

INSPECTION REPORT

SAXON HILL SCHOOL

Lichfield

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124520

Headteacher: Mr Nigel Carter

Lead inspector: Mr Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th February 2004

Inspection number: 258989

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	101
School address:	Kings Hill Road Lichfield Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS14 9 DE
Telephone number:	01543 510615
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Gill Bradnock
Date of previous inspection:	1 st December 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Saxon Hill School is a residential and day school for boys and girls aged 2 – 19 who all have a statement of special educational need. Pupils have physical disabilities and, increasingly, new admissions have additional medical, sensory, communication and learning difficulties. As a result, while the range of attainment on entry is presently extremely wide, fewer pupils at the higher end of the range are now being admitted. In the current population of pupils, a small number have profound and multiple learning difficulties and, associated with these, very low levels of attainment when they enter school. Other pupils, while below the level expected for their age when they enter, are capable of progressing to take Entry Level Certificate and GCSE courses. There are 101 pupils on roll and nearly twice as many boys as girls. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, some less privileged than others, and all are from homes where English is the main language spoken. They are by majority white British. Of the ten minority ethnic pupils, most are of mixed heritage.

The school's residential provision caters for up to 16 boys and girls and is known as the Sleep-Over Club. This is to emphasis its role in providing mostly short-term support for particular pupils and their parents. Currently, 43 pupils take advantage of the Sleep-Over Club at different times.

Since September 2003, the school has been a Key Learning Centre and is developing a role in supporting mainstream schools in its neighbourhood who have pupils with physical disabilities. A caseload of 108 pupils has rapidly developed, although the extent of involvement in each case varies considerably. Partnerships with another special school and a secondary school involve shared lessons. Students attend courses at a college of further education and take part in a Young Enterprise initiative. The school has awards for Healthy Schools and Careers Education and Guidance. It is undertaking Quality Marks in Basic Skills and Inclusion as well as preparing for Investors in People status.

The headteacher took up his appointment in January 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Religious education Art and design English as an additional language
9146	Mark Brennand	Lay inspector	
2423	Susan Leyden	Team inspector	French Personal, social and health education Citizenship Special educational needs
14943	Eric Peagam	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology
13623	James Waddington	Team inspector	Science Music Physical education
22466	Diane Pearson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Saxon Hill School is a good school with several very good features. The headteacher's very effective leadership is a force for the school's improvement and for developing its new role in supporting pupils with special educational needs in other schools. There are some barriers to pupils' achievement, which are reduced to a large extent by very good teaching. Overall, pupils achieve well and teaching and learning are good. The school is providing good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the headteacher is providing the school with a clear direction and high expectations.
- A significant proportion of teaching and learning is very good.
- Due to the inadequacies in accommodation, in the availability of specialist resources and in the time for teaching in mathematics, science and religious education, pupils are prevented from achieving even more than they already do.
- Provision for children at the Foundation Stage and students in the sixth form is very good.
- Provision in French, art and design, and personal, social and health education is very good.
- Pupils are very well cared for and in most respects are given good support and advice. The Sleep-Over Club makes a very significant contribution to pupils' progress.
- While assessment in the Foundation Stage, in conductive education and in the sixth form is very good, it is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

The extent of the school's improvement is good. Pupils are achieving more because of the huge improvement in the amount of very good teaching and learning. This has had a good effect on their attitudes to school. These are now better, although the difficulties surrounding their transportation to school persist and too little progress has been made on their punctuality and the loss of teaching time. Most subjects and areas of learning have managed a good improvement since the last inspection. This has been very good in art and design and personal, social and health education. However, there has been insufficient improvement in science. The progress made on dealing with the key issues from the previous inspection has been satisfactory, overall.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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.

Overall, achievement is good throughout the school. Standards are always below average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and they are very low where these are most severe; however, what is achieved between Years 1 and 11 and in the sixth form is good. While children in the Foundation Stage do not attain the goals expected to be reached by the end of reception, because the provision is very good, they achieve well. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' achievement is good in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and satisfactorily in science. In Years 7 to 11, achievement in English is good; it is satisfactory in mathematics and science. In nearly all the subjects and courses provided pupils achieve well because of almost uniformly strong

teaching and learning. However, in Years 7 to 11, pupils achieve very well in art and design as a result of lively ambitious teaching and very good learning linking effectively the art and ideas of artists to pupils' own work. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make very good progress in improving movement and manipulation skills through regular and meticulously planned conductive education exercises.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils' relationships with staff and with each other are excellent. To them school is a purposeful and enjoyable place and, as a result, their attitudes towards school are very good. They have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong and pupils invariably behave very well. Attendance is good although punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. A high proportion of teaching is very good. Excellent relationships, lively, expert teaching, and well-planned and resourced lessons motivate pupils to learn. The curriculum throughout the school is adapted well to match the needs and interests of pupils and the recent re-organisation of pupils into ability groups has helped to make teaching more precise in meeting pupils' needs. The way in which teaching is timed in mathematics and religious education and the amount of time for science all have an adverse effect on learning. The programme of conductive education and activities being developed in physical education are making a significant contribution to pupils' physical development. Overall, pupils are very well cared for, especially so in the Sleep-Over Club. While support and guidance are good, the shortcomings in assessment arrangements in Years 7 to 9 and in monitoring pupils' performance generally reduce the school's capacity to help pupils improve and in keeping their parents well informed about their progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, overall. The headteacher is giving a very effective lead in identifying priorities and in taking action to bring about improvements. Most of the work of the school is managed well, by an energetic, expert and well-motivated staff. However, it is unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. The development of the school's new role as a Key Learning Centre is being led and managed effectively, and expertise is now being shared with other schools. The headteacher is well supported by senior staff and governors. Governors are fully committed and increasing their involvement and effectiveness. They meet all of their statutory obligations.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with their children's all-round progress. They ascribe this to the commitment and expertise of the staff in meeting their children's needs during the school day and in the Sleep-Over Club. Pupils appreciate being asked for their opinions and are impressed that their views are acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Re-organise the timetable to achieve a better balance of teaching time in mathematics, science and religious education.
- Promote pupils' competence in numeracy effectively in all subjects and areas of learning.
- Strengthen the procedures for, and use of, assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- Eliminate the shortcomings in classroom accommodation so that there are adequate teaching spaces in which learning is not hindered by a lack of space or disrupted by noise from adjacent rooms or by people moving through the classroom.
- Increase the range of specialist equipment essential for all pupils to have equal access to learning opportunities.

- Resolve the difficulties of access for pupils' transport to the school's entrance in the morning to expedite their arrival and ensure teaching time is not lost by delays.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below and often well below those expected of pupils of the same age because of pupils' special educational needs. Overall, however, achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the school's data on pupils' performance and its analysis are limited, what is available shows achievement is good.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of much expert teaching and well-planned lessons, which are often effectively resourced with good lesson materials.
- While a great deal of teaching is very good, pupils' achievement is not because of the inadequacies in accommodation and the lack of specialist resources some pupils require.

Commentary

1. There is insufficient information available to make a reliable year-on-year comparison of test and examination results or to discern the trend in results over time. On the limited data there is, one group of pupils raised their average point score in national tests between Year 6 and Year 9. Other data shows that between Year 6 and Year 9 pupils have progressed one National Curriculum level. Although the standards this data represents is always below average the change shown is a good achievement for the pupils concerned. A similar picture is found in examination results for pupils in Year 11. There has been a good improvement in achievement since the last inspection at which time pupils' progress was satisfactory, overall.

GCSE	Entries	A* - C	A* - G
English	5	1	5
Mathematics	6	0	5
Science	6	2	6
Design and technology	5	1	4
Art and design	6	2	5

A-C are the highest grades attainable and A*-G are the pass grades*

Entry Level Certificate	Entries	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
English	9		1	8
Mathematics	4			4
Science	9	1	3	5
ICT	9		1	2
Design and technology	4		3	1
Art and design	9		2	5
Religious education	9	1	5	3

Level 3 is the highest level attainable

2. While, as a result of their special educational needs, none will reach the early learning goals, children at the Foundation Stage, nevertheless, achieve well in all the areas of learning. This is a result of the very good quality of teaching. Opportunities for personal development are

planned very well and, because staff have a very good knowledge of their needs, children learn quickly to cope with and enjoy socialising and sharing in group activities. Their speaking and listening skills are well promoted and children communicate enthusiastically, if not using speech then by gestures, symbols and electronic aids. Numerous visits to places outside school build children's good knowledge and understanding of the world.

