’ individual needs are met through activities such as mobility training, as well as individual targets set for the development of personal and social skills. In addition, music therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and speech therapy programmes are provided where these are prescribed on pupils’ statements. However, for pupils in Years 7 to 9, there is no programme of sex and relationships education, which is a requirement. In fact, the school’s PSHE co-ordinator has developed and devised resources for a suitable programme which has all the required elements. However, this has not been implemented, as curriculum development has been curtailed since priorities were revised in the light of the NCSC inspection.

13. Pupils in Years 10 to 14 benefit from a suitable modular programme, which is accredited and is highly relevant to most of their needs. However, for those who are approaching school leaving age, there is no specific preparation for the next stage of education, such as visits to establishments that they might move on to, or liaison with agencies in their home area. As a result, the curriculum for pupils over 16 is unsatisfactory.

14. The school is generously staffed with skilled teachers. Although they have not been empowered to develop their roles, many have carried out development work in their own time, and there are suitable plans to guide teachers in planning their lessons. There is a good number of classroom support staff, but most are not experienced. Nonetheless, they support pupils well in class, and provide well for their care and welfare.

15. For pupils in residence, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum. These include a variety of educational visits to parks and places of local interest, such as Warwick Castle and Coventry Memorial Park. These visits widen pupils' experiences and raise their awareness of the local area. However, there is not sufficient time for activities to take place at lunchtimes.

16. The school includes some newly built areas, and these are suitable for pupils with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. Classrooms are spacious, and the immediate grounds offer opportunities for play. However, the school lacks facilities for physical education and sporting activities. There are no specialist rooms for science, food technology, design and technology or art, and the music room is too small for whole-class groups. The teaching of independent daily living skills has to take place in the classroom, as there is no specialist area designated for this. This restricts the opportunities that can be provided; for example, pupils cannot learn to operate a washing machine.

17. Learning resources are good; each co-ordinator will have their own budget from April so that they can acquire resources for developments in their subject. Resources are conveniently kept in storerooms and are available to all the staff when planning and preparing their lessons. Most co-ordinators undertake a regular audit of the resources available, and with the co-operation of the other teachers, check their future needs in the light of the programme of studies.

Care, guidance and support

There are **satisfactory** arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety, and for their support, advice and guidance. A **good** system of key workers is in place, and pupils have a trusting relationship with at least one adult. The provision for induction of new pupils is **good**. Involvement of pupils in the work of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care arrangements are good: there is good provision for child protection and the general welfare of pupils.
- Transition arrangements for school leavers are unsatisfactory.
- Staff respect the personal dignity of the pupils, value their opinions and take these into account in planning both for individuals and for groups within the school.
- There are sufficient physiotherapists and speech therapists, but accommodation for them to work in is poor.
- Life in the residential houses contributes considerably to the personal, social and health education of the pupils. It supports learning through a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

18. Pupils receive a high quality of care and are happy in the school; evidence of this is seen both within the school and in the residential houses. All staff work hard to ensure that pupils get the most out of what Rushton Hall has to offer. The staff are committed to further improvement in the overall provision. Increasingly there are shared values and a shared vision for making the school a very caring community. Each individual pupil is treated with respect. Individual education plans (IEPs), care plans and therapy plans, ensure that pupils receive the best possible personal quality of life. Within their limited ability to communicate, pupils show that they respect those who care for them. Both school and residential care staff know the needs of each pupil. They familiarise themselves with the targets set in the individual plans. All pupils have a key worker who works closely with them and acts as a mentor. In addition to this, every pupil has a number of link workers forming a personal team of teachers, classroom support staff and therapists. Ancillary staff also treat pupils with respect, and do all that they can to help them. Child protection procedures are well embedded and are in line with locally agreed arrangements.

19. A number of weaknesses were identified by NCSC in the most recent full inspection of the residential provision. Many of these were comparatively minor and have already been dealt with. All of the remaining issues are currently being addressed. A major problem was that the school had no permanent nursing staff. This is already partly resolved with a part-time nurse in post, and a full-time nurse is due to start in the near future. Already a number of in-service courses have been run to familiarise care staff with basic medical procedures. This needs to be extended to school staff.

20. The school has a good number of therapists. The physiotherapy team and speech and language therapy team carry out baseline assessments on all pupils, and draw up individual plans for them. They work closely with teaching staff, support assistants and care staff to ensure that pupils gain maximum benefits from the assessments. Much of the therapists' work has to be with individual pupils, but they do not have suitable accommodation for this. Members of the physiotherapy team mostly work in a borrowed classroom, and there is no soft playroom. Members of the speech and language therapy team mostly work in the classroom, but they work with pupils in their office at times, and wheelchair access to this is poor.

