

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE SOUTH DOWNS COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL**

Eastbourne

LEA area: East Sussex County Council

Unique reference number: 114692

Headteacher: Ms E.D.A. Gidlow

Lead inspector: Steven Parker

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 259009

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Special  
School category: Community Special  
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 125

School address: Beechy Avenue  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex

Postcode: BN20 8NU

Telephone number: 01323 730302

Fax number: 01323 640544

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs G. Temple

Date of previous inspection: Inspected as The Downs School 16/03/98 – 19/03/98

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The South Downs Community Special School was created in September 2003, as part of the reorganisation of special provision in the southern and western part of East Sussex. The long established Downs School was amalgamated with the primary element of an all age special school on the other side of Eastbourne to create the new school. This now provides education for 125 primary aged pupils on two sites, some four miles apart on the east and west of the town. Pupils have a wide range of learning difficulties, with nearly half having a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Of the remainder, around a third have either moderate or severe learning difficulties and there are smaller groups of pupils with profound and complex needs, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties and other communication, physical or sensory impairments. There are currently ten children of reception age following the Foundation Stage curriculum. As a result of their learning difficulties, all pupils have attainments significantly below the average for their age. The great majority of pupils are of white UK heritage and only one pupil is identified as having English as an additional language. A quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This picture is generally representative of the local population. The school has strong and productive links with the local community and has use of a hydrotherapy pool on the east site, which is also used by community groups and other schools. The Downs School received recognition for its work through the School Achievement Award in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13033	Steven Parker	Lead inspector	Art and design, design Technology, music
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, geography, history, physical education
20566	Mary Saunders	Team Inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	English, personal, social and health education and citizenship, religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Limited

102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL53 7JX

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The South Downs Community Special is a **good** school. Pupils achieve well in their lessons and make good progress over time, as the result of good teaching. The school is well led by the headteacher, working in a successful partnership with her senior management colleagues and a supportive governing body. It provides good value for money.

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

- The headteacher has successfully led the process of creating a new school in a very short time, with a shared commitment by all staff to provide high quality education.
- Skilled teachers work very effectively with their able teaching assistants and other support staff to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils develop very good and trusting relationships with all staff, with the result that they are confident and keen to learn.
- The high quality programme of community and residential educational visits, combined with a wide range of visitors to the school, make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' achieve very well in their personal and social development.
- The wide range of information gathered about pupils' progress is not used as well as it could be to inform planning for their future learning.
- Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the school are underdeveloped.

In the eight months since it was established, very impressive progress has been made in building a sense of belonging by the whole school community. This has been despite significant challenges relating to effecting necessary improvements to the accommodation on the east site, the need to meet a much broader range of educational needs and managing the integration of two different staffing establishments.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 6	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

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

Achievement is **good** overall. Children of all abilities are given a good start to their education in all aspects of the Foundation curriculum. They then make good, steady progress as they go through the school. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups because all staff are committed to including all pupils in all activities, no matter what their difficulties. Pupils do well in all aspects of English and their good progress in speaking and listening benefits from the effective partnership between speech and language therapists, teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' achievements in religious education are satisfactory. Progress in all the creative and practical subjects, including physical education is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. The school makes sure that each aspect is covered very well, with particular success in raising pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school very much. They behave well, both in school and out in the community. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides **good quality** education.

Teaching is **good**. Pupils learn successfully because teachers plan work very carefully to ensure that all pupils can participate successfully in lessons, which are consistently challenging and engaging. Teachers do not, however, always use the wealth of information available to them about pupils' achievements to best effect to inform their planning. The school provides a good curriculum which is very successfully enriched by a stimulating range of additional activities. Good care, welfare and guidance arrangements give good support to pupils' pastoral needs and learning. There are successful partnerships with parents and very good, productive links with the wider community. Whilst there are a number of successful activity links with mainstream schools, the school recognises the need to develop more opportunities for pupils to spend time working collaboratively with their mainstream peers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher has worked in successful collaboration with an effective governing body and other key staff to create one school across two sites, following the very recent amalgamation. This process has involved effective leadership, good quality consultation, thoughtful analysis of identified problems and the formulation of appropriate responses. Day to day management by the headteacher and her senior colleagues has been effective in pushing through this agenda, whilst ensuring that pupils have continued to achieve well. This has, however, meant that less attention has been paid to gathering information about the wider effectiveness of the school and using this information to inform planning for improvement.

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

Parents feel positive about their partnership with the school. They particularly value the fact that the staff are very approachable and supportive, seeking their views and opinions and acting on them promptly.

Pupils are equally happy about school. They feel well cared for and able to ask for help, because staff are kind, friendly and always ready to listen to their needs.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- make better use of all the available assessment information to support teachers' planning;
- develop more effective systems to monitor the school's effectiveness and use the information gathered to inform future improvement planning;
- develop and nurture productive links with local mainstream schools to enable South Downs pupils to experience more inclusive learning opportunities.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement is **good** for all pupils, irrespective of their age, special educational need ethnicity or gender.

