

INSPECTION REPORT

RUSSETT SCHOOL and CHESHIRE MSI UNIT

Weaverham, Northwich

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111506

Headteacher: Mrs H. M. Watts

Lead inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 259018

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	96
School address:	Middlehurst Avenue Weaverham Northwich Cheshire
Postcode:	CW8 3BW
Telephone number:	01606 853005
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Cherry Hughes
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Russett School is a school for pupils aged two to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Within the school are two classes which make up the Cheshire Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI) Unit. However, to all intents and purposes, the pupils and teachers in these classes are part of the main school. Currently, 96 pupils attend the school, 12 of whom are in the MSI classes. There are 12 children in the nursery or reception years, seven of whom attend on a part-time basis, and 22 post-16 students. When they join the school, pupils' attainment is well below average. All but two of them have statements of special educational needs. The two exceptions are being assessed. Forty five pupils have severe learning difficulties and 37 have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A significant number of pupils have additional special educational needs. Thirteen have a hearing impairment and seven are visually impaired. Five have autistic spectrum disorders and six have behavioural difficulties. The 12 pupils with multi-sensory impairment also have learning difficulties. The large majority of pupils are white, but two are from mixed white/Caribbean backgrounds, one is Asian and two belong to other ethnic groups. Two pupils have English as an additional language, with Turkish or Arabic being spoken in their homes. Most pupils are from the Vale Royal district of mid-Cheshire, but several are from surrounding districts or counties. Their socio-economic circumstances are very varied but are broadly average. Five are in public care. The school has gained the Investors in People and Healthy Schools awards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage curriculum
9981	Saleem Hussain	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science Religious education Physical education Modern foreign languages
27409	Sue Hunt	Team inspector	English Geography History English as an additional language
20466	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Art and design Music Information and communication technology Special educational needs
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Personal, social, health and citizenship education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Russett School is a **good** school with many very good features. Pupils achieve well and their personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's leadership is very strong and effective, directed towards continually improving the school.
- Staff make very good and successful use of a wide range of methods to help pupils to communicate.
- Pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well.
- The school works very hard to ensure that pupils are safe and happy. As a result, they enjoy being at school and try very hard to do well.
- Very many activities, in and out of school, make learning interesting and contribute to pupils' very good personal development.
- The school very successfully welcomes parents as partners in their children's education.
- Pupils with severe learning difficulties do not achieve as well in science as they do in other subjects, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- In a minority of lessons, activities are not effective in ensuring that pupils learn well.

The school has improved very well since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is better in most subjects, especially English and physical education. Their attitudes and behaviour have improved and post-16 students are now prepared very well for leaving school. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and all the issues raised previously have been dealt with successfully.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Good	Very good

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Children in the nursery and reception years achieve well and so do the pupils in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is good in Years 3 to 6 and 7 to 9. It is also good in Years 10 and 11 and for the post-16 students. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in communication, speaking and listening, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. In reading and writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and religious education, pupils and students achieve well. Achievement is satisfactory in science. Children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development and well in the other areas of learning. Girls and boys, pupils in public care and those from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language achieve equally well. Pupils with sensory impairment and autistic spectrum disorders get on as well as other pupils.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are also very good and so is their behaviour. When possible, pupils become increasingly independent and they readily take on a variety of responsibilities. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are seldom absent unless they are ill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teachers are very skilled at choosing activities and resources that encourage and enable pupils to learn well. This is especially so in the classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, where the teaching is very good. Support staff and physiotherapists make very strong contributions to pupils' learning. In a minority of lessons, tasks are not hard enough for all the pupils and in others, activities either go on for too long or are rushed and so pupils don't learn as well.

The curriculum is well organised and meets pupils' special educational needs at each stage in their school career. For instance, older pupils and post-16 students take part in a good range of examination courses. However, the science curriculum requires further development. There are very many activities provided to enrich the curriculum and make learning enjoyable. These are supported by very strong links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community. Pupils are cared for very well and given very good support – for example, when they join the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Leadership is good overall, but the headteacher's leadership is very good and the deputy headteacher supports her very well. A very strong sense of teamwork exists in the school. Management is also good. The school is well aware of what it does well and what needs to be improved. Governance is good. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities and use a range of effective methods to keep themselves well informed about the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, they are very happy that their children enjoy school and that they are taught well and treated fairly.