3. Pupils achieve well in English in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Speaking and listening is promoted more extensively in English and in other subjects; questioning and ensuing discussion is often of a very good quality in many subjects. In English, good teaching leads many pupils to using phonic skills effectively to recognise and read words. If pupils because of physical limitations are unable to write words by hand, they use alternative methods such as arranging magnetic letters into words. Pupils are achieving well in mathematics in Years 1 to 6 as a result of teachers using a well-adapted numeracy strategy. However, this has not yet been extended effectively into Years 7 to 11 where, together with the inadequacies of accommodation and unfavourable timetabling of mathematic lessons, pupils make less progress but achieve satisfactorily. The promotion of numeracy in other subjects is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11, which is another factor contributing to pupils' slower progress. Numeracy is more effectively promoted across subjects in Years 1 to 6 and this contributes to their good achievement. Achievement is satisfactory in science although it is taught for less time than it ought to be. While in Years 7 to 11 teaching is based on good expertise, because the pace of some lessons is slow and good scientific methods are not used, progress is limited. Insufficient space in the science room for larger groups to work also contributes to the lack of scope for better progress.
4. Achievement in the sixth form is good as the result of a broad and well-planned curriculum which includes valuable links with a secondary school and a college in the locality. Students use literacy and numeracy skills well to deal with the everyday demands for independent young adults. In information and communication technology, higher attaining students use a spreadsheet to set out and explore a buying, selling and profit-making operation.
5. The good expertise with which subjects are often taught, combined with well planned and resourced approaches to teaching, is a significant contribution to pupils generally achieving well. In information and communication technology, good progress in knowledge, skills and understanding is driven by pupils being given informed explanations and clear demonstrations, which are made especially effective by using an interactive whiteboard. In art and design, close attention to art and artist informing the development of pupils' ideas and work raises standards significantly. The Pop Art sculpture and portraiture done in Years 7 to 11 are significant successes and, for some pupils, a very good achievement as a result. In information and communication technology and art and design, as seen in several other subjects, the small spaces for work place restrictions on how much more many pupils can achieve. The considerable expertise in the techniques of conductive education is the basis of meticulous planning and targeting in individual programmes for pupils in Year 1 to 6. Exercises are carried out with consummate skill. Pupils make very good progress in improving their physical skills and overcoming disabilities, which is central to their success in all other areas of learning. Personal, social and health education has a high priority in provision across the whole school and as such its programme is planned and organised highly effectively, resulting in pupils achieving well in acquiring self-help skills, gaining independence and preparing well for adulthood.
6. Despite much very good teaching, the scope for pupils to achieve very well is hindered by a combination of adverse circumstances. While the school does the best it can, classrooms are often too small for the large number of pupils in some groups. The open plan arrangement of teaching spaces means the sound from activities in adjacent rooms is poorly insulated and invasive, causing unwelcome distraction. In addition, the arrangement of rooms means that several teaching spaces are used as main thoroughfares, leading to other staff and pupils passing through during lessons and causing further unavoidable distraction. As a good number of pupils use wheelchairs, the already tight space in classrooms is exacerbated; this acts to

slow the pace of learning and progress more than necessary. An added problem for pupils in wheelchairs is a lack of good access to equipment or a sufficient and secure surface on which to work. There are, for example, good computer resources to promote the literacy of children at the Foundation Stage but these are not placed on the right sort of tables so that all children have good access to them. The school is ill-equipped with height-adjustable tables that would provide better access for many pupils. Time is wasted because of the slow arrival of pupils each morning and time is not always used effectively in mathematics, science and religious education. As a result of this, the shortcomings in accommodation and specialist equipment, the majority of pupils do not have the full benefits of much very good teaching, which limits how well they achieve.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good; however, punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work very well together and are very helpful towards each other. Their moral and social development is very good.
- The timing of pupils' arrival each morning is unsatisfactory, the result of persistent problems with the access of their transport to the school entrance.

Commentary

7. Pupils have very positive attitudes and behave very well, which is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Much thought goes into the planning of lessons so that pupils have many opportunities to work harmoniously together. Well-organised paired work in French and personal, social and health education, for example, benefits pupils working together. Regular assemblies provide pupils with the opportunity to applaud each other and give time for reflection and to experience prayer.
8. Pupils have a sharp sense of what is right and show great care for one another; ambulant pupils willingly help those with greater physical disability. Much courtesy is shown by pupils to each other, teachers and visitors. This is a reflection of pupils' very good social development and the high expectations for good behaviour and well-established routines throughout the school. They all behave extremely well in lessons and in all activities throughout the day. A consequence of very good behaviour is that, in lessons, teachers are free to concentrate on teaching and, where they can, pupils maximise their opportunities for learning. Valuable shared activities are provided in the Sleep-Over Club where pupils have extra time together. Sixth form students attend evening classes at a local college and are looking forward to transferring to courses of their choice. There have been very few pupils excluded from school since the previous inspection.

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	90	1	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

9. Pupils' cultural awareness is promoted satisfactorily. Records of events on display work show that pupils have participated in local festivals involving dance and musical activities. In art and design, pupils have produced very creative designs in clay based on African masks and much of the art pupils make is based on their appreciation of the work of artists such as Picasso and Modigliani. In geography, pupils study American Indians and compare city and village life in Brazil. In religious education, they learn about the festivals and celebrations particular to major world religions.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11.7%	School data	0.8%
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

10. Parents speak highly of the school and are keen for their children to attend. Although attendance is good, punctuality is unsatisfactory being affected by the nature of the building, which hinders the speed with which pupils can be unloaded from their transport. As a result there is a considerable delay at the start of the school day. Plans are in hand and action is imminent to change the parking arrangements to create new parking bays to speed up arrivals.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The breadth of experiences for all pupils is good, overall, while in the Foundation Stage and in the sixth form it is very good. Generally, areas of learning, subjects and courses are well taught and learning is at least good throughout the school. All pupils are very well cared for and are given good support and guidance on personal and educational matters.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning is good, overall and, it is very good for children in the Foundation Stage and for students in the sixth form. Assessment is carried out and used satisfactorily although the picture is mixed across the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 71 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	20 (28%)	41 (58%)	10 (14%)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning have improved greatly, which offsets the worst effects of inadequacies in accommodation and specialist resources.
- Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage and in the sixth form.
- While English and mathematics are taught well, the development of numeracy is unsatisfactory in other subjects.
- There is a very large amount of good and very good teaching and learning, leading to pupils achieving well and most having all of their needs met effectively.
- Assessment is used inconsistently and is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

11. While teaching was good at the time of the previous inspection there is a four-fold increase in the proportion of very good teaching now occurring, which is a very good improvement, overall. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and the resultant revision of the schools' teaching and learning policy by the headteacher immediately after his arrival in September 2003, have been decisive in this improvement. The re-organisation of pupils into groups of near similar abilities stemming from these initiatives has enabled teaching to be more precisely targeted on matching work to pupils' strengths. This has played a significant part in pupils now achieving better than they did at the time of the last inspection. The strength of teaching to a large extent allays the detrimental effects caused by unsatisfactory accommodation and inadequate specialist equipment that some pupils need. However, ill effects do show up, for example, at the Foundation Stage where teaching is very good but learning is only good, overall, because some children are unable to access activities as well as others due to the lack of suitable equipment.
12. The uniformly good teaching and learning in English are an improvement linked to a better match of teaching to pupils' learning needs. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 have the advantage of being taught by the one teacher, which builds in continuity to what they are taught. This is more difficult to achieve in Years 1 to 6 where each class is taught English by their own teacher. Because of a lack of monitoring of teaching here, problems arise such as inconsistent practice among teachers in the use of sign language. Pupils' literacy is assessed when they arrive and what this reveals helps significantly in deciding what they are taught. Classes are sometimes split into small groups of similar ability and each is given a different level of work pitched carefully to be challenging. Learning resources have been increased, particularly the supply of reading books, and these support the range of work provided. The lively teaching enthuses pupils; for example, when reading of stories, pupils dress up and role-play the characters. This is very enjoyable and pupils learn a better understanding of the story and its characters. Good opportunities are always prominent in such activities for pupils to use and improve phonic skills and writing. Pupils' literacy is carefully promoted in other subjects of the curriculum, but mainly

in speaking and listening skills because questioning and discussion are such prominent approaches in supporting pupils' learning.