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

- Children in the early years classes do well in all areas of learning.
- Achievement is sustained throughout the school, because of the extra support given to those who need it most.
- Pupils achieve well in all aspects of English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Achievement in religious education does not equate with the general high standards.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make particularly good progress.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children achieve well and get off to a good start during their time in the Foundation Stage. At first, many of them find it difficult to sit and listen to or co-operate with adults. As the result of high quality teaching, they gradually settle and participate in activities. The difficulties they experience in communicating are seen as a priority for development and, as a consequence, most make impressive progress in learning to use signs, symbols or speech to ask for help or answer questions about what they are doing. Children make equally good progress in developing pre-reading and writing skills, and higher attaining pupils read and overwrite their names by the time they are five. They acquire a range of skills necessary to learn in mathematics, such as coming to know and join in counting rhymes and learning to match objects by shape and colour. Children also achieve well in all the other early learning goals.
2. Pupils build successfully on this early success across all subjects, always benefiting from the very well focused help they are given in relation to their particular needs. In English they do well in all aspects of the subject. The National Literacy Strategy has been thoughtfully adapted to meet the wide range of pupils' needs and, when combined with specialist techniques, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), pupils are enabled to make good, and often, very good progress in some aspects of their learning. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are successfully enabled to cope with change through the successful use of visual timetables and pupils with profound and complex difficulties (PMLD) are helped to understand and appreciate the experiences planned for them through the sensitive use of objects or sounds of reference to signal new activities. All pupils achieve well in developing the ability to communicate through their chosen medium, be it sign, symbol or speech. This is because of the very effective working partnerships between speech and language therapists, teachers and teaching assistants. By the end of their time at The South Downs, the majority are consequently talking confidently about their experiences and participating well in discussions. By the same token, pupils make good progress in learning to read and write, with the highest attainers able to read aloud in class and write their news independently by the age of eleven.
3. Effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has helped pupils to learn all aspects of mathematics successfully through practical activities, often using their skills and knowledge well in other subjects. Pupils make equally good progress in science and ICT, as the result of well planned activities, thoughtfully structured to engage their interest. Pupils' achievements in religious education are only satisfactory, because there tends to be a concentration in lessons on social and moral issues, often resulting in there being too little religious content. Progress is good for all the creative and practical subjects.



## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are **good**. They behave **well** in and around the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**, in response to the wide range of experiences that school provides for them. Attendance is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well.
- They have very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong.
- The responsibilities of living in a community are promoted very well through the high level of residential visits.
- Cultural awareness is promoted very well through the curriculum.
- The quality of behaviour plans for individuals is inconsistent.

## Commentary

4. Pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about their experiences. They look forward to their lessons and to the wide range of activities that the school offers. Behaviour is good. Pupils respond well to their teachers and other adults, and they show respect and interest in lessons. They take part with enjoyment in group and individual activities. Their good behaviour reflects the very good social and moral teaching that they receive. Pupils have a very good awareness of the difference between right and wrong. This is because of the good, whole-class behaviour strategies in place that are understood by the whole school community. Each class establishes its own rules, rewards and sanctions that are agreed by all. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them and to work towards achieving their goals. Whole-class discussions at the end of each lesson encourage pupils to understand what has gone right and what has gone wrong. Consequently, they are usually able to accept the group decision about their own behaviour.
5. Pupils with more challenging behaviour are supported through individual behaviour plans. Many of these are of a good quality and help pupils to manage their own behaviour well. However, the quality of some of these plans is inconsistent. They are not always detailed enough, or used well enough to bring about changes in behaviour. In these cases, the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils with challenging difficulties becomes unsatisfactory.

## 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	110	1	0
White - Irish	2	0	0
White - any other White background	4	1	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	1	0	0

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

6. This very small number of exclusions reflects the school's sensible approach to using this ultimate sanction sensitively and carefully to deal with extremes of unacceptable behaviour.
7. The responsibilities of living in a community are promoted very well in many simple ways, such as taking responsibility for giving out resources, taking the registers to the office and delivering messages. A particular strength is the level and quality of residential experiences that are offered to pupils. During their time at the school, they have several opportunities to undertake such a visit, and pupils talk enthusiastically about their visits to Cudham. They express their enjoyment of the trip, detailing each experience and task undertaken very well. Very strong relationships are evidently forged between pupils, and between pupils and staff during this trip.
8. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Their cultural awareness, in particular, is promoted very well through many areas of the curriculum. For example, they learn about faiths and festivals during religious education, and study texts that promote awareness of racism and fairness in English. In one literacy lesson, pupils were able to comment on how 'unfair' it was for one character to be prevented from acting the part of 'Peter Pan', firstly because she was a 'girl' and secondly because she was 'black'. Their discussion showed that they were aware of the importance of equality and fairness and they took full advantage of the very good opportunities to express their own feelings on the subject.
9. Pupils like coming to school, are punctual and attend regularly. The school has developed good procedures to monitor and promote good attendance and staff follow up any unexplained absences. Attendance rates are above those found in similar schools and absences are mainly because of illness or medical appointments. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time and the school day starts promptly.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.48	School data	0.06

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided is **good**.

**Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers work in very effective partnership with their teaching assistants and other professionals.
- Teachers' planning is very good and ensures the efficient use of staff and learning resources.
- All staff focus their efforts well to ensure that every pupil is included in each learning activity.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations.
- Thoughtful adaptation of National Strategies has resulted in well structured lessons that have good pace and variety.
- The comprehensive assessment information gathered is not always used to best effect in planning the next stage of learning
- Parents of pupils with ASD praise the quality of support given to their children.

## Commentary

10. Pupils learn as well as they do because they are provided with comprehensive and well focused support. It is particularly impressive that the whole staff team, coming as it did from two quite different school cultures, has been integrated into an effective whole over the two sites in only eight months. The class teams of teachers and teaching assistants plan, work and evaluate the outcomes of their efforts thoroughly and thoughtfully. They utilise their particular individual strengths well, and teaching assistants often, as in the case of ICT and displays, support their colleagues across the school. By the same token, the work of therapists is well integrated into planning, most particular for speech and language therapy, where detailed programmes inform practice well. Whilst physiotherapy is available for those pupils who need it, detailed plans are not always available to help teachers and teaching assistants adapt their approaches in, for example, swimming lessons.
11. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive, being one of the reasons for the good behaviour around the school and out in the community. Pupils are confident to take part in challenging activities because they know that their efforts will be recognised and valued. The high, but realistic expectations that teachers have of them are motivating and the interesting lessons and engaging resources that teachers plan and produce are further reasons for pupils to get involved and work hard. One of the most impressive aspects of the school's work is the way it has adapted its approaches to include pupils with ASD in all learning opportunities, both in mixed classes and the specialist groupings. Good quality training has resulted in staff utilising a range of techniques well to meet the challenge of overcoming the resistance that so many autistic pupils display to getting involved. Parents are particularly appreciative of this understanding and skill.
12. Good teaching is the result of individual staff making sure that they know each of their pupils very well and adapting the materials that they use, and the approaches that they employ best to meet their varying needs. The school has developed an impressive structure to gather, record and analyse information about how well pupils are getting on, and to inform whole school target setting. This has resulted in their working closely and productively with the LEA and other special schools in the authority to ensure consistency of approach in monitoring pupils' progress. In this situation, however, teachers at The South Downs have tended to view this activity as a formal requirement, and have increasingly tended towards depending on their good, informal knowledge of pupils; with the result that they have not always used the more formal information available to them as well as they could. There is certainly inconsistency of practice across the school, both in terms of subjects and individual teachers. Whilst a minority of teachers are combining all the available information very effectively to inform their planning for individual pupils' learning, most especially in early years classes, a significant minority are not. The appropriate shift of emphasis in targets for individual education plans to focus on personal and social development is good. Parallel individual pupil planning for curriculum subject focus has, however, not yet been fully developed to facilitate assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do - and this, in turn, has an impact on how thoroughly pupils' achievements can be reported.

