

INSPECTION REPORT

SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL

Leek

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124515

Headteacher: Mrs I Corden

Lead inspector: Adrian Simm

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd October 2003

Inspection number: 258993

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	50
School address:	Springfield Road Leek
Postcode:	ST13 6LQ
Telephone number:	01538 383558
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Phillip Davis
Date of previous inspection:	1 st – 4 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Springfield Community Special School is for 50 pupils who have severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is popular with parents and has nearly doubled in number of pupils since the last inspection. Around one third of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), which is higher than at the last inspection. The school has a small unit for pupils who need very high levels of adult support. Pupils come from the Staffordshire Moorlands and Stoke on Trent, which whilst varied, covers areas of high social deprivation. Thirty per cent of pupils on roll claim free school meals. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low in comparison to their chronological age. Nearly all pupils come from white British ethnic backgrounds. No pupils have English as an additional language. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Pupil turnover is very low. The school received a School Achievement Award for the improvement in pupils' achievement in 2001 and a Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003. Pupils have opportunities to work alongside pupils from local primary and secondary schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21138	Adrian Simm	Lead inspector	Science Geography History Modern foreign language (French) Religious education
9981	Saleem Hussein	Lay inspector	
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music Foundation Stage curriculum Special educational needs
17182	Michael Farrell	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education and Citizenship Design and technology Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Good leadership has moved the school on well as it has grown in pupil numbers. Part of the success is the very good relationships pupils have with staff and the effectiveness of staff in supporting all pupils' special educational needs. Governors do a lot that is effective. Financial planning is very good. However, they are given insufficient information to fully support, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of child protection procedures and provision for pupils with challenging behaviour when restraint is necessary. Although management of the school is satisfactory, in this one very important area of governance the school has a serious weakness. However, because of pupils' good achievement stemming from effective teaching, **the school offers good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is good for all pupils in communication, literacy, numeracy, science and personal development including personal and social education.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils work and socialise very effectively with pupils and adults from other schools and the community.
- Very good leadership of the curriculum and teaching by the headteacher has ensured that the school has improved well in meeting its ambitions and goals for improving pupils' achievement.
- There is continuous improvement in the curriculum and in teaching and learning. Effective professional development for all staff is central to this.
- The school's child protection procedures and risk assessments for some activities with pupils with challenging behaviour are insufficiently clear for the school to ensure they are fully effective.
- School procedures in collecting data to monitor trends connected with incidents involving pupils with challenging behaviour and to further improve provision are not fully effective.

The school has responded well to the previous inspection. Pupils' attendance is now good. Teaching and learning has improved well because of the good staff development offered by the school. This is across a much-improved curriculum. Ways of checking on how well pupils are doing in their work has continued to develop although subject co-ordinators could still be involved more. Use of computers in more aspects of pupils' work is still being developed. The school building and grounds have improved significantly, helped by very effective fundraising activities within the local community. Staff recognise that three classrooms are still small, which affects how well the school is able to include pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in with their own age groups.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

All pupils, regardless of their differing special educational needs, achieve well in each stage of the school as shown in the table below.

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

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

(*) Communication, reading, writing, numeracy and science.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception in communication, numeracy and personal and social education. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory. No judgement was made in religious education because of insufficient evidence. Pupils' develop satisfactory skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in the broad range of subjects of the curriculum. Achievement in other subjects was not part of the inspection. **Pupils' attitudes to work and each other are very good. Their behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attendance is good** in comparison with similar schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good for all pupils regardless of age or special educational needs. **Teaching is good** because staff have very good knowledge of pupils and understand their individual needs. Pupils are expected and encouraged to join in and as a result, they do well. **Overall, pupils learn well** although the work of those pupils working individually could be more effectively linked to the main objective of the lesson. Staff are developing the sophistication of ways of finding out and checking on just how well the pupils are doing in their work. Very good teamwork between teachers and support staff and the high number of support staff means that pupils frequently benefit well from individual or very small group support. The school ensures as a priority that sufficient staff are trained in child protection although the school's written procedures are not as clear as they should be as to how they work in practice. Pupils experience **a good breadth of learning opportunities** within a well-designed curriculum. This **includes good links with other schools and the community**. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 benefit well from a vocational curriculum through which they pass examinations at different levels, for example, in the National Skills Profile. Businesses in the local community support the school very well financially. Links with parents are very good. These have been improved significantly by the recent appointment of a full time school nurse. The school values and acts upon parents' views very well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. Management is satisfactory. Governance is unsatisfactory. Staff and governors are committed to school improvement. Checking on how well school priorities are developing is very good. Governors are provided with insufficient information to effectively support, monitor and evaluate the school's provision for dealing with incidents and risk assessments with those pupils who have challenging behaviour and child protection procedures for all pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are well pleased with the school. Those pupils able to express an opinion are very happy attending the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the good quality teaching and how well the children get on with each other.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the school's systems for finding out and analysing how well pupils are progressing and make better use of this. This is already identified in the school's own planning.
- Make better use of the time pupils spend in individual work by linking this more often to the focus of lessons.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure governors receive sufficient information to fully carry out their role in checking on the effectiveness of staff in dealing with incidents and risk assessments with those pupils who have challenging behaviour and child protection procedures for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils starting in the reception class make a good start to their school life in working towards the goals set for them.
- Achievement is good for all pupils in the school's core areas of communication, literacy, numeracy, science and personal development including personal and social education.
- School systems for checking pupils' progress in these core areas show an improving trend in achievement. This is good improvement since the last inspection.
- Achievement in ICT is satisfactory but hampered by insufficient opportunity to use computers in lessons. Pupils use switches well and in a range of ways to help their learning.
- Achievement in religious education could not be judged because of insufficient information about pupils' progress in relation to their prior learning.
- Pupils' good success in Post 16 in accreditation of their work.