13. Teaching is good in mathematics because lessons are well planned to meet the widely different learning needs of pupils. As a result all pupils are challenged by their work. Good assessment of what they have learnt is used well and ensures mathematical activities continually set high expectations. Classroom assistants work alongside teachers and pupils very effectively in achieving all of this. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of lessons. They react positively to the problem-solving approach frequently used and have learnt well how to choose and apply good methods to find answers. Teachers and classroom assistants have cultivated excellent relationships with pupils and these set the scene for a high level of motivation and confidence in tackling mathematics. Beyond mathematics lessons, the pursuit of numeracy skills in other subjects is unsatisfactory because a strategy is not co-ordinated effectively.
14. Invariably, pupils arrive at lessons in a very good frame of mind and ready to learn. Teachers and classroom assistants are well prepared with good plans of what lessons contain and what pupils will be expected to learn. Consequently, work gets off to a good start and proceeds at a good pace. The timing of different parts of lessons is usually managed well and at the end of each lesson the class comes together to sum up what has been learnt. At lunchtime and at the end of the day the quality of this summing up is sometimes spoiled by other classes moving through the teaching area on their way out. Teachers are assured about their subject matter and with confidence set out their intentions, bolstering this with detailed explanations and demonstrations. In information and communication technology the expert use of an interactive white board makes the explanation of a series of complex instructions needed to operate a program a great deal easier and intelligible. As a result, pupils went on to work independently at computers and learned to utilise the program's facilities. Teachers are always sure to capture pupils' interest early on either by getting them quickly involved in activities or posing them well-focused questions that allow them to show what they have already learnt. These qualities exist to a greater extent in the Foundation Stage, in the sixth form, French, art and design and personal, social and health education, making teaching and learning in these very good. Pupils are confident in making contributions and do not shrink from speaking because they only partially know the answer; quite often together they complete the picture. Relationships are excellent and the support given by teachers and their assistants is always positive and at hand. The various groups of pupils who go out to other schools for some lessons are buoyed by self-confidence and very good social skills, making a good success of these partnerships. They are enthusiastic and get fully involved with other teachers and groups.
15. The wide range and complexity of pupils' learning, physical and medical needs are well understood and treated. The small group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught very well as a result. Their activities are guided by meticulous planning, very good choice and use of sensory resources and close assessment of progress towards targets. The physical development of all pupils in Years 1 to 6 is promoted very effectively through a very well taught programme of conductive education. The teacher is expert and plans exercise regimes for each pupil in great detail. Assessment is highly refined and used very well to measure progress against sharply written targets. The interaction between staff and pupils is intense in its expectations and encouragement. As a result, pupils give maximum concentration and effort to learning to move their limbs, co-ordinate movement and sustain effort. A Year 6 pupil achieved the target of independently sitting upright for three minutes.
16. Assessment was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and the amount of improvement since then is satisfactory, overall. Good progress has been made in devising and implementing assessment in the Foundation Stage. Profiles on children are detailed and a good source of information for staff. Assessment procedures have been improved generally in Years 1 to 6 and are good; for example, there are good baseline assessments for new pupils carried out in English. As a result, teachers are gathering more accurate information on what pupils have learnt and this is being relayed in greater detail to parents. The many courses followed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 have in-built assessment, which teachers make satisfactory use of. However, in design and technology, assessment procedures are seen as

an exemplar by an examination board. Assessment is beginning to inform effective teaching and learning strategies in Years 10 and 11 in information and communication technology and, overall, in French. Assessment arrangements in the sixth form are very good and comply well with the criteria set by external accreditation agencies. This enables teachers to refine their teaching strategies effectively and students give clear statements as to what they need to do to improve in their coursework. In general, teachers assess less thoroughly and constructively for pupils in Years 7 to 9 compared to pupils elsewhere in the school because good procedures have often not been developed. As a consequence, assessment is unsatisfactory in science and information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The enrichment of the curriculum throughout the school is good. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the curriculum is planned well but there is some imbalance in the provision for mathematics, science and religious education.
- Provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form offers a wide range of courses relevant to pupils' and students' needs and aspirations.
- Links with local schools, colleges and the community extend and enrich pupils' experiences.
- The open plan arrangement of classrooms and their small size often act to detract from the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

20. The learning opportunities provided for all pupils are broad and relevant to their interests and needs. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Education for personal, social and health education is placed at the core of pupils' learning experiences and provision is very good. There is also very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage, where a well-balanced programme, adapting early learning goals, provides suitable activities to address children's needs and develop their communication, social and self-help skills. A strong emphasis is given to improving pupils' communication skills throughout the school. Provision is very good in art and design, design and technology, drama and French, in all of which pupils take part in a wide range of imaginative and stimulating activities. New arrangements for grouping pupils by ability rather than age mean each subject is better targeted on pupils' needs and interests. Literacy is promoted through all other subjects satisfactorily but numeracy is not co-ordinated effectively across the school and is unsatisfactory. There is an imbalance in the use of time in mathematics, science and religious education. The current arrangements for checking the breadth and balance within subjects are not yet effective in recognising the problem.
21. Curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is good because pupils follow courses leading to GCSE, Entry Level Certificates and other accredited courses such as Computer Literacy and Information Technology and life-skills awards. As a result, pupils achieve well, overall, in their courses. In the sixth form, provision is very good. A well-planned curriculum provides students with courses of study that are interesting and relevant. The very good links with local schools and colleges broaden the range of students' experiences and introduce them to opportunities that are available in further education. A suitable programme of work experience is undertaken by the majority of pupils and students.
22. The school makes very good provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Very well adapted learning opportunities are well planned and relevant to these pupils' attainments and overall development. The medical, physical, mobility and communication needs of pupils are met effectively by the well-coordinated work of speech and language

therapists and physiotherapists. In addition, the skilfully and sensitively managed conductive education programme makes a significant contribution to the physical development of all pupils in Years 1 to 6, which is being complemented with very well targeted opportunities in physical education.

23. Learning is enriched by a range of additional and enjoyable activities, such as the Dance Club, the French Club, and participation in the Lichfield music festival as well as the many and varied educational visits. Pupils' cultural development and interest in sporting activities are effectively encouraged through involvement with local schools and community facilities.
24. There are a number of aspects of accommodation that make it unsatisfactory overall. These include the small size of many teaching spaces in relation to the number of pupils in classes. In addition, the open plan arrangement of classrooms creates the unavoidable use of teaching spaces as thoroughfares between rooms and the normal traffic around the school often disturbs teaching and pupils' concentration. These arrangements also mean rooms are often poorly insulated from the sounds of adjacent activities and this creates more interference for teaching and learning. There is insufficient specialist furniture to meet the needs of some pupils, especially height-adjustable tables for wheelchair users. The limited space outside the school entrance slows the arrival of pupils in the morning, which results in loss of teaching time. The school is aware of these shortcomings and is taking action to address transportation difficulties but the other issues are presently not budgeted for.
25. Staffing levels are good and staff are well qualified to meet the curriculum needs of pupils. However, the organisation of the high number of teachers employed on a part-time basis is distorting the timetable for teaching mathematics, which is having a detrimental effect on pupils in Years 7 to 9. The lack of technical support in science limits the range of investigations that pupils undertake. Resources in the form of books and other learning materials have been improved significantly and this has been beneficial to the quality of teaching and learning in many lessons. However, specialist resources, such as adjustable work surfaces, are inadequate to meet some pupils' needs and the lack of these hinders the access these pupils have to learning and the pace at which they work.

Care, guidance and support

There are very good procedures for taking care of all pupils and for ensuring their welfare, health and safety. The support and guidance given to pupils are good, although the Sleep-Over Club provides a very good level of care, support and guidance. Pupils' views and opinions are very effectively sought.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of pupils' needs is well known to staff and this ensures they are very well cared for.
- Pupils feel valued and play an effective part in school life through participating in the school council.
- The Sleep-Over Club is very well led and managed in providing very effectively for all the pupils who use it.

Commentary

26. There has been a good improvement in the quality of care and support for pupils. Much work has been done to ensure that all the necessary health and safety checks, from risk assessments to fire drills through to the regular maintenance of lifting hoists, are in place. The governor with oversight of health and safety brings a valuable perspective to issues on the site. The records for child protection are maintained in a very thorough form and lines of responsibility are clear should the designated child protection officer be away from the school.
27. The arrangements for monitoring care and personal needs are very effective. The way in which the school manages the day-to-day needs of pupils is very good. This begins with a very

thorough induction during which a full assessment of each child's dietary, medical and physical needs is undertaken. Parents are fully involved in this process ensuring that the school gets a full picture of their child's needs. During these assessments an individual care plan is drawn up and this provides a very good basis for the ongoing monitoring of their progress. Within the care plans there is a good system for monitoring pupils' personal development with small step awards for achieving specific goals. For example, a child is awarded a sticker when they successfully feed themselves. The small size of each class also means that staff know pupils very well.

28. The general level of care throughout the day, from all staff, is both unobtrusive and very good. There were numerous occasions in lessons when pupils were withdrawn to attend to their medical needs. However, the seamless way in which this was managed meant that there was minimal disruption to lessons.
29. The way in which the school seeks pupils' views through its school council is very good. The sixth form students take the lead role in arranging and recording meetings with representation drawn from as wide a cross-section of the school as is possible. The council serves an important role. Not only does it give pupils an appreciation of the democratic process but, more importantly, it provides them with a say in the running of their school. As a result, they have brought about a number of improvements including the introduction of water coolers, the design of the playground and the interviewing of candidates for the post of headteacher when it came available last year. The level of maturity displayed by the current members demonstrates that it will continue to play a significant role in the future of the school.