21. Arrangements for maintaining a safe school are satisfactory, but require some improvements. The management team is aware of this and has set up a health and safety forum, which meets regularly. The school itself has a health and safety representative, who is a member of the classroom support staff. She has familiarised herself with relevant procedures, and carries out weekly safety checks, ensuring that any necessary remedial work is undertaken. The residential houses do not have a health and safety representative at the moment; the acting head of residential services is covering this on a temporary basis, but the arrangements need to be regularised. School staff did undertake risk assessments some time ago; these now need to be updated. Teachers and classroom support staff ensure that pupils follow safe practice in lessons and at break time. Whilst most care staff are now qualified in first aid, there are very few classroom support staff who are similarly qualified. The management team has identified a trainer, and dates have been set for training in the near future.

22. The respect that staff and pupils show for one another contributes very positively to the good learning outcomes and to personal development. Many pupils have acute communication difficulties, but all are given an opportunity to express their views about school life and related issues. For example, in the school, the pupils chose the names of their class groups. In family meetings in the residential houses, pupils have an input into choices of menu, leisure activities and outings; they have decided to sponsor a dog at the local dogs' home and have taken decisions about other matters affecting out-of-school life.

23. A great deal of trouble is taken to ensure that new pupils settle happily into the school. It is a welcoming environment, and it is clear that pupils are happy and feel secure in the school. Whenever possible, a pupil will spend a night at the school before a final decision is made about admission. The head of care is responsible for induction. She forms a team of staff who contribute to the induction process for each new arrival and produce a placement plan. The particular needs of new entrants are identified at a very early stage, and a general assessment is made on arrival. This is reviewed frequently in the early days, before a longer-term plan is produced after the pupil has settled in. Transition plans for pupils coming up to leaving age are not as well organised. The school is aware of this and is working to improve the process. Currently the acting head of residential services is responsible for transition. There is no real focal point for leavers, since careers advice and work experience placements are not part of the school programme. There is a need for one member of staff to be designated as a transitions officer, who would collate all information about possible placements for leavers anywhere in the country. The school is developing links with the local Connexions service.

24. The residential care is of good quality and enhances the education of pupils. An extensive range of educational and leisure activities contributes to the 24-hour curriculum. In the residential houses there is an emphasis on personal care and social interaction. However, the recording system for personal and social targets that is used in the school is not used in the residential settings, and this leads to inefficiencies. The care staff are very committed to their work, which is

highly pupil-centred. All care staff have attended some training courses, but this needs to be extended, especially for the team leaders. Care staff have contact with teachers and classroom support staff several times a day: at the beginning and end of morning school, and similarly in the afternoon. This enables face-to-face exchange of information about individual pupils to take place. All staff are very flexible and make further opportunities to discuss pupils whenever necessary.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **satisfactory** overall. Links with the local community and other schools are at an early stage of development; overall, they are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- There are good links between the school staff and the residential staff.
- There are mutually beneficial links between the school and its local community.
- The school provides good levels of information about pupils' progress and wellbeing.

Commentary

25. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and at the meeting, parents showed that they are generally pleased with what the school provides. Their children like school, and most parents are happy with the progress their children make. Some parents expressed concern about the recent changes and the lack of information they have received from the RNIB. The inspectors conclude that, although a meeting for parents was held recently, there has been a lack of written information for parents regarding the situation.

26. The school has recently begun to produce a newsletter each term. These are easy to read, informative about general matters, and celebrate the work of pupils and staff. The residential staff speak on the telephone to parents regularly; they welcome any who wish to visit the school. The parents see teachers at formal meetings, and are invited to annual reviews, during which both the pupils' needs and the annual progress reports are discussed; these meetings are well attended by parents. Pupils' annual progress reports are good, telling parents what each pupil knows and what they can do. In addition the school provides a home/school communication book for both day pupils and boarders; this is a valuable communication tool through which parents and carers are informed of what each pupil has done during the day or week, and parents can comment on the pupil's evening or weekend.

27. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to the school's work and to the achievement of the pupils by working closely with the staff. Parents support what the school is doing, and they work with the staff in deciding on the best approach to helping their child. They are represented on the advisory governing body.

28. Staff are developing relationships with their immediate neighbours and with the local community; for example, pupils have visited a local RSPCA centre, and are helping to raise funds for it through car washing. There are links with the local church, and the youth leader visits to take assembly.