Commentary

1. Pupils make progress in very small steps. The school's ways of setting appropriate but challenging targets for pupils to achieve are becoming more and more precise. This supports well the good achievement being seen against individual education plan (IEP) and individual behaviour plan (IBP) targets. Also, the school plots pupils' progress against nationally recognised levels in a range of areas, including in the core subjects taught. This is monitored, analysed and discussed by staff and governors. The school is not yet able to compare its standards effectively against similar schools but is working towards this end both locally and nationally.
2. Higher and lower attaining pupils' work sampled for the inspection shows good progress. For example, lower attainers progress in:
 - language and communication, from showing recognition of familiar sounds to sustaining even greater concentration and focus;
 - mathematics, from intentionally exploring three-dimensional shapes to placing objects in a container with adult help;
 - science and ICT, from showing a sense of interest in activities to indicating preferences;
 - personal development, from eagerly waiting their turn in activities about 'what's in the box' to returning themselves to tasks when distracted.
3. For higher attaining pupils achievement is also good. They progress from:
 - enjoying reading with others and predicting events they now identify increasingly the letters of the alphabet;
 - being able to count to five by rote in mathematics to correctly understanding the value of numbers from one to five;
 - from learning in science how best to separate insoluble materials using for example, magnets, sieves and filter paper to identifying whether objects are living or not;
 - taking turns within a group situation in personal development when that had previously been difficult to do.
4. Pupils use their skills with switches well. Pupils make satisfactory achievement in their more independent use of a computer keyboard or mouse to access programs. Whilst the school

knows how it wants to establish pupils' knowledge and understanding in ICT, information about how well pupils are progressing is not yet available. Even less information was available in religious education. Pupils have experienced a lot of learning about rituals, customs and artefacts of various religions. Higher attaining pupils have come to understand the difference between right and wrong, the principle of kindness to others and express how they feel. However, whilst staff are clear how they want to assess what pupils know and do not know, little evidence is yet available. Only in that part of religious education experienced through personal, social and health education (PSHE) is achievement clear, and here, it is good.

5. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 benefit from achieving passes in examinations. In 2002, three pupils achieved accreditation in ICT, home management and communication after a two-year course in the National Skills Profile, whilst in 2003, numeracy was added to courses achieved with 11 passes achieved overall.
6. In the unit the school has established a good environment in which the needs of pupils with autism, who also demonstrate extremely challenging behaviour, are well supported. Pupils achieve well. Part of this is seen in the successful way in which a number of very challenging pupils have been reintegrated into a learning environment following their exclusion from other special schools or prolonged time out of school. Pupils build a very good level of understanding of how to respond better to the learning opportunities offered to them.
7. Pupils in the main school with autism, sensory impairment, complex learning difficulties and medical needs achieve well because individual staff are trained in each of these areas and are effective in ensuring that the school meets the educational needs outlined in statements of special educational needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, relationships, spiritual and social development are very good. Moral and cultural development and pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school promotes good attendance and parents are very supportive of this.
- Pupils show very high levels of interest in school, lessons and activities.
- Behaviour is good.
- Pupils enjoy each other's company and work very well together.
- Personal development is good overall.

Commentary

8. Parents play their full part by working closely with the school transport services. This ensures their children's good attendance and punctuality.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.6	School data	0
National data	9.1	National data	0.6

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

9. Pupils show much interest in lessons and other school activities such as trips and lunchtime clubs. For example, in a music and science lesson to explore sound, all pupils made very good efforts and did their best. Spiritually, they were very moved by the opera music. Children in the Foundation Stage are developing very positive attitudes too. There are occasions when the behaviour of some pupils could be very disruptive to their classmates. The school has put much effort into staff development in working out how best to deal with pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Teachers and support staff deal with these situations skilfully so as to minimise the disruption and effects on other pupils. In most cases, the pupils also make a major contribution by continuing to concentrate on their work to the best of their ability. The school has a long history of not excluding pupils for inappropriate behaviour.