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	9 (18%)	35 (70%)	6 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentage..*

## The curriculum

The school provides **good** learning opportunities, which are very well supported by the wide range of activities beyond the classroom.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subjects are well planned to meet the broad range of pupils' learning needs.
- An extensive range of educational visits, clubs and residential opportunities link subjects together very well to motivate pupils, and extend their learning beyond the classroom.
- The school's extreme difficulty in recruiting teachers to vacant posts has an adverse impact on the curriculum available to pupils.
- Programmes for speech and language therapy are very good but there are not enough physiotherapy and hydrotherapy programmes.
- The split site arrangements and certain inadequacies in the buildings do cause some difficulties.

### Commentary

13. Learning opportunities are relevant and meet the needs of pupils with moderate, severe, profound and complex needs, speech, communication and behavioural difficulties, and autistic spectrum disorder. Planning in English is particularly effective. Good quality planning helps all pupils to achieve equally well. There is broad coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Teachers make very good use of computers to support learning across the curriculum. The programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education has been well written. Weekly educational visits, annual residential educational trips for older pupils and physical education lessons also provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal, social and independence skills.
14. A very broad range of activities and visits motivate pupils and make their learning more interesting. There are visits, for example, to the Sussex Downs, seaside, harbour, castles, churches, art galleries, woodlands, farms, parks, villages, the town centre, science centre, dental practice, and fitness centre. Work in the classroom and on visits links subjects together very well. Pupils in Years 1 to 3 with autistic spectrum disorder, for example, visited a bluebell wood, listened and observed and reflected on the sounds and sights of nature, then in the classroom used paints, tissue paper and glitter to re-create the mood of the bluebell wood. This activity successfully linked religious education, science, art and geography. This is just one of many examples seen in very effective displays of pupils' work. Visitors support work in dance, tennis, science and music, for example.
15. The school is experiencing considerable difficulty recruiting teachers to fill three vacant posts, including one for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although the specialist music teacher has been re-deployed temporarily to teach this class, this has meant a reduction in the music programme this term. In other respects, the resources of the school are good. The long distance between the two sites, however, has necessitated re-organisation of the science programme, so that the rather modest quantity of resources in this subject is available to pupils on both sites.
16. The quality of the accommodation is good overall. There is generally plenty of space and the buildings and grounds are well maintained. Displays are used very well to make the learning environment more interesting and to praise pupils for their good efforts. However, the split site, with buildings some distance apart is, not an ideal arrangement for the efficient management of the school. On the east site, the echoing acoustics in the hall are a problem for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There is a shared hydrotherapy pool on the same site, and the school has access to it for two days a week. On the west site, there is severe congestion when pupils arrive and depart. There are no medical rooms on either site, which does cause occasional difficulties.

17. Pupils receive high quality speech and language therapy and make good progress. The programmes that have been written by the physiotherapy service are also of good quality. There are, however, a considerable number of pupils for whom physiotherapy and hydrotherapy programmes have not yet been written. Without these specially designed programmes, teachers and assistants are not able to give those pupils the support they need.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **satisfactory**. Provision for support, advice and guidance is **good**. Involvement of pupils is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although governors and staff are vigilant of potential risks, not all formal risk assessments have been completed.
- Adults working in school give pupils good encouragement to develop their social and personal skills.
- Staff value pupils' views and, consequently, pupils feel that they can turn to adults in school if they are worried or upset.
- The arrangements for the induction of pupils are good.
- Support and guidance arrangements are good overall.
- Teachers write good quality, relevant targets for individual pupils but these are not linked to the annual review of the pupil's Statement of Special Educational Need.

### **Commentary**

18. Staff endeavour to provide a safe and healthy environment for the pupils. They pay due attention to health and safety in lessons and supervision around the school is good. Governors make regular checks of the premises and appropriate arrangements are in place for emergency evacuations of the building. Risk assessments have been completed for off-site visits, swimming and of the playground, but the school recognises the urgent need to complete assessments for other areas and activities, such as first aid, arrivals and departures and pupils with challenging behaviours.

19. Two senior members of staff have been trained in child protection and carry out their duties well. Child protection procedures are well known to staff and they understand the importance of reporting concerns to the child protection co-ordinators. Arrangements for pupils in public care are good. Procedures for first aid are good and staff keep good records of accidents and medication. However, both sites lack specialist accommodation for clinics and first aid treatment.

20. Staff know pupils very well and show care and concern for them. New pupils and their families are given good support when they visit the school and meet with staff. Parents appreciate the home visits by senior staff who are able to discuss any concerns with parents and assess children in familiar surroundings. Support staff work seamlessly alongside teachers so that all staff make significant contributions in raising pupils' self esteem and encouraging independence. Teachers set personal development targets and track their progress very closely. Pupils know what is expected of them and they work hard to achieve their targets. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the way teachers give advice and guidance to pupils about how to improve their academic work.

21. The ethos of mutual respect permeates many aspects of school life and relationships are very good. The results of the questionnaire show that nearly all pupils feel that they can turn to adults working in school if they need help. In lessons and annual reviews staff value pupils' views. For example, in a year 4/5 religious education lesson, the teacher created an atmosphere where pupils felt able to talk about their fears of the dark without fear of ridicule. Newly elected members

of school council are learning to canvass their classmates and voice their opinions about healthy eating. The staff are keen to act upon the school council's ideas.

22. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are in place, as required, but targets for the following year are not included as part of this review process. Consequently, the following year there is no review of progress in meeting the previous year's targets. However, teachers do write good quality, relevant targets for individual pupils and these are reviewed regularly, but they do not form part of the formal annual review of the statement.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Links with parents are **good**. Links with other schools are **satisfactory**. Links with the community are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school makes parents feel welcome in school and values their opinions.
- There are good opportunities for parents to discuss how their children are getting on.
- The school makes very good use of local amenities.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to be included in mainstream school activities.

### **Commentary**

23. The school works hard to reach out to parents and communication on a one-to-one basis is good. Staff make beneficial home visits when children are about to start school and the vast majority of parents feel that their children settle into school quickly. Most staff and parents make good use of the home-school diaries to communicate concerns as well as to celebrate successes on a daily basis. Parents value the opportunities to come in to school for events such as class assemblies and nativity plays. The school also invites parents to coffee afternoons where they can talk informally with staff and gain support from other parents. Each term the school consults parents about their views on school life and involves them in the annual review process. Through newsletters and the school magazines, the school gives parents relevant and timely information about future events as well as celebrating the school's successes. In response to the questionnaire, a significant minority of parents felt that the school did not give them enough advice about homework. The inspection team does not share their views. Parents are given good information, particularly about how to help their children at home in the helpful booklets which the school sends home.
24. The school offers parents good opportunities to talk with staff at termly meetings about their children's IEPs and annual reviews. Although a significant number of parents do not feel they are well informed about their children progress, the inspection team judges that annual reports are satisfactory, but some lack detail about pupils' progress in subjects other than Mathematics and English.
25. The school's very good partnership with the community enriches the curriculum and has a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development. The staff make very good use of the recently acquired additional minibus to make educational visits which enhance pupils' learning. For example an afternoon trip to Pevensey Castle brought the pupils' study of the Norman Conquest to life and they were able to recall important historical facts in the follow-up lesson.
26. The school has developed useful links with the adjacent infant school and pupils have worked together, for example, as a performing choir. At the time of the inspection only one pupil was able to take part in mainstream activities and the school rightly sees this as an area for development. There are few curriculum links with other schools, but the school advises mainstream colleagues on useful strategies to support pupils with special educational needs. There are

appropriate arrangements in place for the transfer of Year 6 pupils, and the school supports parents in making informed choices about their children's secondary school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Governance of the school is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **good**. Management of the school is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has led the whole school community well through a challenging period of change to achieve an impressive unity amongst everyone involved.
- There is a strong commitment to develop the school so that it can meet the needs of a wider range of pupils effectively.
- The governing body is well informed about the work of the school.
- Performance management has been effectively implemented.
- The school is very thorough in its collection of information about the progress of pupils, but there is insufficient systematic analysis of this and other management information.
- Best value principles are underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

27. The headteacher has worked collaboratively with governors and other key staff to successfully create one school across the two sites, following the amalgamation. This has been a complex process, given the range of special education needs of the pupils and the different perspectives and skills of all the staff, parents and pupils involved, across two sites, which are several miles apart. In this context, the headteacher and governing body have worked well together to establish a clear direction for the school. They have consulted widely with parents and staff to find the best solution for any difficulties. Staff are, consequently, clear about the developments taking place and are committed to creating one school. Serious recruitment problems are, however, hampering the completion of this process.
28. Recent changes have meant that the school now provides for pupils with a very wide range of learning difficulties. There is a strong commitment to develop the school so that it can meet the needs of all of these pupils in an inclusive manner. Planning is in place to increase staff expertise and develop the curriculum and buildings in order to achieve this. Subject co-ordinators have valuable allocated time out of the classroom each term to develop their subjects productively. The needs of lower attaining pupils have been given an appropriately high priority for the period of the current improvement plan.
29. The governing body has a well developed committee system, through which governors receive reports from key staff. Governors also make regular visits to the school in respect of their areas of responsibility. This enables them to be aware of its strengths and areas for development, helping them to support the work of the school effectively.
30. Arrangements for the performance management of teaching and support staff are good. Formal requirements are in place for teaching staff and are overseen by the governing body. Support staff also participate in annual appraisal interviews and benefit from good access to continuing professional development. Three of these staff are working towards gaining teaching qualifications, and two others are being supported to achieve NVQ Level 3. The headteacher has high expectations of all staff and works rigorously with governors to ensure that these are met.
31. The school is welcoming and there is an induction pack available to new staff. This is currently being adapted to meet the needs of the amalgamated school.
32. The school is very thorough in its collection of information about the progress of individual pupils. All pupils are assessed three times each year using the P Levels that lead into the National

Curriculum levels of achievement, and there is consequently a wealth of data available. However, although outcomes are discussed, there is insufficient systematic analysis or commentary to inform whole school improvement effectively. Collection of other management information is limited. The school's ability to challenge itself and bring about improvement is, therefore, restricted.

33. The budget is managed efficiently by the bursar on a day to day basis and overseen by the governing body. Staff report on spending to the appropriate committees. Decisions about expenditure are largely based on previous costs and current staffing and there is limited consideration of possible options and effectiveness in regard to the overall budget. Governors look for quotations when making spending decisions and consult widely about the work of the school but Best Value principles are underdeveloped.

## Financial information

### Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,467,565	Balance from previous year	79,095 (b)
Total expenditure	1,379,464	Balance carried forward to the next	90,453 (c)
Expenditure per pupil	12,101(a)		

Notes:

- a) Based on 114 pupils (99 pupils for 5/12<sup>ths</sup> of a year and 126 for 7/12<sup>ths</sup>)
- b) To cover amalgamation
- c) To complete the amalgamation process

The governors made an informed decision to have higher than normal carry forward budgets, because of the demands of the amalgamation of two schools into one. They knew they were moving into a building on the east site, which was in poor condition and had few resources. It is also in an area that experiences high levels of vandalism, which would lead to a requirement for regular repairs to its fabric.



## **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.*

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

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

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

- Children achieve well because planning allows them to experience all the areas of learning through guided play activities.
- Staff teams work together effectively to help children achieve their individual targets.
- Links with parents and information about their child's prior achievements is good.
- Accommodation is good.