29. The school has established some links with other schools and educational support services; it receives advice and training on behaviour management, and has shared use of the swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool and the grounds that it occupies with another special school. The school's improvement plan acknowledges that much work is needed to develop links with further education colleges, the Connexions service and local agencies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The acting headteacher provides **good** leadership; other key staff provide **satisfactory** leadership. The governance of the school is **unsatisfactory**. The management of the school is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher and acting head of residential services both provide stability and a sense of direction.
- Financial management and control are good.
- Governance by the RNIB is unsatisfactory and this has contributed to the school's present difficulties.
- School self-review and evaluation is not yet developed, and school staff are not always managed well.

Commentary

30. The acting headteacher, and the acting head of residential services, both of whom have been in post for little more than three months, are providing good leadership; this has brought stability to a school that was in some difficulty. As a result of their efforts, staff feel confident that they can carry out their roles properly, pupils are learning in a safe and pleasant environment, and the shortcomings identified by the NCSC inspectors are being steadily rectified. Communication between the school and the residential setting suffered during the period following the second NCSC inspection, and the acting headteacher and acting head of residential services are now working closely to restore constructive communication and collaborative working.

31. The acting headteacher has a clear sense of purpose and acts as a good role model. She has set high standards and expectations for both pupils and staff. She has achieved her aspiration of establishing stability and normality, and there is a pleasant, purposeful and welcoming atmosphere in the school.

32. Although there are governors, they have no delegated responsibilities, and they act in an advisory capacity only. As the proprietor of the school, the RNIB has provided insufficient support to the school during a time of change, and there is no clear line of accountability between the school, the advisory governors and the RNIB. As a result, governance is ineffective. During the move from the school's previous site, the RNIB offered considerable financial support, but did not monitor the progress of the move well enough. Following the first NCSC inspection, the RNIB did not intervene quickly enough to ensure that weaknesses were being addressed. As a result, some residential pupils were unable to return to school after the summer holidays. Following the unannounced NCSC inspection of November 2003, the RNIB took robust action to ensure that NCSC requirements were met, and subsequently they have taken steps to ensure that a similar crisis does not occur again. Some statutory requirements are not met: the prospectus does not meet requirements; transition reviews of pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs are not carried out; and the requirement to provide sex and relationships education is not in place for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

33. Although the acting headteacher has ensured that the school runs smoothly, and is beginning to facilitate communication between the many staff and agencies who contribute to pupils' education and welfare, the management of the school has many weaknesses, and not all of these are attributable to the difficulties that the school has recently experienced. Implementation of the school improvement plan has been delayed, so subject co-ordinators have been unable to develop their management roles. Few attempts are made to evaluate the work of the school. For example, the evaluation of pupils' performance was only at an early stage of development before it ceased because of staff absence. Performance management is in place for teachers, and learning support assistants have an annual appraisal. However, induction of staff has been rushed since the school moved, and several new recruits do not feel well supported. Teachers have not been given the guidance or the time that they need to develop their roles as subject leaders, and in the recent past, support staff have been deployed to cover teachers on long-term absences. Implementation of best

value principles is unsatisfactory. Although comparisons with the fees of similar schools are made, there are no arrangements in place to consult pupils, parents, staff or local education authorities on their views about the school's provision.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,738,723	Balance from previous year	0
Total expenditure	2,198,935*	Balance carried forward to the next	0
Expenditure per pupil	70,933		

* The difference between income and expenditure represents the subsidy from RNIB.

34. Financial management is good. During the school's period of change and disruption, staff responsible for managing finances have maintained good control and administration. The poorly managed relocation, and subsequent NCSC inspection, resulted in loss of income from fees, as several pupils had to return to their homes; the school is currently running a deficit budget. However, the level of resources is being maintained, because the RNIB is heavily subsidising the school.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

No modern foreign language lessons were seen, as the subject was not a focus for this inspection.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress against their communication targets.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and promote achievement well.
- The co-ordinator has taken the initiative in developing the subject, but does not have time to monitor teaching and learning.

Commentary

35. Teachers set realistic yet challenging targets for each pupil, and there are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to work towards these targets across the curriculum. As a result, pupils make good progress. About a third of pupils have had a significant loss of schooling and their progress has been interrupted. As a result they are working on the same targets that were identified in September. Pupils develop their skills at different rates. Although the most skilled oral communicator is one of the oldest pupils, those who are most skilled at reading and writing are much younger. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory in English; it is satisfactory in each of communication, reading and writing.

36. Teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good; in nearly a quarter of English lessons, teaching was very good. Teachers make good use of the structure and planning of the National Literacy Strategy. As a result, pupils build systematically on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Individual targets are shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson, and reviewed well at the end, so pupils are aware of how well they have done. Staff record in detail how well pupils have progressed during each lesson and a summary record is also kept so that staff can see at a glance which P level pupils have reached or are working towards. The speech and language therapist is currently carrying out assessments of pupils' needs, and has identified some resources that six individuals need to assist them in communicating with others. Staff use a suitable range of methods to communicate with pupils and enable them to communicate too; for example, staff place their hands over pupils' hands, and make signs to support their understanding; switches are used to activate recordings of speech, and pupils are encouraged to vocalise even if they cannot articulate actual words. In registration, one teacher exhorted a pupil to use her voice to say 'Hello', and was rewarded with a small sound.

37. In a good lesson, older primary pupils listened to recordings of initial sounds. They listened carefully as they pressed the switch to produce sounds, and by the end of the lesson one was able to blend the 'c' sound with 'at', to make 'cat'. The most skilled pupils read whole words and began to read whole sentences. All pupils enjoy listening to stories; they show that they are listening when they respond to the humour, by laughing or by repeating words. One spontaneously touched his head at the mention of the word. Pupils are involved in stories, because staff provide objects, related to characters or events, for them to explore. In 'The Selfish Giant', for instance, pupils explored stars mounted on a dark blue carpet square, and smelled lavender, representing the sweet smell of the garden. 'Nice garden' said one, after smelling this. The teacher encouraged listening by asking

pupils at the start, 'I wonder if the selfish giant was lonely or had lots of friends?' A range of literature is provided, and this gives pupils experience of other cultures. For instance, the oldest pupils have listened to 'The Three Musketeers', as an example of French literature. These pupils particularly enjoy poems and choose their favourites each week. Although no pupils can read newspapers, teachers ensure that they are aware of the information that can be found in them.

38. No pupils are able to write. Most record what they have done or found out by making posters on which relevant objects are fixed. The most skilled are able to sequence pictures to make a meaningful sentence; for example, following a Native American story of creation, one sequenced three Moon symbol cards to make the sentence, 'Great Spirit makes trees'.

39. The co-ordinator has secured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although she does not have time to monitor teaching and learning, she has written her own role-description, produced a subject development plan and improved the reading resources. Equipment is available so that teachers can make resources of their own; a good deal of effort goes into this. Resources for teaching reading are good, but if each story had more than one set of objects for pupils to explore, pupils would not have to wait their turn for quite as long as they do at the moment; this occasionally slows the pace of a lesson.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in other subjects. Communication is encouraged at every available opportunity. The speech and language therapist has developed communication passports for each pupil, and these are very helpful, especially for those who meet pupils for the first time. In subjects other than English, teachers take good account of pupils' communication targets. They also encourage understanding of new vocabulary by explaining this carefully and providing opportunities for consolidation. Very occasionally, though, language is used that is too difficult; for example, in a religious education lesson, the teacher referred to the bitterness that the Jews had *endured*, and gave no explanation of this word.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress against their individual targets; achievement is satisfactory.
- There is a good match between activities in lessons and pupils' abilities.
- Assessment arrangements are good.
- The teaching of mathematics is good.

Commentary

41. Pupils make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics and higher attaining pupils are able to use mathematics in practical settings. The quality of teaching in mathematics is never less than good; this contributes to the good progress that pupils make against their targets. However, a few pupils have missed half a term of teaching this year, which has slowed their progress. As a result, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall.

42. Teachers use effective methods to present mathematics to pupils in ways which gain their attention and interest, and promote learning; for example, in work on position with pupils in Year 1, good teaching emphasised the importance of *left* and *right* by moving around the school, and taking left and right turns to find their way along corridors to other classrooms. This lesson ended with the class and the adults in the room singing the 'Hokey Cokey', which pupils enjoyed and which was a great help in consolidating their understanding. In another lesson, with Years 6 and 7 pupils, good teaching combined learning about position with learning about food technology; pupils made beans

on toast, and the teacher and the learning support assistants placed great emphasis on the mat being 'under' the plate, the toast 'on' the plate and the beans 'on' the toast. In a lesson with Year 10 and 11 pupils, good teaching combined learning about measures with pupils' personal development, by exploring differences between the pupils in their height, weight and hair length. Work in pupils' books throughout the school shows an appropriate emphasis on use of numbers and mathematical concepts in practical settings; this includes the use of mathematical language, knowledge of numbers and of shape, space and measurement. Most pupils can count from memory, with higher attaining pupils reaching 20 and above. Most know the difference between a cube and a sphere, and despite their visual disability, understand space and position; for example again, the directions *left* and *right*. In all mathematics lessons seen, pupils were confident in their teachers and the assistants, engaged willingly with the interesting activities presented to them, and showed great pleasure when adults acknowledged their work.