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	46	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

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

10. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and each other. For example, in religious education they were very patient and receptive to each other's efforts and work as they learnt and sang about Noah's Ark. Lunchtime is a calm and pleasant social occasion. Those who can cope with responsibilities such as doing simple tasks for staff, do so with pride and satisfaction. These tasks support pupils' very good social development.
11. Pupils' spiritual development is very well promoted. For instance, during a lesson to learn about the christening ceremony, pupils recapped on their knowledge of religious artefacts gained from recent visits to a church, mosque and synagogue. These visits contribute very well to pupils' understanding of living in a community. Pupils' cultural development is clearly good. Also, the staff's very good relationships with pupils ensured that pupils who were not paying attention as fully as they were able soon joined in again effectively. The school has ensured good improvement in pupils' attitudes and attendance since the last inspection, which make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and achievements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for lessons is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is helped very well because staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs.
- Very good use is made of support staff to help pupils learn.
- Regular training is significant in improving the staff's skills. This is particularly effective in the use of the approach known as The Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH) although pupils working individually sometimes do not benefit sufficiently from having their learning linked directly to the focus of the lesson.
- New staff are trained very quickly and well in TEACCH techniques.
- Staff are constantly improving ways of finding out and checking on just how well the pupils are doing in their work. This works well for individual pupils because of effective IEPs. Ways of checking on how well groups of pupils are progressing is satisfactory and improving well.

Commentary

12. Teaching and learning has improved well since the last inspection. Around the same percentage of lessons were judged as good or better but this is now over a much fuller curriculum.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	6 (19 %)	18 (56 %)	8 (25 %)			

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

13. Teaching and learning are good in literacy, numeracy, science and PSHE because teachers know at what level to pitch their teaching for each pupil in their class. This information comes from a set of detailed assessments of what pupils already know, understand and do and knowing what their next steps of development are. This works for all pupils regardless of age, complexity of learning difficulty and language level. Staff plan satisfactory opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons in other subjects.
14. Signing and symbols are used well and consistently for those who need them. Together with good subject knowledge, all of this ensures that teachers know realistically where they want the pupils to get to by the end of each lesson or unit of work. Because pupils are used to the routines of the TEACCH approach, they are as clear as they can be about what is expected of them. As a result pupils are well focused on their work. This is particularly effective when the teacher works with one or two pupils on specific tasks. Because of the very good teamwork in lessons, other pupils working individually are well supported by classroom assistants. At times however, although this work is at the right level, it is not clearly connected to the focus of the lesson.
15. Effective IEPs are the foundation upon which pupils' learning is built. These are clear and include the next important areas for development in literacy, numeracy, science and personal development needs. Targets are precise, incorporate timescales and success expectations and are linked closely to the school's performance and assessment methods. Not only do the IEPs set out exactly what is to be taught but they are also a good measure of success. Put together as an assessment package, teachers are clear how well individual pupils are achieving.
16. Teaching and learning in religious education are good because the subject is rooted within pupils' personal and social development. Pupils' understanding and knowledge about a broad range of different religions is not supported yet by ways for staff to know how well higher attaining pupils are remembering facts although this is being developed. Overall, pupils thrive on the challenge of lessons and put everything into their learning.

17. Very good lessons are characterised by changes of focus by staff at just the right time. This strategy maintains a very good level of concentration and effort, including those pupils with more complex needs. These changes can be quite rapid for pupils with high dependency needs or poor communication levels. It demands very close teamwork from all staff and good improvements in concentration and the pupils' ability to relate to others is the outcome. Teachers have very good and trusting relationships with pupils in their immediate care. For all pupils, teachers present new and challenging but achievable tasks in small steps of increasing difficulty and this helps pupils' learning to build on previous knowledge and understanding. Improved assessment techniques linked to a nationally recognised system are being introduced but have not been in place long enough to show patterns in learning upon which even more effective teaching can be based.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for enrichment during the school day. The accommodation is much improved and is now satisfactory overall. Resources to support pupils' learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well developed with an innovative structure.
- Pupils with different special educational needs (SEN) are well provided for.
- Curriculum programmes for pupils in Years 10 to 13 are good and prepares them well for later stages of education and life.
- The arrangements for teaching PSHE are good.
- All pupils benefit equally from what the school provides.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is good and that of teaching assistants is very good.
- Resources for learning are good.

Commentary

18. The curriculum provides all pupils with appropriate learning opportunities. The school appropriately emphasises English, particularly communication skills, mathematics, especially numeracy skills and personal development including PSHE. The innovative structure of the curriculum ensures a good balance of different learning opportunities for all pupils. The school is following a pilot programme of teaching French to some pupils in Years 7 to 11. The curriculum for students in Years 12 and 13 offers a suitable range of vocational activities.
19. Pupils with different SEN have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum. The school provides well for pupils with communication difficulties by, for example, approaches involving symbols and signing. The needs of those with complex difficulties and pupils with sensory impairments are met well. A few staff have additional training in these areas of SEN, which helps to ensure these pupils have good access to the learning opportunities provided by the school.
20. Careers education in the school is good with good links with the Connexions service and well developed work experience. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and include a lunchtime technology club for two sessions a week.
21. The skills and experience of teachers are well matched to the needs of the curriculum and teaching assistants are very well deployed. The school's accommodation is much improved. It is currently satisfactory. The numbers of pupils in the school has grown a lot since the last inspection. Improvements in accommodation have ensured that pupils have not been affected detrimentally because of this. Improvements to the school driveway make the arrival and departure much safer now for pupils. Resources are well matched to the curriculum. Since the