#### **Commentary**

34. Children achieve well because planning allows them to experience all the areas of learning through guided play activities.
35. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. Staff teams work together effectively in caring for the children and in helping them to learn. Children are encouraged to explore their environment through play activities while teachers and support staff help them to work successfully towards individual targets during the lessons. These are planned by the teacher with progress recorded on a daily basis by staff working with individual children. Short group sessions help children to be aware of one another and extend their skills. Teachers use signing and visual symbols well to help pupil understand the structure of the day. In some lessons there is too much equipment available for children to focus their attention and learning opportunities are lost when the pace is increased by the demands of one or two children to move on to the next activity. Many children find it very difficult to co-operate with the demands of school because of the nature of their special needs. Staff work effectively with each child to establish a routine suited to their individual needs so that they can participate and make progress. For those children who need them, there are very detailed behaviour plans to support their learning in this area.
36. Links with parents and information about prior achievements are good. Home visits are made before children start at the school so that staff are well informed about their needs. Information is provided on a daily basis through good quality home/school books. Parents also receive information about the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and suggested activities to follow up at home if they wish, in very helpful booklets. Information is received from other professionals who have been involved with a child before they come to school. Most children enter the school at the beginning of their Reception year, but pre-school pupils are occasionally admitted and may attend part-time. Assessment information giving the level that the pupil has reached in the P levels prior to starting school is received and forms a firm basis for planning and measuring progress during the Reception year.
37. Leadership of the Foundation stage is good. This has been an area of development for the school during the year and the co-ordinator has been given time to support teaching staff, look at overall planning and documentation and liaise with parents and other agencies. This has been used effectively to contribute to the quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Planning is in place to meet the needs of the wider range of children being admitted to the school in the next academic year.

38. Accommodation is good with two well equipped classrooms and a shared area indoors. Outside there are very good facilities including climbing equipment, a grass area and hard standing for small bikes. This contributes particularly well to good achievement in physical development. While toilet facilities are adequate for the current group, there are plans to refurbish the area so that staff can manage children with physical disabilities in a safer way.
39. Children are encouraged to become as independent as possible in their self-help skills and make good progress in their **personal, social and emotional development**. Opportunities throughout the day are used well to support this, such as putting on shoes and socks after PE and finding their own belongings. At snack times, children are helped to develop an awareness of and respect for others. They learn to make choices and ask for what they want, sometimes using PECS. As part of daily routines, children learn to sit on their chairs in the group for short periods and to co-operate in a one to one situation with staff. The nature of their difficulties makes it difficult for them to share toys or to learn to play together, but some show interest in the play of others.
40. The development of **communication, language and literacy** is a priority for most children and they do well in this area of learning. They learn to identify and name their friends in pictures, enjoy making animal noises in response to rhymes and are encouraged to ask for help with signs or gestures if they need it. Children can point to objects in books and give toys to an adult on request. Language is structured so that children can learn to ask for what they want. The familiar routines of the day and use of symbols are effective in consolidating this learning. Some staff are skilled at using signing to develop early language skills, but this is not consistent. Children look at books and listen to adults reading familiar stories such as the *Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Higher attaining children can read their names and are learning high frequency words. They enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to work on letter sounds. Some draw between lines and can overwrite their names
41. In the area of **mathematical development**, regular counting games and rhymes teach some children to count up to 10 and find number symbols on a line. Counting is aided by the successful use of real objects related to the rhymes which can then be counted. These skills are practised every day and extended in play activities. Some children can make groups of objects and create patterns with beads in two colours. They learn to copy shapes and sort and name colours
42. Children have good opportunities to develop **knowledge and understanding of the world** around them. They enjoy exploring materials and respond with wonder at the sight of real butterflies. Handling guinea pigs and other small animals encourages children to learn about their needs and regular outings provide real experience of different environments, such as the park. Information and communication technology is part of teaching and learning throughout the curriculum. While lower attaining children learn to operate simple switch toys or touch a picture on the screen, other, higher attaining children can work with an adult to find individual letters on the keyboard and copy-type words.
43. The **physical development** of children is good. Some can climb and use the slide, run in a given direction and steer a bike. Many enjoy using the small trampoline. Opportunities for physical play are supplemented by taught session in the hall. Children achieve well physically in these sessions but find following instructions very difficult. Additional experiences are provided in weekly trips to the park or a local soft play centre.
44. Children's **creative development** is good. Music and singing form a natural part of many sessions and children have opportunities to play instruments, learning to play loudly or quietly, fast or slow. They explore a variety of materials to make marks on paper and creativity and individual choice are encouraged. Children have the chance to dress up, and some engage in simple pretend play such as rolling out cakes from dough, but many find this aspect difficult because of the nature of their special needs. They prefer to manipulate objects and enjoy playing with cars or trains.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

*Lessons were seen in English for every year group.*

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in all aspects of English.
- The quality of teaching is good and support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements.
- English lessons give pupils the confidence to succeed in all their learning.
- Good Leadership ensures consistency of practice across the school.
- Literacy skills are used well in other subjects.
- Not all pupils are aware of their own targets in English.