43. The good teaching has a major impact on pupils' achievement. For instance, because of the influence of the teacher and a learning support assistant in one lesson, a lower attaining and profoundly visually impaired pupil was able to achieve great success in using a switch to count four objects, to the extent that, by the end of the lesson, he was able to count unaided. Older pupils, working on the 'Moving on' curriculum, undertake mathematical activities which allow them to relate to life outside the school, such as undertaking shopping expeditions or saving money for a future event. Because of the good teaching, many pupils have a sense of how much things cost and how much money they need when shopping.

44. Lessons in mathematics are very well planned and often include plans for individual children. Lessons follow the three-part structure of the National Numeracy Strategy. The introduction and plenary sessions are very carefully planned to ensure that pupils fully understand the work they are doing. Teachers' subject knowledge and their knowledge of the pupils, is very good, and makes a major contribution to the ways in which pupils learn in mathematics lessons. Information and communication technology is used when appropriate; for example, switch control boxes for counting activities and computer programs such as 'All about numbers'.

45. The subject leadership is satisfactory; the co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and has established very effective assessment arrangements, which enable pupils' progress to be plotted carefully. The co-ordinator is not able to monitor and evaluate the subject across the school because of lack of time; this is a weakness.

46. Improvement in mathematics since the last inspection has been good; teaching is now good across the school, and pupils' progress is better; planning of lessons is now a strength, and assessment arrangements are much improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

47. Mathematics is well used and taught in a number of subjects; for example in a PSHE lesson in which pupils used mathematics when considering the weight of a baby; in literacy when a pupil acted out the knocking down of a wall and had to count the number of blows; and in practical work in design and technology and physical education, in which counting activities are commonly used. In all these lessons, teachers take full advantage of the opportunities presented to teach number concepts and mathematical understanding, and they identify these in lesson plans.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory** overall. Teaching and learning are **good**. Pupils' attitudes are also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and pupils are good, and so is behaviour management.
- Lessons are introduced well, and they end with good individual evaluation, which is effectively communicated to pupils.
- Lesson planning is good, particularly where targets are set for individual pupils.
- Practical work features strongly in all lessons, but there is limited use of ICT.

Commentary

48. Standards in science throughout the school are well below the national average because of the complexity of the pupils' learning difficulties. Pupils are provided with a good range of learning experiences that are closely linked to the National Curriculum, and teaching and learning are good. Despite the fact that a minority have recently missed up to seven weeks of schooling, pupils make good progress towards their individual targets when they are in school, and achievement is satisfactory.

49. Particular aspects of teaching are very good: lesson planning, behaviour management, the close relationships between staff and pupils, and the ability of staff to make science enjoyable. The planning is especially good where teachers tailor the lessons to take into account the individual targets of the class group, in some cases having a separate lesson plan for each pupil. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and how to make it accessible to pupils; for example, the youngest pupils have explored seeds with their hands, and watered and nurtured plants as part of their study of growth. Pupils in Years 3 to 6, in learning about electrical circuits, role-played the components of a circuit, such as a buzzer, switch and bulb. When joining in a circle, they found that the buzzer sounded and the bulb lit up. This helped them to understand that a circuit must be complete before electricity will flow through the components. During the inspection, pupils in Year 9 were seen learning about how their bodies move. The use of working models helped them to compare their joints with those of a toy. They realised that their elbow and knee joints move one way only, like the hinge of a door. Practical approaches help pupils to see the relationship between science and life outside school. Older pupils have used local facilities for recycling, and have constructed 'junk models'.

50. Expectations are realistic because teachers know the pupils well and have accurate assessments on which to base their lesson plans. All lessons have a good opening, which enables pupils to gain an idea of what they are about to do. Wherever possible, pupils are drawn into the opening discussion. A particular strength is the final session, when each pupil's work is assessed and the pupil is told how he or she has progressed towards his or her targets. Good use is made of praise, and it is evident that pupils steadily grow in confidence as they progress through the school. The skill of teachers and support staff contributes to very positive pupil attitudes, good co-operation and an enthusiasm to reach personal targets.