The Sleep-Over Club

30. The school has a 16-place residential hostel, known as the Sleep-Over Club, that offers very good provision and support for a significant proportion of pupils and their parents. It is highly popular and extremely well thought of by parents and pupils alike. It is very well managed by a committed and effective head of care and provides consistently good support for pupils' academic and personal development. While a majority of pupils stay for less than the full week, for a number of pupils it offers long-term week-long support. As a result, it is very effective in preparing them for the next stage of their lives in terms both of the development of independence skills and providing access to additional learning, including college courses.
31. The work of the Sleep-Over Club is very well integrated into the overall work of the school and there is very good access to school facilities for pupils staying. For all pupils, there is an appropriate care plan that is used to inform and monitor the experiences offered and there is very effective liaison to ensure that homework and other learning activities support the pupils' in-school learning. Great care is taken to ensure that there is no sense of institutionalisation and pupils are given a high level of self-determination. For example, regular meetings decide on activities and the very good relationships contribute very well to the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere.
32. Relationships within the hostel are very effectively fostered by the high quality of the staff. The high level of commitment they show ensures that the provision is always staffed from within the team so that there is continuity of management of pupils. Staff are confident and experienced and this enables them to participate fully in activities in a way that pupils find very supportive.
33. In addition to supporting learning directly, the Sleep-Over Club makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. They have the opportunity to participate in a number of outside organisations, including Cubs and school youth clubs. Within the hostel, organised evenings celebrate cultural festivals and events such as Burns' Night and the Chinese New Year, during which pupils experience food and practices from a wide range of cultural contexts.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The relationship with parents is good. The partnerships with local schools and colleges are good as are the links with the community. The new role as a Key Learning Centre puts the school's expertise at the heart of provision for pupils with physical disabilities in the local authority.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are kept well informed by the school and they hold the firm view that this is the best school for their children.
- Partnerships with schools and colleges are good. The school's new role as a Key Learning Centre is developing well and experiencing success.

Commentary

34. Parents have very positive views of the school and the way it relates to them. The response to the parents' questionnaire was very supportive and this positive picture was reinforced during interviews with parents. Their overall impression of the school is of the headteacher and staff who are very approachable and who listen and act on their concerns. The school demonstrates its willingness to respond to parents' concerns by introducing a daily home/school book and arranging workshops on Dynavox and communication programmes. Good support for social events and performances and for the work of the League of Friends is further confirmation of the good links which exist.
35. The information provided for parents is good. At the beginning of each term the school issues curriculum sheets detailing the topics that will be covered and this information is supplemented by school newsletters published each half term which give general information about the school and events. Although the annual reports written by teachers on pupils' progress are satisfactory, they have improved in terms of their accuracy and detail in relation to pupils in Years 1 to 6. This is because improvements in assessment and the use of assessment information have been introduced. This is reflected in the good quality of reports to parents but these improvements have not filtered into the reports on pupils in Year 7 onwards and here the detail and accuracy on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory.
36. Support for pupils in mainstream education, through the outreach service, is good. Despite the limit placed on the amount of staff time allocated the school provides an effective service. A great many pupils with physical disabilities in mainstream schools have been brought to attention. The school's very limited resources have been targeted at pupils with greatest need. The level of expertise amongst those managing the service, backed up by the wide resources within the school, means that it is beginning to develop its role successfully as a Key Learning Centre.
37. Since the previous inspection the school has worked hard to develop links with other schools, colleges and work placements and these links are now good. Sixth form students attend lessons in a local secondary school and courses at the further education college. Other pupils join lessons at a nearby special school and pupils from another mainstream secondary school join the weekly French club at Saxon Hill. The headteacher is very keen for the school to be seen as outward looking and to that end he regularly attends meetings of heads in the area. Through this arise joint training events and opportunities to share experiences and develop links further. The school, in conjunction with Staffordshire Partnership, also ensures that every pupil in Years 10 and 11 undertakes a period of work experience, making the provision good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives very strong direction to the school and, overall, provision is managed well. The leadership of other key staff is good. Governors fulfil all of their statutory duties and they support the school effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has made a very good start in setting the school a strong direction in order to bring about improvement.
- Governance is effective and governors are playing a critical part in carrying through developments.
- The leadership and management of provision in the Foundation Stage, in the sixth form and the Sleep-Over Club are very good.
- Leadership is good in most subjects; however, in mathematics and science it is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

38. The headteacher has had a very positive effect on the success of the school since his appointment in January 2003. His very good leadership and substantial experience of leadership in special schools, together with professional development of leadership and management skills, are being put to good use to bring about significant improvement. Accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has produced a clear set of priorities for improvement, which are well underway. However, they are not, as yet, in every case sufficiently carried through to see the benefits in all the school's provision. The headteacher has the faith and trust of staff and this is acting as a strong motivator for the senior management team and all others.
39. The headteacher's early attention to the quality of teaching and the subsequent implementation of a new teaching and learning policy have been almost immediate in raising standards in teaching throughout the school. Nevertheless, the effect of how the large number of part-time teaching posts is arranged is detrimental to well-balanced teaching in mathematics. This is understood and being broached, gradually. What might appear to be a peripheral development – the impending extension of the school car park – is in fact an essential step in strategic direction. This is because it removes cars from the school entrance, allows pupils' transport far greater access and will improve punctuality and give more time for teaching. This was a key issue from the previous inspection, which had not been given the priority it needed to be given in order to support improvements to provision before the new headteacher arrived. The role of the school as a Key Learning Centre, started in September 2003, to support pupils with physical disabilities in mainstream schools is at an early stage but its development is being well led and managed. The surprisingly high level of demand from schools stretches the total amount of resources made available. Given all other priorities, the role, while valued, puts additional strains on resources. However, the staff involved are determined and imaginative in deploying their expertise and that of other staff to support their mainstream partners.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1221600
Total expenditure	1218461
Expenditure per pupil	12184

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	8580
Balance carried forward to the next	3139

40. Governors are deeply committed to the welfare and success of pupils. They give generously of their time to be closely involved and supportive. They see to all of their responsibilities and conduct the business of governance effectively, which ensures that statutory obligations are all met. Their regular review of policies helps them do this well. The governors' relationship with the headteacher is positive and constructive. His evaluative skills have helped them to a sharper view of provision and, in turn, this has been empowering in relation to their forming critical views and understanding the school's priorities. They speak knowledgeably and confidently about the school's achievements and what still needs to be achieved.
41. Leadership and management in nearly all subjects are good and often very good. However, leadership and management in mathematics and science are unsatisfactory. Effective leadership and management have been vital to achieving good, provision in most subjects against the background of inadequacies in accommodation and essential specialist resources for some pupils. Success is sometimes down to good partnerships between teachers sharing the task of co-ordinating subjects, particularly in keeping an informal track of the quality of provision. In subjects where partnerships are not as strong, it has an adverse impact on provision and pupils' achievements. For example, leadership and management are unsatisfactory in mathematics because there are too many teachers involved in its co-ordination across the school to achieve consistency in provision. The situation is also unsatisfactory in science, where co-ordination lacks a clear vision for the subject across the school and is not based on effective monitoring of provision. One result is that assessment of pupils' progress is patchy in science.
42. Very good leadership of provision for children in the Foundation Stage has brought about good improvements to nearly all areas of learning with the result that children have a much richer range of experiences. Similarly in the sixth form, opportunities for students to extend their learning in the community are being pursued energetically and planned in outstanding detail. Very good leadership and management of the Sleep-Over Club Leadership ensure it makes a very valuable contribution to resident pupils' personal care and development and to supporting their academic progress.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

There are very good arrangements for the admission of children and the support of parents. The initial assessment done on children is very good in identifying their needs and informing the targets to be worked towards. All of the work involving early learning goals is very well led and managed and contains a team offering a model of very good practice. As a result, there has been a good improvement in provision since the last inspection, especially in the quality of teaching and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very well planned opportunities for children to develop friendships and make choices.

Commentary

43. All children are achieving well as a result of very good teaching and learning. They are included effectively in many experiences, for example in school assemblies and taking part in celebrations, social and religious events. In many instances, there is a very good emphasis placed on encouraging children's trust and their sense of belonging to a group. This is especially well handled during breaks and lunchtimes. As a consequence, children learn to be friendly. The very well planned opportunities for personal development result in children feeling safe and secure. The teacher and assistants are very sensitive to each child's needs. While children will not reach the early learning goal, they progress well in developing eye contact and, through trying hard, in making choices between either milk or fruit drinks.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The opportunities for most children to develop communication, language and literacy are good, but some children's access to the information and communication technology resources is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

44. While all children will not reach the early learning goal, they achieve well as the result of very good teaching. The teacher and assistants use every opportunity during activities to encourage children to respond and communicate, particularly in speaking and listening. These skills are promoted well by the staff using jelly switches, signs and symbols. They help children indicate their preferences and to vocalise these as much as possible. For example, after a football game in the hall three children described kicking the ball and running. Other children contributed by using an action to respond such as kicking their legs. A few children copy signs and all clap their hands together in applauding each other. During the 'good morning song' the teacher was very careful to gain each child's attention and elicit their responses. A visit to the local library encouraged very good learning about books and the enjoyment of rhymes, pictures and being read to. Children were delighted by the pictures and most followed the story well.

The use of computer programs and communication boards are beginning to support independent learning; however, the lack of suitable height tables means that not all children are positioned properly to see the computer screen, which diminishes the quality of their learning in all areas. Children have good experiences of early writing activities through learning to grasp brushes and crayons and by making marks freely on paper.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well through the very good opportunities provided to promote mathematics in all activities

Commentary

45. All children achieve well because teaching is very good. Counting is encouraged and very good learning is promoted using enjoyable number games. Two children counted all the way up to 20 and all were enthusiastic in joining in counting in various smaller amounts. Staff fully involve each child in the great many opportunities which are very well devised to develop numeracy. For example, children counted each step they took as they played the game "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" One boy has made very good progress in indicating his preferences by signalling 'yes' or 'no' by touching the first or second finger of the teacher. While no children will reach the early learning goal, a few anticipate the next number in a series and have made good progress in counting in steps of five and ten.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many exciting opportunities provided for children to go on visits and explore materials.