previous inspection, when the curriculum was judged unsatisfactory, the school has made good progress.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good advice and guidance for pupils about their achievement and personal development. Whilst the school is a safe place in which to work, staff do not record as effectively as they might, risk assessments and instances of restraint with pupils with extreme behaviour difficulties. Parts of the school's child protection procedures are not as clear as they should be as to how they work in practice although staff training compensates for this in part. These factors result in the governing body not being fully informed in this respect and as a result, they cannot carry out their role effectively. **The school seeks pupils' views very well about their own work and the development of the school as a whole.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have easy access to well informed advice, support and guidance to help them progress.
- The governing body is very active in implementing health and safety procedures but cannot check fully on all requirements because they receive insufficient information.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to be involved with the school by making suggestions and raising issues with staff.

Commentary

22. The school has addressed well the health and safety concerns identified in the last inspection. Pupils are very happy during the school day and are well supported in their learning. This owes a lot to the caring nature of the school that is evident in the very good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers and their assistants work very well together to support all pupils in their learning and personal development. Many areas of learning, achievement and also health are well monitored through good arrangements for reviewing pupils' individual needs.
23. General issues and concerns are handled with sensitivity and care. The school nurse provides good advice and support for pupils and their families. Specialist external agencies are well involved including, for example, the educational psychologist and hearing impaired service. The school is striving to improve the support it gives to those pupils with speech therapy needs.
24. There are many informal opportunities for pupils to develop their self-esteem, personal and social skills. Pupils are highly valued and staff are dedicated to supporting pupils' learning as much as possible. It is pleasing to see how many pupils were involved in designing improvements to the school and the many good ideas they came up with that were taken up. This is a good example of the way that the school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views.
25. The school has good arrangements for emergencies and first aid, underpinned by several staff well trained in first aid and a full-time nurse. The school works well with external agencies to promote health and safety. For instance, older pupils take part in the 'crucial crew' programme each year helping them to learn basic principles of dealing with emergency situations. However, the vagueness of detail by school management in recording incidents of restraint and completing accurate risk assessments with pupils with challenging behaviour and in the clarity of turning child protection policy into practice leaves the governing body short of some vital information. This is a serious weakness.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

As at the last inspection, the partnership with parents, the wider community and other schools and colleges is **very good**. Parents and the community make a very strong contribution to learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a high regard for the school.
- They receive good information about the school and about their children's progress.
- The school involves parents very well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Parents make a very strong contribution to learning at school and at home.
- The school has established many links in the wider community, including with other schools, colleges and businesses, taking every opportunity to enrich pupils' learning.

Commentary

26. Replies to the inspection questionnaire and responses at the parents' meeting show that parents have considerable confidence in the school and its work. They are pleased with the quality of education and how well their children are supported and cared for. Home and school diaries are well used to communicate on day-to-day matters and parents are notified in advance on forthcoming work in the curriculum. Pupils' annual review reports are very helpful with much detail about how well pupils perform in their work.
27. Parents feel very well involved with the school. For instance, their views about their training needs are taken on board wherever possible and individual advice is given or workshops organised. Formal consultation also takes place from time to time on wider issues.
28. Parents, teachers and friends of the school work very hard in organising many successful social and fundraising events. For example, they have contributed financially to building work and towards additional learning resources. Several parent helpers give their time generously by helping in lessons such as swimming or listening to readers. Many parents have taken advantage of courses available including the use of communication aids, other special equipment, literacy and numeracy support.
29. Wider community links include several churches and other places of worship. This has contributed very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many visits and visitors to the school enhance learning, including trips to museums and art galleries. Musicians give pupils a very wide range of experiences through performances. Several businesses sponsor and support the school. Very good links with other schools include effective ways for pupils to learn alongside other pupils in mainstream schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The school is well led and satisfactorily managed. **Governance is unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is relentless in its push for improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. The leadership of these aspects by the headteacher is very good.
- All staff with responsibilities for improving pupils' learning are effective.
- Financial management by the governors is very effective.
- Governors are keen and actively involved in planning for further improvement although they are given insufficient information to ensure that all of their policies are fully effective.

Commentary

30. The school has moved forward well since the last inspection because of the good leadership of the headteacher. This shows itself in a number of ways including:

- plans for improvement that are effective in practice. For example, improving the staff's skills in teaching and in developing the curriculum through good staff development opportunities;
- very good ways of preparing and settling new staff into the school's ways of working. This includes teachers, support staff and more recently, the new school nurse; placing the school in the heart of the community. This leads to a very good community response, which amongst other things, results in high levels of financial donation to school. This income is spent wisely for the benefit of all the pupils;
- ensuring the achievement of the growing number of pupils in school, including those in the high dependency unit and with autistic spectrum disorders across the school is good.

Staff with responsibilities play an effective part in all of this development.