51. The subject has been satisfactorily led and managed. The subject co-ordinator took over very recently and is only just getting into the role. Training for the co-ordinator's responsibilities has not been undertaken, and such training in the near future would be beneficial. There is a sound policy, and subject plans reflect well the National Curriculum for science. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Assessment is much improved: there are clear records of pupils' academic progress and how they are progressing towards their individual targets. Much of this evidence is photographic, since the majority of pupils are unable to record by conventional means in this subject. Cross-curricular links are good.

52. Resources in the subject have improved, but still need further development. All science teaching takes place in classrooms. This works adequately, but a specialist area would benefit the older pupils, as it would increase the range of practical tasks that could be safely undertaken. Good use is made of the immediate environment to enrich pupils' scientific learning. The school is fortunate in having the large grounds of a neighbouring school at its disposal, enabling considerable work to be done in looking at local plant life and habitats. Trips further afield to rural facilities and light industry are also well used. Little evidence of the use of ICT was seen in lessons or work scrutiny; this is an area for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy using ICT, and their achievements are satisfactory.
- Teaching is good.
- Information and communication technology is well used to support learning in most lessons.
- No plans have been developed showing what should be taught to each class.

Commentary

53. The subject shows good improvement since the previous inspection. The school is well equipped, and teachers make full use of the technology across most curriculum areas. All teachers in the school are aware of the potential of ICT to improve pupils' ability to communicate, control their environment and gain access to information; because of this, they use ICT in their lessons, are competent users of the equipment and positive about its impact on pupils. As a result, pupils benefit; their learning improves and they are able to have access to experiences which could not otherwise be offered. In most lessons, pupils can be observed using a range of switches and alternative communication methods. Higher attaining pupils use Intellikeys to develop pre-reading skills, and other pupils use touch screens to activate software. Pupils' independence is developed well in applying the subject; for example, by the use of voice/speech synthesisers and concept keyboards with Moon overlays. Teachers are secure in their use of ICT and the subject is led satisfactorily by a co-ordinator who is very enthusiastic about the potential of the technology, and is keen to improve her own subject knowledge. Although ICT is well used across the curriculum in support of learning, there is as yet no programme or scheme of work setting out the activities and experiences that pupils should engage in; this is a weakness.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

54. Pupils' use of ICT across all their learning experiences is good. Teachers are well aware of the opportunities offered by the technology, and good examples of pupils confidently using equipment to enhance their ability to understand and communicate were observed in numeracy, literacy, and PSHE lessons.

HUMANITIES

55. Two **geography** lessons were observed. In a lesson with Year 6 pupils, good teaching introduced pupils to maps by exploring a plan of the school. Pupils enjoyed following the plan and very good learning occurred: pupils were able to describe a location visited. In another good lesson, Year 9 pupils studied coastal regions by exploring the activities undertaken on a holiday by the seaside. Good teaching created an atmosphere in which pupils' learning improved by feeling sand, tasting ice cream and hearing the sound of the sea.

56. No **history** lessons were observed during the inspection, but scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the subject is addressed as a way of enabling pupils to gain a sense of time beyond their immediate experience.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and a broad range of learning experiences is provided.
- Resources for religious education are good; they are accessible and well organised.
- Visits to a variety of places of worship enhance pupils' learning.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- The co-ordinator has only been in post for a short period of time, and has not been able to develop the role to any significant extent.

Commentary

57. Pupils are taught well, and are offered a wide range of suitable learning experiences, so they steadily increase their knowledge and understanding of the main world religions. The programme also encourages the development of values, such as respect for cultural differences and an understanding of moral beliefs. Although pupils make good progress in lessons, a significant minority has missed considerable schooling. Nonetheless, achievement is satisfactory.

58. Teachers are skilled in devising methods of helping pupils to understand concepts. In a good lesson for older primary pupils, the focus was on what 'caring and sharing' means. Pupils were asked to name their friends in the class, and the teacher explained to them what it was like to be a good friend. Pupils were given toys to play with and then asked to exchange the toys with their friends. After a period of time they were shown how to share a toy with a friend, so that they could both enjoy playing with it. Each pupil was given an individual task according to their ability, and each successfully completed it.

59. Assemblies support the subject well; pupils have the opportunity to celebrate religious festivals and to take parts in acting out stories. In one assembly observed, pupils were celebrating an Indian festival with the theme of colours. Different coloured and textured edible items were introduced. Pupils were asked to smell, feel and taste. The accompanying story gave the pupils an insight into different festivals and religious celebrations.

60. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only held the position for a short period of time, and the role has not yet been developed. There is a policy and a programme of studies that effectively support the work of teachers. These documents are related to the locally Agreed Syllabus, and in Years 10 to 14, lead to external accreditation through the EQUALS 'Moving On' programme.