Commentary

46. All children achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good. Effective use is made of 'objects of reference' in teaching and, as a result, children know which activity is to happen and when during the day. This ensures they are all very well included in the day's work. Assistants give very good support to children, for example, by showing how to dig with different tools in the sand box and to find the buried shells or feel the shapes of objects hidden in the sand. While no children will reach the early learning goal, achievement is promoted well through many visits to places outside school such as the fire station, local parks, a donkey sanctuary, zoo and sea life centre. There is very good teaching attached to all of these activities. Along with pupils in the school, children experience the fun and social interaction promoted by music and visitors for Harvest Festival, Christmas celebrations, the Harry Potter sports day and a pumpkin party.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good attention paid to pupils' physical development although for some this is hindered occasionally by the lack of appropriate equipment.

Commentary

47. Teaching and learning are very good and all children, while not reaching the early learning goal, achieve well. The close attention given to correct seating and to the routines of standing and walking supports physical development of most children very well. While much care is taken by staff to ensure children are in the best position to take a part in lessons, because there are no adjustable tables a few have less good access to some activities. Achievement is good in physical development. Children anticipate actions and enjoy kicking a large ball. Assistants involve all children well in playing rough and tumble games in the soft play area. Children take turns and listen well to instructions. Most are developing hand and eye co-ordination well in activities through pressing switches or using a mouse to play a number game on the computer. Very good attention to children's individual targets leads to their good progress in holding objects and manipulating with their hand. Children enjoy activities in the hydrotherapy pool and, here, singing games help children not to resist but to relax and enjoy the freedom of movement in water.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for creativity and imagination made in music, drama, topic work and creative activities.

Commentary

48. While the classroom has no separate area for children's free play, achievement is good because the very good teaching provides a variety of creative activities to meet individual needs using the space available. In their topic on fire fighters, children dress in a helmet and uniform, encouraging them into an imaginative role playing firemen. Children enjoyed the street musicians performing during the Lichfield Festival. Most make good progress in exploring different materials although none will reach the early learning goal. Children had great fun with glitter when they used brushes and hands to spread paint on a frieze of 'The Five Speckled Frogs'. They were effectively encouraged to explore the properties of corn flour and water, slapping, pouring and pushing the mixture around.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management in English have resulted in very good progress in developing relevant programmes of teaching throughout the school. There has been a very good improvement, overall, since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 to 6, and very good in Years 7 to 11.
- Small classrooms and the arrangement of space sometimes get in the way of learning.

Commentary

49. Teaching and learning have improved, which has been of particular benefit to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Work is better matched to pupils' needs and they are now offered courses with appropriate accreditation. The co-ordinators for English have worked very hard to improve the subject. They have introduced a meticulous assessment of pupils' individual needs in regard to teaching them English. They have also improved the resources in the subject. As all of the pupils in Years 7 to 11 are taught English by one teacher this ensures a high level of consistency in what is taught. It helps also in gaining a very good overview of the progress in Years 7 to 11. As individual class teachers teach English in Years 1 to 6 and no systematic monitoring and evaluation of provision are carried out, the consistency of what is taught is not of the same high quality. There is not, for example, a consistent approach among teachers to signing with pupils. The use made of symbols and picture exchange cards by a few pupils is effective but there is no consistent use of these means of communication across groups. Speech and language therapists contribute well to formulating the targets in each pupil's individual education plan and their assessment is invaluable as a pre-requisite to planning pupils' language development.
50. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good in speaking and listening, reading and writing because teaching and learning are effective. The teacher divides the class into small groups of matching ability and gives each suitably challenging work. In lessons, good use is made of stories emphasising letter sounds and teaching reinforces these well. Pupils make good progress in writing words and using phonic skills to recognise the sounds of letters. Stories are brought to life for pupils with the good use of dressing up as characters and their understanding of the story is well consolidated by matching a series of pictures that follow the story line. The achievement of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. Teaching is very sensitive to their needs and communication with pupils involves a very good use of voice and drama, which elicits good responses. Pupils show their involvement using their body movements and happy vocal responses as they anticipate their turn. The use of specialist communication equipment is being developed but not yet being operated at a sufficiently effective level to meet needs fully. As some pupils use wheelchairs limited classroom space becomes very crowded and, because classrooms are thoroughfares, people continually passing through during lessons is a disruption to good concentration.
51. Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Very good teaching and learning are based on very detailed planning. In Year 9, for example, this ensures pupils know what they have to do in writing a report on *Macbeth*. As a result, they work together well in discussing and planning their investigation of *Macbeth*. Good use by the teacher of correct terms and examples of exciting phrases helped pupils express themselves

using more complex words. Pupils were confident and made good progress in writing sentences, giving a good headline and a report of the facts of the plot.

52. A very good knowledge of English and very good lesson organisation ensure pupils in Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve their individual targets for reading, spelling and writing sentences. The work is clearly planned for each class according to their ability and is well supported by the assistants. As a result, in 2003, five pupils were entered for the GCSE in English of whom one gained an A*-C pass and four gained A*-G passes. In the less demanding Entry Level Certificate, eight of the nine pupils entered achieved the highest level pass. All of these results are a clear reflection of pupils' good achievement by the end of Year 11.
53. Those who stay on to the sixth form make good progress in all areas of literacy linked to their vocational courses such as ordering lunches over the telephone and word processing menus. They work together, exploring their knowledge of everyday emotions they face, and this has made a valuable contribution to their understanding of pressures in real-life work situations.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Pupils' literacy is promoted satisfactorily across the curriculum. Speaking and listening are emphasised well through all subjects and all aspects of the school day. In the best teaching, pupils are engaged by the use of rich vocabulary, for example in a Year 2 art lesson, where they learnt naming words for fruit and colours and describing words such as 'round', 'long', 'soft' and 'hard'. The quality of questioning and ensuing discussion is a particular feature of teaching and learning in mathematics, science, French and design and technology. The discussion on castles in a history lesson led to good writing on the best defensive features of castles. When writing, pupils are sometimes challenged well to use the correct punctuation such as including speech marks appropriately. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are encouraged to concentrate and follow the 'Big Book' stories. In Year 4, pupils read numbers in their written form in mathematics and in Year 2 they recognise days of the week on word cards in a physical education lesson.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

FRENCH

The provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well. They develop confidence in using French because of the very good teaching.
- A broad, well-planned and interesting curriculum meets the needs of pupils with widely varying needs and abilities.
- Pupils' interest in learning and using French is encouraged across the school and through the many varied extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

55. For many pupils, writing in French is limited by their difficulties with fine motor control, so more often the emphasis in lessons is given to oral work. In lessons, pupils recognise and give the correct words for everyday objects and descriptions and use these in short phrases and sentences when practising talking to one another. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show recognition of words by pointing to, or choosing, the correct picture in context and indicate choices between items of food or drink. Higher attaining pupils take part in structured conversations involving three- or four-word phrases and sentences. They talk about the weather, describe themselves and their family, find their way about town, order drinks or meals, make enquiries, and express likes, dislikes and feelings confidently. Pupils recall what

they have learned in previous lessons and build on this in practising new phrases. Pupils work hard to use correct pronunciation and intonation because they enjoy their lessons and they receive very good encouragement from the teacher and support assistant.

56. Teaching and learning in French have improved well since the last inspection. As a language specialist, the teacher's lively and energetic approach and the well-planned and stimulating activities maintain pupils' interest and involvement throughout the lesson. Pupils develop confidence in listening and speaking in pairs and groups because work is carefully matched to their needs and abilities and pupils are able to practise their new skills in many different situations. Expectations are high and, as a result, pupils work hard to improve their ability to use the target language. They respond well to the teacher's enthusiasm and particularly enjoy the role-play activities. Detailed knowledge about each pupil's stage of learning and individual needs is effectively used in planning. The range and quality of resources, including information and communication technology, have recently been improved and are being well used to increase pupils' interest and enjoyment in the learning activities.
57. The leadership and management of French are very good. A well-chosen curriculum, suitably adapted for pupils' needs, is designed to provide practice, consolidation and development of skills without undue repetition. Clear and detailed planning, meticulous preparation for lessons and excellent documentation provide a very good structure for teaching the language. Pupils' progress is continuously monitored and their achievements are recorded through summary statements on what they are able to do. Procedures for recording more detailed information on pupils' progress are being developed. The introduction of a weekly French Club supported by pupils from a local secondary school, the various 'special event' days and the bi-annual visits to France, all make an important contribution to the modern foreign languages curriculum and enrich pupils' experience of learning another language.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in Years 1 to 6.
- The pattern of part-time teaching together with the inadequate accommodation for pupils' in Years 7 to 11 means their achievement is no better than satisfactory.
- Teaching is good overall and this is reflected in learning.
- There is no whole-school structure for the co-ordination of mathematics and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that numeracy is promoted through work in other subjects.