#### Commentary

45. Pupils achieve well in English right across the school. Their speaking and listening skills are good. These are developed well by good support from the speech and language therapists. This has enabled staff to train in the use of Makaton signing and in the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), both of which are well used to promote pupils' understanding and to extend their language skills. Pupils of all abilities have access to the system that is most appropriate to their needs. For example, a small minority use PECS well for their everyday needs, and, consequently are able to make choices and offer opinions. Other pupils use Makaton signing well to express themselves and to answer questions. The majority of pupils use speech well, both in class and around the school. They discuss their learning with teachers and extend their vocabulary through a wide range of activities. Pupils in Year 6 learn well how to describe characters through their literacy text. As a result of good resources and good questioning, many learn new words and use them well.
46. Achievement in reading is good. The new reading scheme is good and this, together with a very good library facility, is having a positive impact on pupils' use of books and on their achievement in reading. Pupils of all abilities use books well on a daily basis. Younger pupils were observed sharing the story of *Handa's Surprise*, which they subsequently acted out very well for a parent assembly. They quickly showed that they understood how to hold the book, turn the pages and follow the pictures. They showed good levels of interest in the sequencing of the story. Older pupils, and higher attaining pupils, read simple texts well and benefit from the good home-school reading system that helps them to make good progress. Symbols are used well to help pupils with ASD to read their daily timetables, helping them to understand what is happening next.
47. Achievement in writing is also good. Pupils of all abilities enjoy making marks on paper and from the youngest classes learn to represent their thoughts and ideas with pictures, symbols and words. Older pupils, and higher attaining pupils, write for a good range of purposes in many subjects. They make good progress and their writing style and content improves over time.
48. Teaching in English is good and leads to good learning in lessons. Teachers have good skills and make very good use of support assistants to promote learning. This is having a significant impact on the achievements of pupils. Since they are well supported in lessons, pupils work hard, stay on task and make good progress. Teachers make effective use of resources to keep pupils interested, and they manage and organise their literacy lessons well.
49. English lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development. This is because they gain confidence and self-esteem as they take part actively in many role-play and discussion activities.

They learn to take responsibility for their own resources, giving out and collecting books and pencils sensibly. They benefit from the good range of multi-cultural materials that are used to foster understanding and empathy with those who may be different from themselves. For example, in Year 4, pupils studied the text 'Amazing Grace'. They had several discussions about 'fairness' linked to personal issues in the text.

50. Leadership of English is good. A good new curriculum has recently been introduced that allows teachers to provide different tasks for pupils of different ability. This is helping all pupils to make good progress. Effective monitoring has ensured consistency of practice, both in teaching and in the assessment of pupils' work. Data has been effectively analysed to show how much progress pupils are making.
51. Although targets are set for every pupil, they are not always used in lessons to make sure pupils are aware of what they are working towards or to ensure sufficient progress is made towards achieving them. Neither are they monitored well enough on a regular basis. Because of this, there is too little evidence of day-to-day assessment of pupils' achievements to inform teachers' planning for the next stage of learning.

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

52. Literacy skills are planned for and used well in other subjects. Pupils use their writing skills well to describe experiments in science, to write about their own ideas in history, to describe their pictures in art and design and in design and technology, and to work out simple routes in geography. Symbols are also used well to help pupils read instructions and sequence the events of their day.

## **MATHEMATICS**

*Lessons were seen in mathematics for every year group.*

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well, because the planning, organisation and staffing of lessons allows for a range of different activities.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils support learning.
- Realistic practical activities engage the interest of pupils.
- There has been good implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.
- Pace and teaching methods aimed at more able pupils sometimes make it difficult for the less able to learn.
- Each class has clear targets for learning.

### **Commentary**

53. Teachers plan effectively so that the team of adults in each class can help all pupils to learn. They enable pupils to work individually or in a small group on a suitable activity for most of the lesson. For example, in a class for autistic pupils, a short introductory session was followed by each pupil working with an adult on tasks ranging from recognising numbers one to three to writing numbers to fifty in sequence.
54. Teaching and learning in the subject are good and lessons are effective because of the very good relationships between staff and pupils that support learning. Teaching and learning in the subject is good. Teachers use realistic practical activities to engage the interest of pupils such as shopping games to learn about money, creating patterns with beads or relating time to events in the school day. Pupils enjoy these activities and show pleasure in their achievements. Most

participate well and are encouraged to manage their own behaviour. The National Numeracy Strategy has been well implemented to give a structure to lessons and to overall planning. Whole class activities are well balanced with targeted small group and individual work. In some lessons the pace and methods used were very effective with the highest attaining pupils, but teachers had fewer strategies for helping lower attaining pupils to learn.

55. Pupils have clear targets in numeracy. The use of books for each pupil is effective, enabling the teacher to write learning objectives, and, in addition, there is space for staff working with the pupil to record their response. This is a very good way of recording progress on a day to day basis. Pupils do not have mathematics targets as part of their individual education plans so the annual reviewing of progress is less secure. There are good arrangements for advising parents on ways that they can help pupils improve their mathematics at home, particularly for younger pupils, through the provision of booklets.
56. Leadership of mathematics is good. The co-ordinator has developed the use of National Numeracy Strategy materials as a basis for planning the curriculum. This has led to good opportunities for pupils to make progress in all aspects of mathematics. Consideration is being given to further adapting the schemes of work so that they are more appropriate for the lower attaining pupils. Resources for the subject are good on both sites and classrooms are well presented to encourage the interest of pupils and prompt their learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. Pupils have good opportunities to reinforce their mathematical learning in other subjects of the curriculum. Symbolised timetables in most classes encourage the understanding of sequences and timing of events. Counting and measuring are reinforced through class routines and informal activities.

### **SCIENCE**

*Four lessons were seen in science. The previous work of pupils was analysed and discussions held with key staff.*

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well across a broad range of science topics.
- Educational visits are interesting and fun, and link science learning to other subjects very effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good, particularly the planning of practical activities and the teaching of science enquiry skills.
- Assessments are very thoroughly recorded, but the information is not used well enough for planning the work of individual pupils.
- Subject plans do not provide enough advice for teachers about meeting the wide range of learning needs, use of computers, or risk assessments.

### **Commentary**

58. Pupils make good progress in science. They learn well about the parts of plants and how they grow in different conditions of light and water, and about animals in the school grounds, on farms and in other environments. They know how to make bulbs light in electrical circuits, they use push and pull forces and investigate whether light can pass through materials. Pupils understand that materials have different properties and learn about their different uses. When pupils use the science resources it helps to develop their fine motor skills, by, for example moulding, pressing, squeezing, patting, rolling and twisting clay to make snails and hedgehogs and using scissors to cut straws to make hedgehog spines. Achievement is good because learning is supported by

plenty of practical work and regular well planned educational visits. Visits to farms, parks, woodland, the Downs, seashore, harbour, housing developments, and local science centres add extra richness to pupils' learning. Visits link work in science very effectively to work in other subjects, for example, English, art, geography, history and design and technology.

59. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In a Year 4 class, pupils of all abilities achieved a very good understanding of how to conduct a science investigation about transparent, translucent and opaque materials. This was because the resources were very well prepared and organised; and the teacher, ably supported by knowledgeable learning assistants, promoted the ideas of fair testing, prediction, planning and recording results very effectively. Challenging behaviour was expertly managed and pupils were clear about their personal targets. Pupils learned new scientific language, how to collect and record results of an investigation, and how to co-operate in pairs. In Year 6, a higher attaining boy was able to explain cause and effect in work on the conditions needed for cress seeds to grow because his teacher asked him challenging questions and gave him time to think, discuss and write. Teachers encourage younger pupils to do science work at home with their parents. Older pupils, however, are not given the same opportunities for homework. Teachers keep very thorough records of their assessments in science. They do not, however, use this information enough for planning subsequent work. Annual reports to parents are of variable quality. In the best examples, parents are well informed about their child's progress. Other reports contain descriptions of activities studied by the class but no information about the progress of individual pupils.

60. The subject is well led by two co-ordinators. They have developed a very good annual science week, which brings the subject alive for pupils. They monitor teaching plans regularly and have clear plans for the future. The co-ordinators are aware that planning documents now require updating to give teachers more guidance in:

- planning across a wider range of moderate, severe, profound and complex learning difficulties;
- making better use of computers and other technological aids to support learning;
- the writing of risk assessments for science lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

*Two lessons were seen and the use of ICT was seen as part of lessons in other subjects. The previous work of pupils was analysed and discussions held with key staff.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in ICT, because each of them has a clear target for improvement.
- Very good equipment on both sites allows ICT to be used to support learning in all subjects.
- The co-ordinator has provided effective training and support for staff.
- There is very good support from the technician.

### **Commentary**

61. All pupils have targets for improvement in information and communication technology which are accessible to them and to all adults working with them in the classroom. This enables them to achieve well. Progress is monitored in all aspects of the subject through the use of P Level assessments. Higher attaining pupils are confident in using basic word-processing features such as spell checker, saving and retrieving work, finding information on the internet and using drawing packages. Some reach level 2 of the National Curriculum by Year 6. Lower attaining pupils learn to attend to the screen and use single switches to make something happen.

62. The very good equipment on both sites is used effectively to interest the pupils. The school has recently developed its use of interactive white boards and pupils are highly motivated by this technology. There is good planning in place to extend the number and use of this equipment. Digital cameras are also widely used both by staff in their teaching and by older pupils. There is an extensive range of software to meet the learning needs of all abilities. This includes symbol software, which is used well to support learning in literacy. The range of technology combined with careful planning across subjects of the curriculum leads to good teaching and learning in the subject. Pupils gain confidence and are interested by the good use of the technology in their lessons. Although each teacher has identified specific equipment and software to be used by individual pupils in subjects of the curriculum to help them learn effectively, there is the flexibility for pupils to use occasionally computers in a more random way.
63. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has provided effective training and support for all staff so that they can achieve good standards of teaching and learning in the subject. This has been a difficult task because of the technical problems associated with the two sites. All teachers now have their own laptop computers that they can use anywhere in the school, as well as the equipment in the classrooms. The school network and site licences mean that appropriate software is accessible in all classes to meet the needs of individual pupils. There is very good technical support from the school's own technician. Problems can be resolved quickly and teachers do not have to spend time sorting out technical issues.

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

64. Information and communication technology is clearly seen by the school as an important and useful aid to learning in other subjects, particularly English. During the inspection, there was good evidence of the potential of the technology being well integrated into lessons through thorough planning sheets.

### **HUMANITIES**

*No lessons were seen in geography and two were seen in history. Pupils' previous work was analysed and discussions were conducted with staff.*

#### **Geography**

65. Although no geography lessons were observed, it was possible to look at pupils' work, displays and annual reports. In all years pupils monitor the weather, study the changing seasons and frequently link their work in geography to other subjects. Work on weather links very well to science, for example, when pupils decide which materials are best for clothes in summer and winter. Educational visits help pupils to learn about their local environment. They visit new and older settlements in the area and the new Sovereign Harbour development. They link this work to history, science, English, design and technology and art, for example. They consider the materials used for buildings, the age of the buildings, and relate their work to the story about the three little pigs. Pupils make houses in design and technology and cover them with different materials, and in art they paint pictures of the environment in the school grounds. Residential trips help pupils to appreciate environments further afield. By Year 4, pupils contrast their own locality with others, in Africa and Wales, for example. Geography visits support pupils' personal and social development very well.

#### **History**

66. Achievement in the two history lessons seen was good. Pupils learned the sequence of events in the Norman Conquest. They learned facts, names and dates and consequently developed a good understanding of past and present. Whilst there are limited artefacts available to illustrate some lessons, the school does make very good use of places of historical interest in the local community to support learning in history, for example, castles, towers, old houses and churches. History lessons and educational visits about, for example, the Norman Conquest, life in Tudor

Britain, and the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain, link very well to work in other subjects, for example, English, geography, science, design and technology, art and personal, social, health and citizenship education. History visits also contribute very well to pupils' personal and social development.

67. The documentation to support the provision for history and geography has been organised very thoroughly by the subject co-ordinator.

### **Religious education**

*Whilst only two lessons were seen in religious education, other evidence, in the form of discussion with the subject leader and scrutiny of learning resources, pupils' past work and records supported an overall judgement.*

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and behave well.
- Religious education is linked well to pupils' personal development.
- Resources for the study of different faiths and their meaning are limited.

### **Commentary**

68. Pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory across the school. Younger pupils learn about a range of different festivals and celebrations and take part in appropriate activities that help them to find out about Christian values, such as 'giving' and 'sharing'. They took part in an assembly during the inspection week in which they shared their ideas about a multi-cultural text they had studied. They made up their own prayer to show understanding of Christian practice.

69. Older pupils learn about the faiths and customs of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. They benefit from visits to places of worship and from stories about the beliefs and ideas of these religions. They learn to respect the privacy of others and how to express their own feelings during discussions and assemblies.