61. Assessment procedures are good. Staff know pupils very well because classes are small. This helps teachers to set realistic but challenging targets, and to plan activities that appeal to pupils. Good records give a clear picture of what pupils know and understand, and help teachers to plan the next steps in learning.

62. Teachers have access to a very good range of learning resources of high quality, and they use them well. There is a good range of artefacts, videos, posters and pictures. The team leader has ensured that resources are well organised and accessible by storing them in boxes associated with the main religions. Visits to places of worship form part of the curriculum, and these provide pupils with good experiences of religious and cultural diversity. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No design and technology, or music lessons were seen during the inspection. Neither of these subjects was a focus for this inspection.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils enjoy the activities provided.
- There is a policy and good plans that are followed by all teachers.
- The role of the co-ordinator is not well developed.

Commentary

63. Pupils' achievement in art and design is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in lessons, but a significant minority has missed schooling. Pupils use many different materials in their paintings and collage work. The range of high quality displays around the school is evidence of the wide range of work in the subject. One of these displays depicts the story of Apollo and Daphne, reinforcing a story read to the pupils in a literacy lesson. This was a collaborative effort, with the pupils exploring how shape, form, space, colour and texture can be used to create different designs. The activity also enhanced their social skills, as they had to work as a team to complete the task. In a good lesson, lower secondary pupils had to make a shield, using some of the materials associated with Native American art, with pupils choosing from a selection of materials provided in a box. They discussed their work at the end of the lesson by responding to questions about the task.

64. Good teaching results in good learning and progress for the majority of pupils, regardless of their initial confidence or ability. Lessons are well planned, and there are clearly established routines, which are closely followed. Teachers present very good role models, and have good support from the classroom staff. Pupils enjoy the challenges presented to them and, as a result, respond with enthusiasm and interest.

65. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory, but the role of the co-ordinator is not fully defined or developed. There is a sound policy and adequate planning to guide teachers in shaping their lessons. Good resources are stored in a central base, but there is no art room, and this restricts the range of activities that can be carried out; for instance, ongoing projects cannot be kept out, and there is no kiln for pottery work. There is no means of evaluating the success of teaching, and no long-term vision of how the subject should develop.

66. The school and the co-ordinator have responded positively to the comments of the previous inspection when the overall judgement was that the provision was unsatisfactory. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, and so are pupils' attitudes to the subject.
- The co-ordinator has developed a suitable programme to guide teachers in planning their lessons, but does not have time to develop her role or monitor provision.

Commentary

67. The subject is taught through discrete lessons as well as through other subjects, and it meets statutory requirements. For example, pupils in a Year 10 and 11 science lesson were finding out about rubbish disposal; they decided that burying is a better method than burning, because burning creates an unpleasant smell. Teachers have high expectations, demonstrated in a lesson for pupils in Years 8 and 9, where the topic was children's rights. The teacher introduced the lesson by reminding pupils about the previous week's work, and pupils showed recall of the subject, which was human rights; for instance, one acted as an apple picker and placed an apple in a box to represent workers' rights. The teacher successfully used a variety of objects to represent those things that children are entitled to; for instance, a soft pillow represented the family, and a sticking plaster symbolised health care. Pupils explored these objects with their hands. In addition, pupils had targets related to the development of their communication skills. Staff were mindful of these objectives and ensured that pupils were given opportunities to work towards them. Suitable consolidation was provided by engaging each pupil in the completion of a poster. On the posters, objects depicted the different things to which children are entitled. A good variety of materials ensured that pupils were able to choose from a range of items, colours and textures. Completed posters were shared during the final session, when individual targets were reviewed. All staff took part in recording outcomes for individual pupils. Pupils were well supported in the lessons seen; they enjoyed the tasks and were mostly co-operative, which meant that they worked productively throughout lessons.

68. Although leadership of the subject is satisfactory, management of it is not. The co-ordinator does not have the time to develop the subject, to review records and plans, or to observe others teach. The subject was not reported upon in the previous inspection, so it is not possible to judge improvement.

Personal, social and health education

Provision in PSHE is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress against their individual targets.
- A suitable programme has been planned, but it is not being taught.
- Teaching and learning of mobility and daily living skills is good.
- The co-ordinator has provided satisfactory leadership, but does not have the time to develop her role as a manager of the subject.