Commentary

58. Good achievement is largely the result of the school's commitment to using an adapted version of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been in place longer for pupils in Years 1 to 6. In Years 7 to 11, the way the large number of part-time teachers are organised makes the timing of lessons over the week awkward, taking away from the quality of learning and achievement, for example having two separate lessons in one day and none in others. This situation is exacerbated by small classrooms and the fact that poor insulation from the sounds of adjacent lessons is a distraction. All of this hinders pupils achieving better than satisfactory. However, the development of setting by ability throughout the school has enabled teachers to begin working more effectively in relation to each pupil's attainment. For students in the sixth form, who have significantly greater learning difficulties, the individualised curriculum is effective in securing sound achievement. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to take externally accredited examinations. In 2003, of the six entered for GCSE, five passed with A*-G grades. The four pupils entered for the Entry Level Certificate all achieved the highest grade.

59. Teachers plan effectively for the wide range of attainment found in most classes, so that higher attaining pupils are properly challenged. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly so that they are well able to match work to individuals. Support staff are also very effective in lessons, undertaking a wide range of responsibility for supporting and monitoring learning. There is a strong emphasis on practical learning and, as a result, pupils achieve equally well across all strands of the subject. They are increasingly able to select for themselves the mathematics needed to solve a problem posed in words. The excellent relationships within classes, and in particular the rapport between teachers and pupils, go a long way to creating a vibrant learning atmosphere within which external disturbance is tolerated good-humouredly. Teaching and learning are supported well by the high quality of pupils' behaviour and commitment to learning which is always good and frequently very good.
60. The co-ordination of mathematics across the school is divided between several teachers and is unsatisfactory. There is good liaison between teachers of adjacent year groups to ensure that information is passed on and that there is continuity in pupils' learning. However, the lack of leadership and management giving a clear direction to mathematics limits the cohesion of the school's approach to the subject. In particular, there is nobody with responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of cross-curricular numeracy planning and, in consequence, provision is patchy. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Recent developments, in particular the introduction of national strategies and the practice of setting by ability, are bringing about significant improvements in pupils' performance. Formal evaluation of attainment and progress are beginning to be firmly established and the school has adopted an appropriate method for tracking and evaluating individuals' progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. The approach to the promotion and application of numeracy skills in and through work in other subjects is variable and is insufficiently established within the school. It is better in Years 1 to 6 where class teachers plan the whole programme and relate work to that which they are undertaking in other subjects. For pupils in Years 7 to 11, the lack of a strategy to promote numeracy skills means that, although there are examples of mathematics being used in other subjects, these, overall, do not develop pupils' numeracy skills sufficiently.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of technical support limits learning opportunities in lessons conducted by non-specialist staff in rooms other than the dedicated science room.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is based on a good knowledge of science but some lessons are not organised effectively.
- Leadership in science is unsatisfactory, resulting in there being insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

62. Difficulties in recruiting technical support staff mean that guidance and support on health and safety matters for non-specialist staff in Years 1 to 6 is lacking. It also means that the teachers do not have access to resources and assistance to carry out a wide range of investigations. As a result, as their subject knowledge is only just adequate, teaching is limited to basic experimental work. This restricts the quality and range of learning. Achievement across the school is satisfactory as teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Consequently, by the end of Year 2, most pupils have an awareness of parts of the human body and what plants need to survive and grow. At the end of Year 6 most pupils undertake simple experiments such

as tests on materials for strength and waterproofing, but there is too little challenge from the limited range of work to ensure that pupils extend their learning further.

63. In Years 7 to 11, pupils achieve satisfactorily in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a good range of accreditation available for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, of the six pupils entered for the GCSE in science, two passed with A*-C grades and four passed with A*-G grades. Nine pupils were entered for the Entry Level Certificate of whom five achieved the highest level. There is good emphasis on pupils acquiring appropriate scientific vocabulary. Pupils are taught to behave responsibly and safely as they conduct experiments. The learning of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 is consolidated well through discussions of what they have learnt at the end of each lesson. Although lesson organisation is satisfactory, the pace of some lessons is slow. In addition, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to develop independent learning and investigative skills. Few pupils, even by the beginning of Year 8, securely write up the results of their experiments. By the end of Year 9, however, knowledge of what constitutes a fair test in experimental work is more secure for middle and higher attaining pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic about aspects of their practical work and even some with significant additional learning needs discuss aspects of their practical work with confidence.
64. The subject co-ordinator does not have a clear vision for the development of science. The science curriculum is not monitored with the result that pupils throughout the school receive less than the recommended time for the subject. Assessment is not fully in place across all of the school. The school is beginning to explore the science aspects associated with the Key Stage 3 Strategy but this has not yet had an effect on pupil learning. Limited funding for science has meant there is a limited range of resources such as textbooks and artefacts. Data logging equipment has been recently acquired and there is access to an interactive whiteboard, but this technology has yet to impact on the learning of the majority of pupils. Improvement is unsatisfactory. The science room has been redeveloped, and deficiencies such as an inadequate preparation area and lack of a fume cupboard have been addressed. Whilst adequate for small groups of six or seven, the science room is still not adequate for the larger groups. Also, space does not allow for any significant display of pupils' work or other visual material to support pupils' learning and self-esteem.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement throughout the school is good.
- Teaching and learning is good, overall.
- While the information and communication technology room has some good features, it is too small. Being a thoroughfare for other classes distracts from learning.
- The good use of information and communication technology in some subjects contributes to pupils' achievement in these areas.

Commentary

65. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress in information and communication technology through its general use in lessons. New resources are being rapidly developed, which contribute to good achievement, in particular the introduction of a range of electronic communication aids such as electronic writers and voice synthesisers. In addition, video, digital cameras and interactive whiteboards are in regular use by staff and pupils. By the end of Year 2, pupils operate simple programs by following on-screen instructions and using a mouse as a control. Higher attaining pupils access programs independently. They use word processing and design decorative patterns, print their finished work. Pupils with profound and

multiple learning difficulties respond well to the sound and voice effects they make by operating a simple switch. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils add images to their word-processed texts and include features such as tables and sounds into the work done on computer.

66. Good achievement in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form stems from expert and direct teaching of the subject in well-resourced conditions. Pupils are particularly interested in developing their command of computers and demonstrate much self-confidence in tackling the challenges presented in information and communication technology lessons. In Year 7, higher attaining pupils answer questions knowledgeably on using the Internet, naming search engines and explaining how to capture images from Internet sites for use in their documents. Their technique in using the keyboard, mouse and on-screen tools is self-assured. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils have gained a good understanding of creating and using spreadsheets and databases. A lower attaining pupil, for example, developed a spreadsheet from a survey of car colours and used the spreadsheet program to make a bar graph, which showed the most and least popular colours.
67. In Year 11, pupils understand how computers and their programs control machinery and automate processes. They explain clearly the principles of the input and output commands that achieve automation and, largely independently, construct a computer program of command loops that provide the correct sequences to set and operate a burglar alarm. In 2003, nine pupils were entered for the Entry Level Certificate of whom eight achieved the highest grade and one a grade below that. These results are a clear reflection of their good achievement. In the sixth form, higher attaining students are completing the first level of the Computer Literacy and Information and Technology course, while other students follow an information and communication technology module for the Youth Award Scheme. Higher attaining students work independently on making a spreadsheet to log data on buying and selling quantities of produce and for calculating their profits. They know how to enter data into cells and to accurately construct the mathematical formulae to automatically perform the calculations required. Students also join pupils at a local comprehensive school for lessons and achieve well in building and extracting information from a database. Lower attaining students investigate and make a word processed list of all the uses of computer technology they can find in school.
68. Good teaching in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form is based on a broad knowledge of the subject. The programme of what pupils are taught is well planned, providing many and varied experiences, which pupils and students find interesting and challenging. The teacher's subject knowledge is used effectively to explain the work to be done and to demonstrate what pupils and students need to know in order to do it. In this respect, the large interactive whiteboard is used very effectively to set out clearly the often complicated steps needed to be performed, for example, in making a flow chart of command loops. As a result, this use of the whiteboard contributes significantly to pupils' and students' learning and their good achievement. They quickly grasp an understanding of what they have to do and mostly work independently at computers. This frees the teacher to observe each pupil's performance and to give advice and support where it is needed, again contributing considerably to good learning. While the information and communication technology room is small, it is set out reasonably well so that pupils in wheelchairs have direct access to computers. Movement in the classroom needs to be managed carefully if there are more than a few wheelchairs involved and this takes away from the pace of work. The fact that part of the room acts as a thoroughfare for other classes occasionally disrupts teaching and learning; for example, when the teacher was summing up a lesson, another class was moving through the room. This was too much of a distraction for that lesson to be completed well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily overall across the curriculum but increasingly well in some subjects as a result of the good leadership and management of the subject. Information and communication technology is used well in design and technology

because this subject shares the same subject co-ordinator. Pupils employ computer-aided design to set out plans and three-dimensional representations of the work. The Internet is used widely for research, for example in history and art and design. In the latter, as a result, pupils have learnt about, and taken an interest in, the work of particular artists. They also use digital photography and the manipulation of digital imagery extensively in their art work. Throughout the school, pupils use computers to create designs using lettering or repeat patterns. Some children in the Foundation Stage are hampered in accessing computers because table tops are not adjustable to suit their individual needs. Information and communication technology is used insufficiently in science. The subject is benefiting from new technology resources but they are yet to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

70. The co-ordinator for information and communication technology provides training in school on the use of equipment and programs to staff, which is succeeding in raising the profile of new technology in the teaching across the curriculum. This has resulted in a good and broad improvement in the subject. The standards achieved are higher now, teaching and learning are better and the curriculum now meets statutory requirements.