31. The governors keep a very close watch on the budget, which benefits from a good range of donations from a variety of sources. This has contributed to good improvements in the school building and grounds including:

- much safer arrival and departure for pupils on school transport because of alterations to the school driveway;
- extra space in several classrooms because of building extensions. This is part of a planned programme, which is intended to overcome restrictions that curb the ease with which pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can be integrated into all classes as necessary;
- contribution to the funding of staff training and the extra resources needed to effectively support pupils with a range of learning needs.

32. Since September 2002, the school lost around 70 days of teacher time and 700 days of support staff time to absence through illness or other medical certification. This was a significant draw upon the school budget but was handled well ensuring little detrimental impact upon the pupils. These costs contributed to governors using some of its budget reserves during the last school year in meeting its commitments to planned improvements. In response to this difficult period of staff absence, governors have put in place improved strategies to support how to deal with such a position should it happen again. Overall, details are shown in the following table.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	682,160	Balance from previous year	82,280
Total expenditure	742,926	Balance carried forward to the next	22,020
Expenditure per pupil	14,211		

33. The school is working well on more detailed ways in which it can tell just how well pupils are progressing in their learning. This is good practice. Information from this is developing but is not yet ready for staff and governors to be able to decide what else needs to be done to improve teaching and learning even more. Governors have a clear view on how well this is going. However, in other ways they are short of information. This means that the school is unable to check well enough if its strategies are being effective or if there are any trends in pupils' behaviour that need to be addressed differently. Records of incidents are initially kept in a loose-leaf folder. The school follows good practice in transferring the information to a bound logbook. However, it does not record the same level of detail and important information to help senior

managers and governors check what is happening is lost. Vagueness in the school's written policy for child protection procedures, including reporting to governors, means that governors cannot be clear how effective the school's policy is in practice.

34. The school does challenge itself to improve in many ways linked to the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. Governors ensure that the school uses its finances in a way that seeks best value for money. The school checks regularly with parents individually and surveys their views as a whole about how well the school is doing. However, the school does not have the data to sufficiently challenge itself to improve how it works in all aspects of school life. Whilst it is good in all other respects, it does not meet the principles of best value in this one important area, and as such, meeting the principles of best value overall, is unsatisfactory.

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

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision for children under five is good. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well in the areas of communication, language and literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Achievement is satisfactory in the areas of physical and creative development and in developing knowledge and understanding of the world.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning opportunities are planned effectively for individual children and reflect the requirements of the foundation stage curriculum.
- The accommodation in the classroom and outside is good.
- Teaching methods for pupils with ASD have been implemented well.
- Resources are good and there are well prepared resources to support TEACCH.
- Use of the school's system to check and monitor children's achievement is not fully effective.
- The programmes of learning are not fully incorporated into the school's overall curriculum plan.

Commentary

35. Currently there are only three children of reception age in the school. They are taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. All the areas of learning recommended for young children are taught. National guidance is used effectively to plan learning opportunities and adapts the requirements well to reflect children's abilities and their special needs. This ensures that children are provided with a good and relevant range of experiences. Children have good opportunities to develop the understanding and skills they need to work towards achievement of the early learning goals. Because there are few young children in the school their curriculum opportunities are planned on an individual basis and do not form part of an overall plan of learning for the whole of their time in the school. This has already been identified for improvement and is being addressed well by the co-ordinator.
36. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well. The teacher plans activities that are well considered to support children's learning because they are interesting and encourage their participation. Children with autism make significant progress in learning to understand routines and how to participate in activities because the TEACCH systems are implemented effectively. There is very good teamwork. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to children's achievement by using the systems consistently. Resources are good particularly those developed to support autistic children. There is a good range and supply of cue cards and well prepared tasks for children to complete during independent work sessions.
37. The teacher effectively plans activities, which help children to develop their communication and early reading and writing skills. Their numeracy is promoted well and there is a good emphasis during lessons and throughout the school day on teaching children independence and social skills. These opportunities ensure that children achieve well in their personal development. The effective use of the TEACCH system enables children with autism to participate in learning and to achieve as well as others. However, there are occasions when they do not complete the activity they have been set because staff do not check what they are doing often enough. No lessons were observed in the areas of creative or physical development and only one lesson

was seen in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world. Systems to check what children have learned indicate that children's achievement in these areas is satisfactory.

38. The school has implemented a satisfactory system to check children's learning and has already recognised that it is not sensitive enough to indicate the small steps in progress that children make. This has already been addressed by putting in place a more detailed system. However, the teacher has not yet developed a sufficient understanding of the criteria to describe what level children have achieved. Individual education plans are good and clearly indicate the next steps in learning for each individual child.
39. The accommodation for young children is good. There have been recent improvements to the classroom. These enable the teacher to create clearly defined learning areas, which help autistic pupils to recognise where activities take place. The outdoor play area is good and is used well to promote children's physical development.

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

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Lessons in English were seen in all classes in the school. French has been disapplied on all pupils' statements of SEN. However, the school has introduced a pilot programme for some pupils in Years 7 to 11. This is in its early days. Insufficient information is available upon which to make firm judgements about provision or pupils' achievement in French.

English

Provision for English, including communication, language and literacy skills, is good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and as a result, achievement is good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Teaching assistants give very good support.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed very well.
- Data on the attainment of pupils is not used in a detailed enough way to sufficiently improve standards.