Commentary

69. Pupils are set precise individual targets that are closely linked to the objectives on their Statements of Special Educational Needs. These targets are largely to do with skills; for example, the records of a Year 9 pupil shows that he chooses a snack from his choice book, collects the

snack and bowl from the kitchen and takes these back when finished. Detailed records show that pupils make good progress towards their personal and social targets when they are in school. For those who have missed schooling, progress has been interrupted, and they are still working on targets that were set in September. Overall, pupils' achievement against their individual targets is satisfactory.

70. Although the school has not yet implemented a suitable programme of knowledge and understanding, one has been developed, and associated resources have been produced by the co-ordinator. There are some discrete sessions when pupils work on specific skills. For example, pupils work on personal and social skills during snack time, and they work on their mobility skills at every opportunity. Older pupils work on independent daily living skills. These sessions are well taught. When pupils practise their mobility skills, they are set challenging objectives and they are well supported by adults. The most skilled pupils begin to use a long cane to move around the school, and others learn to ride a tricycle, or negotiate obstacles deliberately placed in their path. All pupils use the move from school to family units at lunchtime to practise their skills. Teachers carefully monitor progress and ensure that targets are reviewed as pupils' confidence and skills increase. Suitable lighting and decoration and the strategic placement of objects in corridors help pupils to become familiar with the new building. Traffic markings in the school's grounds give pupils experiences that prepare them for the outside world, such as using a pedestrian crossing. However, the school is not equipped well enough for the teaching of independent daily living skills, because there is no accommodation suitable for this. As a result, pupils have to learn skills in the classroom. Nevertheless, teaching is good, and pupils experience everyday tasks, such as vacuuming, mopping the floor and wiping surfaces. Staff in school record in detail pupils' progress towards the P levels and represent these in summary charts. However, the same summary record is not used in the residential setting, and this is a weakness. School and residential staff are beginning to set common targets for pupils, and this is a worthwhile development.

71. The co-ordinator has demonstrated satisfactory leadership by developing a programme of knowledge and understanding in PSHE, and this includes sex and relationships education in Years 7 to 9 as required. She has also purchased resources for this. However, management is unsatisfactory, as the co-ordinator does not have the time to monitor teaching and learning or to develop her subject. The subject was not fully reported upon at the previous inspection, so it is not possible to judge improvement since then.

Post-16

The provision for Post-16 is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A suitable, accredited curriculum has been adopted, but preparation for transition is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, and pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

Commentary

72. The modular curriculum for pupils from 14 to 19 is externally accredited by EQUALS, and last year pupils achieved between 3 and 6 units each. For pupils over 16, the experiences they have, build well on what they have done previously, but do not prepare them well enough for their post-school placements. Currently, there is one pupil who will leave in the summer, and preparations are only now being made for this. The acting headteacher has started to contact agencies in the pupil's home area, but the pupil has not been involved by being made aware of options. In all other respects, the curriculum offers relevance and a wide range of suitable experiences. It meets the requirement to teach religious education, and has a suitably adult focus; for example, pupils have opportunities to develop their key skills and take part in mini-enterprise activities. The programme covers sex and drugs education, and there is some experience of the world of work.

73. Teaching and learning are good, and occasionally very good. Teachers plan a suitable range of learning experiences, closely linked to adult life. In two very good lessons seen, pupils were making cakes to sell in order to raise money for charity. They responded well and, with the support of the staff, worked enthusiastically. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of such issues as 'friendship' and 'caring for others', and thus develop their personal qualities. Popular music is used to good effect; for instance, the Beatles' song 'Yesterday' was used to signal discussion about the previous day's lesson, and Eminem's rap music was most effective in energising one pupil after lunch. Objects are also used well to help pupils' understanding; for example, the feel of sponge is experienced at the start of the car washing activity.

74. Teachers set realistic and challenging communication targets, and pupils make good progress towards these; they also experience different forms of literature, including poetry and classics, such as 'The Three Musketeers'. Pupils acquire everyday numeracy skills, when they purchase snacks from the campus shop. They also raise funds, through a car washing enterprise, which they donate to the RSPCA. Their visits take them into the local community, such as the RSPCA centre; they learn about local events, such as Crufts dog show at the National Exhibition Centre. Pupils learn about the world of work, both on local visits and on the school site; for instance, a pupil worked alongside the cook to decorate a cake.

75. Leadership is satisfactory; a good deal of work has gone into developing the curriculum. Weaknesses are attributable to the staffing difficulties that the school has experienced, as well as the fact that it has relocated and has had to establish working relationships with a completely new set of external agencies. There are suitable plans to address the weaknesses identified by this inspection team. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	4
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	N/A	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	5	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		5
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	5	5

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