HUMANITIES

A total of seven lessons were seen in humanities. Two lessons were seen in religious education along with a lesson in a local comprehensive school joined by students from the sixth form. The religious education curriculum has been written in the light of the locally agreed syllabus and national guidance on teaching the subject. It meets statutory requirements. In geography and history, two lessons in each were seen. This is insufficient basis to make judgements on overall provision, pupils' achievement or teaching and learning in these subjects.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

71. Co-ordinators have good subject knowledge which they share with other staff. Young pupils experience and explore geographical and historical facts through topic work. They visit interesting places such as the Botanical Garden and local parks. One group has made good progress in finding information using the Internet in order to study the foods of the Caribbean islands. Learning is effective as the good use of stories illustrates the lives of families in other parts of the world, although small spaces to work in and the lack of tables at the correct height inhibit the learning for some pupils.
72. In Year 7, pupils build on their skills of observation over time and understand the development of Ecosystems. Good planning and the good use of time in the lesson observed ensured pupils enjoyed their work and used lots of relevant language to discriminate between facilities in a Brazilian village and those in a city. Pupils showed they know that people are poor, that they walk to the city to look for work and a few remembered the word 'migration'. In Years 8 and 9, pupils work well independently and also carry out research together. They discuss historical facts, use the Internet to gather information and write sentences on the aspects of the defence of motte and bailey castles.
73. Pupils in Year 10 learn well from completing research on the City of Lichfield. They discuss the positive and negative points arising from their discoveries and illustrate points well using photographs and word-processed text. There is good evidence that a few pupils are developing personal initiative in discussion. All pupils know what they have to do towards their work for accreditation and complete work at home. In 2003, of the nine pupils entered for the Entry Level Certificate in humanities, five achieved the highest level and the rest one level below that.
74. There has been good improvement since the last inspection; the programme of what pupils are taught is comprehensive.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

75. The school's records of pupils' work in religious education show that by the end of Year 2 they listen and respond to stories dealing with topics such as their own and other people's feelings. They know about good human values through exploring the vulnerability of small creatures and the care they need from people. Pupils also listen to stories from the Bible and from other religions. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils compare the differences in beliefs in various religions and treat all views sensitively. However, current timetabling of subjects results in the main group of Years 5 and 6 pupils have insufficient time to complete the programme of religious education planned for them, which is confirmed by the small amount of work completed by them over time. The reports of pupils' progress by the end of Year 9 are inadequate in showing what they have studied and achieved.
76. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow an Entry Level Certificate course and in 2003, of the nine entered, three achieved the highest grade, and five achieved a grade below that. These results would rank religious education alongside other subjects where pupils' achievement is satisfactory. A lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11 presented a relevant, interesting and challenging topic on the inequalities affecting women. In discussion, pupils related their knowledge of the treatment of women in some cultures to the theme. The discussion did not go much further than listing examples of inequalities although most pupils could have been challenged to analyse what gives rise to these. Students in the sixth form taking part in a religious education lesson at a local comprehensive school were better challenged in a lively discussion of spirituality and materialism in which they explored what spirituality could mean.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, the planning of what pupils are taught and the quality of learning are good.
- There are significant developments in the use of information and communication technology to improve standards and access.
- There is a very good range of materials and processes available to pupils.
- Although the accommodation is improved, it is still insufficient to meet all pupils' needs.

Commentary

77. Pupils are achieving well as a result of the well-structured curriculum and the skilled teaching they receive. The subject is well established in the school and is promoted effectively by subject leaders. Assessment is being used with increasing effect. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, the school has developed a planning framework for their coursework that very effectively steers them through the assessment criteria so that they can be sure of meeting the requirements. This has been so successful that the examination board has used it as an exemplar for other schools. Pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school and, although only a small and declining number go on to take the GCSE, most pupils achieve external accreditation in Entry Level Certificate or, increasingly, in vocational studies through the Transition Challenge. In 2003, five pupils were entered for the GCSE in design and technology of whom one passed with a grade C and three others with a grade D. At the same time in the Entry Level Certificate, of the four pupils involved, one gained the highest level and three a level below that.
78. Effective teaching promotes good learning. Teachers have developed good expertise in the subject and use their good knowledge of pupils' needs to ensure that work is well matched to ability. Pupils build very effectively on their previous learning and develop a secure repertoire of skills and knowledge. Learning is also well supported by the good attitudes that pupils display

in lessons. Throughout their time in the school, they learn to employ a variety of hand and power tools, which they use safely and carefully, making sure that, for example, goggles are worn when using cutting or shaping equipment. In food technology, they learn to follow hygiene rules and understand these well enough to explain their importance.

79. In Years 1 to 6, pupils develop skills in making choices based on an evaluation of the needs that are to be met and increasingly apply these to a wide range of materials, using a full range of processes. These pupils learn to handle, shape and join a variety of materials using different fastenings and techniques and apply this knowledge to designing and making projects in different materials. As they progress through the school, they explore the ways in which different mechanisms such as levers, cogs, pulleys and pneumatics can be used to transfer movement, using construction kits and reclaimed materials as well as card. They develop skills with resistant materials as they make wooden picture frames, applying their increasing knowledge of structures to strengthening the corners, and develop understanding of structural issues when they design and build a model tower. They have a good range of experiences with compliant materials, including food and textiles in a variety of settings.
80. In Years 7 to 9, the scope for designing and making artefacts has been significantly improved by the introduction of plastics technology. This includes a strip bender and vacuum former, but most significantly, the introduction of computer-aided design equipment that enables pupils with limited manipulative skills to design and produce complex shapes accurately, for example a chassis for a sand yacht. In addition, there is very effective use of information and communication technology. Pupils use computers to create decorative patterns and to finish their work using graphics packages, and confidently use the Internet to research designs and download and incorporate images into their design briefs.
81. Although there is no overall co-ordinator, the co-operative and mutually supportive relationships between the primary and secondary co-ordinators ensure that the subject is well led, managed and promoted across the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall; facilities have improved and there is a more coherent curriculum. As a result, achievement, especially for pupils in Years 1 to 6, has improved from satisfactory to good. There is now a specialist facility for design and technology and food technology and this is a satisfactory improvement, but the rooms are not well designed and are too small for the needs of the pupils. In addition, the absence of flexible-height furniture makes it difficult for those pupils using wheelchairs to easily access the full range of facilities.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good, expert, challenging and enthusiastic teaching results in pupils of all abilities achieving well and by the end of Year 11, achieving very well.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject have established a high profile for art and design across the school. This is strongly conveyed in excellent displays of pupils' work in the corridors and rooms throughout the school.

Commentary

82. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well and in Years 7 to 11 they achieve very well. This is a result of the combined effects of the subject's main strengths, which amount to a very good improvement since the last inspection.

83. Art and design is taught in a variety of appropriate ways that closely match the wide range of pupils' needs and attainment. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is set out in a clear structure and detail that makes it possible for the non-specialist teachers to teach very effectively and provide the right type of work in challenging ways for their classes. Art and design is pointed at developing physical skills and sensory responses in pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and they achieve well exploring the colours, black and white in paints, patterns and materials. These pupils looked closely as the paint spread and made good efforts to hold and move rollers and paint brushes. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were very effectively engaged in conversation about and exploration of fruit. The teacher injected a rich vocabulary, naming the many fruits being passed round, describing their colours, shapes and smell. Pupils recognised their colours. They counted the fruit, cut some in half or made two slices in the deliberate promotion of their mathematical knowledge and skills. Higher attaining pupils work independently, choosing materials and printing patterns from leaves, and making repeat patterns using a computer program. Most lessons are linked to work made by artists.
84. In Years 7 to 11, pupils are taught with greater expertise and are challenged very well to develop their own ideas using research and experiment to extend and refine their work. Often they employ the Internet and their own digital photography as means to achieve this. As a result, pupils in Years 7 to 9 succeed in constructing very effective giant hamburgers, chocolate bars and drinks cans reflecting a Pop Art style. They choose from a wide variety of scrap materials to achieve the colours and textures of their objects. Pupils' physical difficulties are no limit to their creative ambitions. In pottery, they roll, shape and build clay into abstract patterns. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have developed their own ideas from looking at the designs of African masks. They show an acute eye for detail and painstakingly model and assemble clay motifs that strongly reflect the qualities of African art. In 2003, of the six Year 11 pupils entered for GCSE in art and design, two gained A*-C grades and three gained A*-G passes. Of the nine pupils taking the less demanding Entry Level Certificate, five achieved the highest level and two achieved a level below that. These results reflect very good achievement by the end of Year 11.
85. Teaching and learning are very good, overall. The main strengths are:
- Teachers use their very good knowledge of pupils effectively to plan work that challenges pupils intellectually and them overcoming their physical disabilities; their progress is assessed well and improvements in learning are recorded regularly.
 - Relationships with staff and between pupils are very good; they contribute to pupils' interest, enjoyment and motivation to achieve; pupils have much pride in what they and each other create.
 - Pupils learn about a wide range of art from across the world and from different periods, which is particularly strong in Years 7 to 11. In Year 11, pupils recalled that an earlier portraiture project was based on the work of Modigliani.
 - Teachers and classroom assistants work together very effectively to support learning without ever compromising the high expectation that pupils manage their independence.
86. Leadership and management are so effective because of the infectious enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator. This is strongly expressed not only in the very good planning of what is taught in art and design across the school but also in the great consistency with which all teachers have taken on board the subject's aims and aspirations. Their displays of pupils' art, which permeate the school, say this very clearly. Two dedicated rooms, one for art and the other for pottery, contribute positively to achievement in Years 7 to 11. The best use is made of small spaces. However, the absence of adjustable work surfaces sometimes inhibits the access of pupils in wheelchairs although teachers provide makeshift arrangements that are partially successful.