Commentary

40. Teaching and learning are good. Several examples of very good teaching were seen during the inspection. Here, the pace of the lessons was brisk with changes in activity at the right time to maintain pupils' concentration. Signing was used fluently by staff with pupils with communication difficulties and careful use was made of symbols to help communicate and structure the activities for pupils. Where teaching is good, well-established routines are in place and known by the pupils. The TEACCH system involves tasks which pupils carry out independently. Whilst overall it is usually used effectively, sometimes pupils do not benefit sufficiently from having their individual work linked directly to the focus of the lesson. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupil learning, working closely with teachers and reinforcing learning and encouraging the pupils' attention. Because of these approaches, pupils achieve well in communication, language and literacy skills. They work hard and are fully engaged in the tasks required of them. Their behaviour is very good. For example, in a very good lesson, which involved a library visit, the pupils listened intently to a story of 'Old McDonald's Farm'. They joined in with delight as they picked out of a large bag, various animal toys that made the appropriate farmyard noises.

41. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The school has worked impressively on its vision to provide better and more comprehensive communication and other aspects of English. The management of the subject is good although further work is needed on evaluating and acting upon the increasingly more precise information the school is collecting about how well pupils are progressing. Although ICT such as switches and other equipment is used well by the pupils, they do not have enough opportunity to benefit from using computers.
42. The accommodation for English is good and includes a school library area with books, videos, a television and computers, which are used well. Resources are good and include the necessary supporting materials to continue developing signing and other forms of communication. There is a good range of well-illustrated modern non-fiction books and storybooks. Since the previous inspection, when provision was judged good, the school has made good progress in maintaining this level of quality with a school that has nearly doubled in numbers and is now teaching pupils with a much broader range of SEN.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Across the curriculum, other subjects contribute satisfactorily to literacy and speaking and listening. The school has not yet formally built this into planning although this development is planned.

MATHEMATICS

Lessons in mathematics were seen in all classes.

The provision for mathematics is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good guidance for teachers when they prepare work.
- The National Numeracy Strategy has been adapted well to reflect pupils' needs.
- Teaching methods ensure that pupils of all abilities join in with learning and achieve well. Pupils' IEPs help them to make good progress.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Systems to check and monitor pupils' achievement are not sensitive enough to help teachers improve standards further.

Commentary

44. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. This has helped the school to maintain the quality of teaching and standards as the school has changed and grown. Teaching and learning are good and pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well.
45. The teaching provided for all pupils are good, regardless of age or special educational needs. Students in Years 10 to 13 have their achievement recognised well through accreditation. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well and suitably adapted to reflect pupils' needs. The co-ordinator has developed subject plans, which ensure that pupils build successfully on past experiences because they provide teachers with good guidance when they prepare lessons. The local community is used very well to extend learning by providing opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in different settings.
46. Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve very well in understanding number. Their achievement is satisfactory in the areas of shape, space and measure and in investigating and in using their mathematical understanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a very good understanding of pupils' special needs. The school has ensured that all staff

have developed good skills in the use of teaching methods, which help pupils to participate in activities so that they achieve well. In a few classes the TEACCH system has been effectively adapted to provide a less rigid structure to promote the achievement for pupils with other learning difficulties. The school has also been effective in implementing strategies that support the achievement of pupils with complex learning difficulties and sensory impairment. Teachers provide a good level of cues to help pupils recognise what the lesson is about, for example by singing an introduction song about numbers and by helping pupils to explore three-dimensional shapes. With good levels of sensitive support pupils participate effectively in activities which focus on providing them with sensory stimulation. These strategies enable pupils of all ages and abilities to achieve well.

47. In all classes teachers provide lessons that are well structured and pupils are effectively involved in activities through the consistent use of visual, verbal, physical and auditory cues. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to work independently in low distraction areas. This has had a good impact on pupils' achievement and on developing their learning skills. However, whilst work is set at the right level, teachers do not always match work sufficiently well to the focus of the lesson during these activities.
48. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is already aware that pupils achieve better in understanding number than in other aspects of the curriculum. The school has recognised that the way it was checking on pupils' progress was not sensitive enough to provide information about the small steps that pupils made and were too open to the interpretation of individual teachers. Teachers still need to improve their understanding of the criteria they are using to ensure a shared understanding across the school. The IEPs established for pupils clearly identify the next steps in learning and because teachers ensure that they plan opportunities for pupils to learn which reflect these targets achievement is good. However, without the additional information provided by an accurate whole school system to check levels of attainment the school is currently unable to judge if pupils are making enough progress or to further improve standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. Opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills across other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory. Subject plans do not provide enough guidance for teachers to consider where there are opportunities for pupils to use their skills or where other subjects such as food technology could be used for teaching skills in a more practical and relevant way.

SCIENCE

Lessons were seen at the end of each key stage.