70. The quality of teaching in religious education is satisfactory. Teachers model respect for all pupils and this helps to foster a good, caring ethos in classrooms. Religious content in lessons is sometimes weak. Religious education is closely linked to the development of personal skills and, because of this, lessons often focus on social or moral issues. Consequently, there is sometimes too little learning about religious content, but good learning and achievement in relation to personal skills. Pupils learn to care for one another, help others, share resources and take responsibility for themselves.

71. The co-ordinator for religious education has only recently taken on responsibility for the subject, and leadership is satisfactory overall. A good start has been made in monitoring the provision but, as yet, there are too few resources for learning and, consequently, pupils' understanding of the meaning of special artefacts of different religions remains limited.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Two lessons were seen in art and design and design and technology and, one in music. The previous work of pupils was analysed and discussions held with key staff.*



## Art and design and design and technology

72. The school plans for and teaches these two subjects together. For the most part this amalgamation has proved to be effective in utilising the crossover of some aspects of the subjects to good effect. The co-ordinator does, however, recognise that more work needs to be done to ensure that all elements of design and technology, most particularly the evaluative element, are covered thoroughly. Pupils are encouraged to use a wide variety of materials and techniques to make marks, express their ideas and produce good quality pieces of art. As a result, they become increasingly confident and adventurous in their activity, often being stimulated by the many sensitive displays of their own and others' work around the school. The supportive and enabling atmosphere helps them to build successfully on their earlier learning or, in some cases to overcome their anxieties and low self esteem in relation to their capabilities. They are able to explain the development of their ideas, sometimes related to the work of famous artists or other cultures. The same principles hold good for design and technology, which incorporates both food and designing and making activities. There are many examples around the school of all these aspects being used to good effect right across the curriculum, for example in the humanities, where impressive models have been made of villages or artefacts to illustrate particular teaching points. Pupils achieve well because of the imaginative and thoughtful approach that teachers and their assistants have to integrating the benefits of these two subjects well into pupils' experience.

## Music

73. The school benefits from the involvement of two specialist teachers in this subject. The co-ordinator is currently teaching a class full time, but is continuing to influence the work of her colleagues very effectively through exciting development work of the curriculum and the introduction of very motivating materials. She also successfully models good practice through her assemblies and other activities. The other teacher provides very effective one to one and small group teaching and organises impressive performance work, both in the school and for local inclusive arts festivals. Teachers use music effectively in a variety of ways in their lessons, through number and action songs and to teach the skills of listening and performing. Pupils sing well and participate in group activities, where they learn a wide variety of skills and techniques in motivating lessons that make the subject fun. Resources are of good quality and pupils benefit from a wide range of contact with musicians who visit the school. Pupils who display particular aptitude, work with visiting instrumental teachers, who, in turn, have enabled a few of them to achieve well on violin and keyboards. All pupils have thoroughly enjoyed their involvement with visiting dance, percussion and theatre groups, all of whom have brought performance alive for them and encouraged them to go on and achieve well in their own work.

## Physical education

*Five lessons were seen in physical education. Discussions were held with key staff.*

Provision for physical education is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in lessons.
- Teaching is good, although there are no assessment records, except in swimming.
- The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Residential visits, links with other schools, visits from specialists, and activities at lunch times extend opportunities for pupils to participate in, and enjoy, physical education.
- The subject is well led by two well qualified, experienced and committed co-ordinators.

## Commentary

74. Pupils make good progress in learning a wide range of skills in games, dance, athletics, gymnastic activities and swimming. In Years 3 to 6, pupils swim in the hydrotherapy pool or visit a local swimming pool. Records confirm that these pupils make good progress.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. At the time of the inspection it was only possible to observe swimming and athletics. There is, however, evidence of good planning also for dance, gymnastics and games. Teachers plan well for pupils to develop personal, social and independence skills during physical education lessons. Teaching and support in the hydrotherapy pool is good and pupils gain in confidence because they feel safe and secure with the staff. In a class of pupils in Years 3 and 4 with profound and severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviours, the time spent on changing clothes and shoes for physical education was used very well to promote personal development and communication skills. At times, however, learning opportunities are wasted on the playing fields and in the hall because pupils are not managed firmly enough. Teachers have not yet developed an assessment scheme to track progress in all the areas of physical education over time.
76. The subject is well led and managed, particularly the arrangements made for pupils to participate in physical activities through clubs, links with other schools, colleges and organisations. Short cricket, rounders, tennis, badminton, swimming and hockey are all provided, either in lessons, at lunch time and in the Friday afternoon club. A tennis coach visits in the summer term. Pupils work with mainstream primary pupils and a visiting dance group during an annual dance festival. Pupils visit the university to work with students and pupils from other special and mainstream schools during an annual games festival. Residential visits for pupils in Years 4 to 6 provide opportunities to participate in a very wide range of activities, including rock climbing, abseiling, canoeing and pony trekking. There is an annual sports day, in which the great majority of pupils participate. Pupils are active at lunchtime on bicycles, playing cricket, and climbing on the adventure play equipment. There are more opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to participate in sports and clubs than for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The co-ordinators have begun to plan programmes to help improve provision for physiotherapy and hydrotherapy.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Whilst only one specific lesson was seen in this subject, its principles were incorporated right across the curriculum - and there was much evidence, mentioned elsewhere in this report, of good provision.*

77. Pupils make very good progress because they have many opportunities to develop their personal social and citizenship skills through good quality discussions and a wide range of very relevant activities. Daily discussion and circle times help them to explore their own feelings and extend their understanding of how to express themselves, and how to behave well. There is a good range of planned, relevant topics within the PSHE programme and this helps pupils to improve their skills as they progress through the school. Citizenship topics have been effectively included and the new school council is enabling pupils to learn first-hand about taking responsibility for themselves and their community.
78. One of the strong features of the programme is the good level of role-play activities, which are planned in each area of the school. These help pupils to gain in confidence and improve their self-esteem. Pupils in the younger classes were observed presenting a role-play of a text in an assembly for their parents. They showed high levels of confidence as they acted their own part, and read simple pieces using a microphone. Good provision at break and lunch times also promotes good personal skills, because staff organise structured play activities with pupils. This helps to extend their play skills, keeps them interested and defuses any difficult behaviour.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); not applicable (8).*