MUSIC

87. One lesson of music was seen and, as a consequence, it is not possible to make judgements on pupils' achievement or provision. The lesson seen was well planned and teaching was

good. From the scrutiny of planning and teachers' records, opportunities for music are available through the school day for pupils in Years 1 to 6. Here, rhymes are used to develop number skills and pupils have produced their own music books, which has assisted with literacy skills. Pupils are introduced to the music of other cultures such as Latin American and Japanese. The co-ordinator has a good overview of the pupils' abilities. Display work illustrates the fun pupils have in performing in local school festivals and competitions as well as in appearing with other musicians. Good teamwork ensures that pupils in Years 2 to 6 are very involved and feel secure when singing and playing.

88. There are no specialist teachers of music, but the co-ordinator has been effective in developing others' knowledge and skills in teaching music. Good progress has been made in planning what should be taught, particularly up to the end of Year 9. This gives pupils a good variety of opportunities for musical experiences within and outside school. Resources for music are improving, largely due to support given by the League of Friends. Pupils now have access to information and communication technology in undertaking composition and also to tuned as well as un-tuned instruments. Teaching spaces for music are small and this, combined with the restricted range of instruments, results in slower progress being made by pupils in acquiring compositional and performing skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

89. Two lessons of physical education were seen, which is insufficient to make a judgement on pupils' achievement and provision in the subject. A further two lessons of conductive education, focusing on pupils' physical development, were observed. The physical education lessons seen were well planned and provided a wide variety of challenging activities closely matched to pupils' needs. In a mixed group of reception and Years 1 and 2 pupils, classroom assistants were effective in teaching pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to reach for and hold on to objects. Higher attaining pupils used space in the hall well to move a ball with their feet. They learnt well to control the ball's movement and progressed to kicking it fairly accurately at a target. The planning of conductive education is very detailed and focused sharply on each pupil's individual targets. Their progress towards targets is meticulously measured and recorded.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Provision in personal, social and health education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in personal, social and health education.
- Very effective teaching and the wide range of opportunities for personal development, including very good links with the community, effectively prepare pupils for life beyond the school.
- The leadership and management of personal, social and health education are very good.

Commentary

90. Children at the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2, learn to share, take turns, communicate likes and dislikes, become aware of other's feelings, and recognise and name different parts of body. They develop early self-help skills well. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 show an increasing ability to express preferences and choices; they develop relationships with one another and show initiative in discussion. These pupils are encouraged to feel good about themselves and to strive to overcome barriers. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 and students in the sixth form demonstrate maturity in their knowledge and understanding of relationships. They are aware of the consequences of different behaviours and identify critical factors in situations, resolve problems and avoid risks. Pupils steadily increase their capacity for independence, developing, for example, their knowledge and understanding about sex and relationships and

the dangers of drugs and substance abuse. They become more confident in making and taking decisions, including managing their finances.

91. The school's approach to developing pupils' independence, relationships and personal growth provides a central focus for all activities in the school. Lunchtime arrangements effectively promote pupils' self-help skills, whilst providing important opportunities for modelling and developing relationships and social skills. In Years 1 to 6, the teaching of personal, social and emotional education is skilfully woven throughout the curriculum and through every transaction with pupils. In Years 7 to 11, well-planned lessons, effectively differentiated for different levels of understanding and ability to respond, ensure participation of all pupils. Carefully sequenced activities, stimulating and varied approaches to exploring personal, social and health education issues and the excellent management of discussion, maintain pupils' interest throughout lesson. Pupils listen carefully in discussions. They treat each other's contributions with respect. They co-operate well in paired and group activities and show growing maturity in their responses. They are courteous and well behaved to outside visitors. The very good use of school and community facilities extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of the community and the world of work, as well as extending and enriching their social experiences.
92. The co-ordinator's expertise and confidence provide a clear vision for the school. Exemplary planning and organisation of the curriculum, supported by excellent documentation, gives very good guidance and support materials for other teachers to include in their lesson planning. There are effective systems for monitoring the delivery of curriculum, including observation of lessons. Procedures for recording progress and achievement in Years 1 to 6 are very good. Plans for extending this detailed approach into Years 7 to 11 are developing well. As a result, the school has been awarded Health Promoting School status. Since the last inspection provision for teaching personal, social and health education has improved significantly. Detailed lesson planning and the development of a wider range of teaching strategies and resources have increased the interest and relevance of the learning, including for those with more complex needs.

CITIZENSHIP

Three lessons in citizenship were seen, which is insufficient to make an overall judgement on pupils' achievement and on provision. The quality of teaching and learning in the limited number of lessons was very good. Work was very well planned and matched to the wide range of pupils' needs. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties concentrated very well in response to the lively, enthusiastic efforts of classroom assistants. They indicated their choices by gesture or eye movement, and some pupils used signs to do so. Higher attaining pupils in a mixed age group of Year 8 and 9 learned why we keep animals as pets and how we should look after them. They listened carefully to and questioned a visiting pet dealer. The school has developed a good policy and good curriculum plans for citizenship, which meet statutory requirements. Pupils show a growing knowledge about local communities, people's jobs and roles in society, community issues, the world of work and their role as citizens.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

Provision in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well taught and stimulating curriculum provides extensive opportunities for learning and gaining relevant accreditation.
- As a result of very good leadership and management there is very effective planning and organisation of the curriculum.
- Very good teaching, relationships and support give due recognition to students' adult status and independence.

Commentary

93. Students in the sixth form achieve well. All students follow nationally accredited courses in Basic Skills, Life Skills, information and communication technology and the Youth Award Scheme. A well-planned curriculum provides them with courses of study that are interesting and relevant to their needs. Students make steady progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills and achieve good results in their coursework. Their work towards the Foundation for Work Award and their very successful participation in the Young Enterprise scheme prepare them very well for the world of work. The quality and presentation of their course work folders are good. Their achievement on the Young Enterprise Project is excellent.
94. Students achieve well in developing their social skills and in becoming more independent. The Life Skills programme and personal, social and health education provide a very good structure within which students develop their ability to manage their lives and to consider their relationships and future roles in society. They become more independent and confident in their ability to work with others because of the many opportunities to follow courses alongside students in local colleges. The very good links with local secondary schools and the option to follow courses in colleges broaden the range of students' experiences and introduce them to opportunities that are available in further education.
95. Teaching and learning are very good. Detailed planning across the various courses ensures that students' knowledge and skills in different aspect of their studies are steadily developed and consolidated. Lessons are carefully planned, with clear aims and stated outcomes, which are shared with students, so they know what is expected of them. Well-sequenced activities, with plenty of opportunities for discussion, maintain the students' interest and enthusiasm. There is an appropriate focus on developing students' independence and their ability to solve problems for themselves, so students show an increasing maturity in the way they approach their work.
96. Students appreciate being treated as young adults. Relationships are very good. Staff are skilful in helping students to cope with frustration and persevere in the face of difficulties. Students are interested in their work and enjoy their time in school and in the community. They co-operate well and support one another. They handle themselves very well when working with students in other schools and colleges,
97. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for developing the curriculum and is energetic in the pursuit of opportunities to extend students' experiences in the community. Course planning and documentation are excellent. An effective and relevant programme, 'Towards Independence', has been designed for students with significant and complex difficulties. Students' progress is monitored and recorded on a regular basis. Work is in hand to track the development of cross-curricular skills across the various accredited coursework.
98. The range and quality of provision improved significantly since the last inspection. A coherent programme, linking the courses for pupils with more complex needs in Years 7 to 11, has been further developed to create a smooth transition from one phase to another. The school has extended the number and range of opportunities for students to follow courses in local schools and colleges. The Young Enterprise project has been successfully introduced. However, it has still not been possible to locate suitable work-based placements for all students in the sixth form.

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	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
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	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
Accommodation and resources	5
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	3
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	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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