Provision in science is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys and girls achieve well in all of the various elements of the subject. This is the same for higher and lower attaining pupils because staff are clear about what each pupil understands and what the next step in learning is. Ways of checking on how well groups of pupils are doing in their work using a more detailed national scheme is in its infancy.
- Whilst teaching and learning are good across the school, provision for pupils' use of ICT is only satisfactory.
- Provision has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. All aspects of the curriculum are now in place although provision for ICT could have been further on.

Commentary

50. The good quality of teaching and learning is rooted in staff checking on and recording regularly what pupils have understood or done in response to stimuli or pieces of work, then knowing what the next step is in learning for each pupil. For example, in a very good lesson with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils responded very well to a widening range of sounds and rhythms, and to silence. A very good sensory experience encouraged pupils to search for the source of the sound, which was at times quiet and at other times, very loud. The very good knowledge of the pupils meant that different but sufficient time was given to each pupil for them to be challenged to respond in their own way. It is this individuality of approach, which is the basis of the good teaching. In most lessons, the very good quality of teamwork between teachers and support assistants is central to organising lessons to meet pupils' needs. This includes good quality communication through signing and symbols. There was the opportunity for higher attaining pupils to show their knowledge for example, in recognising which plants are dry and therefore need water to help them grow. The staff's clear knowledge of pupils' literacy and numeracy targets from their IEPs means that lessons serve a good variety of purposes.
51. Pupils achieve well. Individual special educational needs are being met regardless of age. As such, pupils can be found throughout the school working on similar levels even though there is significant age difference between them. For example, a lower attaining pupil in Year 2 achieves well in building on showing a sense of interest in what is happening, to indicating a preference between two items or having the dexterity to repeatedly press a switch when requested. This is equally the case for older lower attaining pupils. Another Year 2 pupil who is further on with his understanding develops the ability well to identify loud and soft sounds and is at the very early stages of predicting which it will be. Older pupils working on the same type of work equally achieve well.
52. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning have come on satisfactorily since the last inspection. Lessons now cover all elements of science whereas at the last inspection, the curriculum was narrow. Ways of checking on and measuring pupils' success and progress using a nationally recognised system is still in its infancy and will take a while to show, for example, areas of learning that pupils are either strong in or where extra focus is needed. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is clear on the strengths of the subject and weaknesses such as the strengthening the use of ICT in the curriculum and improving staff's understanding of how to assess pupils' work. However, whilst the co-ordinator has made use of an electronic microscope linked to a computer, this has not yet been introduced to other staff. Also, staff training has not yet happened to ensure that all staff would make the same judgements when deciding on pupils' levels of work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology was seen mainly in other subject lessons in all classes.

Provision for ICT is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching assistants support pupils using ICT effectively.
- The attitudes to learning of pupils when they use ICT are very good.
- Data on the attainment of pupils is not used in a detailed enough way to improve their standards of achievement.

Commentary

53. Use of ICT by pupils in a broad range of subjects is satisfactory. Teaching assistants contribute well to helping pupils gain access to ICT. They work sensitively with pupils and help them maintain their concentration. While the pupils use ICT such as switches and other equipment

well, they do not have enough opportunity to benefit from using computers. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. When given the opportunity, pupils concentrate well and are fully engaged in the tasks. Their behaviour is very good. The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection, in which the subject was judged satisfactory, because the quality of provision has been maintained.

54. The school has a clear sense of how the subject needs to develop which is mainly in building staff confidence and increasing the range and number of multi-media computer software. Among the steps being taken to further build staff competence and confidence is training from a local Beacon special school. The school is still refining its ways of checking on how well pupils are progressing and is going in the right direction.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

55. Other subjects contribute satisfactorily to pupils' achievement because this is the main way pupils are taught. However, the school has not sufficiently built computer use into planning to ensure that pupils' skills improve in this as well as they have done in their use of a broad range of switches used to access the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Judgements on geography and history were not made because they were not part of the main foci of the inspection and insufficient lessons were timetabled during the inspection for observations to be effective.

Religious education

Lessons were observed in each key stage.

Provision is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning with pupils in the profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD) class during the inspection were very good. The lesson was a total sensory experience. Very good teamwork between teachers, support assistants and the school nurse met the objectives of the lesson perfectly, which were matched to the different needs of the pupils.
- Co-ordination of the subject since the last inspection is good. The aim for pupils to learn through religion as well as about religion is well met. Planning to achieve this is fully in place.
- Whilst ways of checking on pupils' progress in learning about religion has started, this has not been in place long enough to show clearly how well pupils are progressing over time. Other evidence was insufficient to make a firm judgement on pupils' achievement in this aspect.

Commentary

56. Overall, teaching and learning observed were good. With pupils in the PMLD class, they were very good. The teacher told the story of Noah very well. It was full of feeling achieved by the perfect use of voice tone and at time, planned silence. The lesson was a total sensory experience including:

- small textured animals to feel;
- cloth models of the main characters in the story to hold and put back into the ark;
- very well chosen music to give the whole lesson atmosphere;
- sensory experiences to feel the rain and hear the thunder crashes.

57. The pupils were well positioned in their chairs for staff to ensure they all joined in at their own pace and levels as indicated in their IEPs. Sufficient but different time was given to pupils to encourage them to respond, for example, to pressing a switch to make the storm wind blow. The lesson was packed with experiences that also met learning objectives in areas such as music, science and PSHE. This good mixture of subject content was also evident in a good lesson about the Goddess Lakshoni and the Festival of Light with reception and Year 2 pupils. Pupils previously made pictures representing lights, together with good singing of 'I can sing a rainbow' all added effectively to the main story line.
58. The school has worked out a very good system of planning to ensure that pupils get a good balance between learning about religion and learning through religion, which is closely linked to PSHE lessons and pupils' personal development in general. This is good improvement since the last inspection when the curriculum was narrow. Systems to ensure that staff are clear how well pupils are progressing by use of a more precise assessment system is in its early stages but developing well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Firm judgements on art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were not made because they were not part of the main foci of the inspection and insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection. Discussions were held with subject co-ordinators. Two lessons were observed in physical education.

Art and design

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject plans ensure that pupils have an appropriate range of learning opportunities.
- Teachers do not have enough information about pupils' achievement.

Commentary

59. Teachers' plans and displays of work indicate that pupils are provided with satisfactory opportunities to achieve. Since the last inspection the school has improved the range of experiences provided for pupils by including guidance from national modules of work in its plans. Teachers ensure that activities enable pupils of all abilities to experience a wide range of different materials and techniques and have opportunities to learn about famous artist. Activities are generally linked well to the topics being studied in other subjects and this provides appropriate opportunities for teachers to reinforce pupils' learning.
60. Systems used to check pupils' achievement are satisfactory but do not provide teachers with detailed enough information about what each pupil can and cannot do. This means that it is difficult for teachers to plan learning that improves pupils' understanding and skill. The school has already recognised this as an area for improvement and a more refined system is being developed.

Design and technology

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for teaching the subject has improved well since the last inspection.
- Useful data on the attainment of pupils is in its early stages of being gathered.

Commentary

61. Since the previous inspection in which the curriculum for design and technology was judged unsatisfactory, the school has made good progress. The subject is now taught fully. Ways of checking on how well pupils are learning and progressing have started although this has some way to go before it is fully effective.

Music

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject plans are currently being improved.
- Teachers do not have enough information about pupils' achievement.

Commentary

62. Teachers' plans indicate that pupils are provided with satisfactory opportunities to achieve. The co-ordinator is currently improving the subject plans to provide a wider range of learning opportunities, which are planned so pupils build successfully on past experiences. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities experience listening to and making music. Their opportunities to achieve are enhanced by a suitable number of visiting specialists. Activities are generally linked well to the topics being studied in other subjects, for example, music is used well to reinforce pupils' learning in a science module about sound. Throughout the school day adults use music well, either by singing, using instruments or with recorded music, to cue pupils into different activities. This contributes effectively to the development of pupils' communication skills.

63. Systems used to check pupils' achievement are satisfactory but they do not provide teachers with detailed enough information about what each pupil can do or how effectively music cues are improving individual communication and understanding. This means that teachers are not able to plan more effective use of music as a communication aid or provide activities for pupils that improve achievement. The school has already recognised this as an area for development and a more refined system is being implemented.

Physical education

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good for older pupils in dance.
- Individual swimming targets are followed effectively.
- Teaching assistants give good support.

Commentary

64. Pupils' targets in swimming are well known by staff and followed closely. Teaching assistants and parent helpers join pupils in the pool and give good support. In a dance lesson seen for older pupils, the session encouraged the pupils to develop their own movements in a dance sequence. Pupils were encouraged well to assess their own performance. The attitudes to learning of pupils in lessons were very good. Pupils worked hard and were enthusiastic. Pupils' achievement is acknowledged for example through certificates awarded for improvement in swimming, participation in sports and through riding awards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE).

Provision is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils is good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The school uses an effective mix of specific PSHE and citizenship lessons and day-to-day activities to enhance pupils' personal development.

- Opportunities for pupils to express preferences are securely built into activities.

Commentary

65. PSHE as a subject and pupils' personal development in general are very important parts of school provision. In importance, they are on the same level as literacy and numeracy and as such feature strongly in pupils' IEPs. This is very good practice. This means that staff are clear just how well the pupils are doing and what the next step is in development for each pupil regardless of their different special educational needs. Planning for PSHE is comprehensive and includes sex and relationships education and drugs awareness. Teaching and learning are good. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 12 to 13, they visited a local café. Skills of pupils were aided well by the use of signing and picture exchanges, which helped them choose what they wanted to eat and drink. This was good support for their social skills. In many lessons there are PSHE elements such as the use of snack times in which courtesies and appropriate behaviour are developed and encouraged. Particularly impressive are the numerous opportunities that the pupils have to choose and express preferences throughout the school day, which contributes well to their growing independence. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities. Since the previous inspection, when provision for PSHE was satisfactory, the school has made good progress. Individual Education Plans are clear and respond well to the individual needs of pupils. The accommodation is used well to encourage PSHE, for example, the use of signs to encourage good hygiene displayed above sinks.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	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	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	5
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	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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

*In a special school such as this, "standards achieved" are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.