Pupils' views are very positive. They especially enjoy being with their friends and post-16 students feel well prepared for leaving school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop the curriculum for science, especially for pupils in Years 10 and 11 with severe learning difficulties, and ensure that all pupils have equally good opportunities to achieve well in this subject.
- Ensure that in the minority of lessons where learning is not as good, tasks and the length of activities are better planned.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well.
- All pupils achieve very well in communicating, speaking and listening, personal, social, health and citizenship education, and physical education.
- Post-16 students are successful in examination courses.
- For pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 3 to 11, achievement in science is satisfactory, rather than good or better.
- Children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.
- Pupils in public care and those from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language achieve as well as others with similar special educational needs.

Commentary

1. The pupils in the special classes for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve particularly well. This is because they benefit from especially skilful and knowledgeable teaching, which takes very good account of pupils' individual needs. Additionally, physiotherapists ensure that their physical needs are catered for very effectively, so they can play as full a part as possible in lessons and activities.
2. Overall, pupils in Years 1 to 11 with severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, sensory impairment or challenging behaviour achieve well in reading, writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and religious education. Those in Years 1 and 2 also achieve well in science. This is because these subjects are taught well and the curriculum is well planned to meet pupils' needs. Because teaching is particularly good in communicating, speaking and listening, personal, social, health and citizenship education, and physical education, and pupils have a great many opportunities to develop and practise their knowledge, skills and understanding, achievement is very good.
3. Whatever their special educational needs, post-16 students follow examination courses and almost all the work they do is accredited in some form or other. Last year, students were all successful in from two to 15 accredited units of work. These covered topics such as using a large switch, tasting food, telling the time by the half-hour, and making an emergency phone call. Additionally, 11 students with severe learning difficulties achieved success in modules of the Towards Independence course. Pupils in Year 11 with severe learning difficulties gained recognition for their achievement through the Transition Challenge award scheme – for example, in independent living skills and personal development.
4. The school has identified science as an area in need of development and the inspection confirmed this analysis. Other than in Years 1 and 2, where achievement is good, pupils generally do not get on as well in science as they do in other subjects. Although they are mostly taught well, the curriculum does not provide them with the range and depth of opportunities needed for good or very good achievement.
5. In the nursery and reception years, children achieve well in mathematical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Those with severe learning difficulties also achieve well in physical development, whereas children with profound and multiple learning difficulties or sensory impairment achieve very well, because they have

enhanced opportunities. In communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development, all the children achieve very well. This is because the curriculum emphasises these areas and they are taught very well.

- The school is very conscious of any additional needs which pupils may have and is vigilant in ensuring that these are met. As a result, for example, the very few pupils with English as an additional language get on as well as other pupils with similar special educational needs. In most classes, there are fewer girls than boys and teachers take care to ensure that girls are not overlooked and boys are not allowed to dominate lessons, so there is no difference in their relative achievement. Small numbers of pupils do so well that they are able to move into other classes – for example, those with multi-sensory impairment may transfer to the main body of the school – or go to mainstream schools on a part or full time basis.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are **very good**. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **very good**. Pupils’ attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils and students and between pupils, students and staff are very good and contribute to the very positive ethos of the school.
- The school provides very good opportunities to help pupils and students develop self-esteem and a sense of personal responsibility.
- Pupils’ personal development is very well supported by lessons, activities and daily routines.

Commentary

- Pupils and students enjoy coming to school and want to do their best in lessons and activities. This has a very positive impact on their achievements. Staff continuously praise pupils’ efforts and work, drawing attention to exactly what they are pleased about. This means that the pupils understand how they are intended to respond and behave. Additionally, because it is so evident that pupils are respected by all the staff, they are prepared to tackle new skills or activities that might appear very challenging. For instance, during a literacy lesson for children and pupils in the nursery year to Year 1, a pupil with visual impairment was persuaded to press a large switch for the first time, making a teddy bear sing. Pupils and students are very willing to help each other. Whenever possible, they participate with enthusiasm in school clubs, residential visits and school productions and these activities make a very good contribution to their personal development. Because they have confidence in the adults who are helping them, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to relax and co-operate – for example, when they are being moved from one position to another.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
91	2	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0

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

8. The school uses exclusion as an ultimate sanction to deal with extremes of unacceptable behaviour. As a rule, the school's systems for managing pupils' behaviour are very effective. These include individual behaviour plans for those who are particularly challenging and praise for good behaviour. Teachers and support staff provide very good role models for pupils and students and encourage them to think about how their attitudes and behaviour affects other people. For instance, they are taught about why bullying is wrong and how they should respond to it. Pupils and students have the chance to work in a variety of group and social situations and take on responsibilities. For example, younger pupils return the registers to the office and, through the 'buddy' and prefect systems, the older pupils and students give support to younger pupils and other students with more complex needs. During a citizenship lesson for pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 9 to 12, several of the class used signs, without prompting, to help others with hearing impairment to understand questions and participate fully in the discussion.
9. The building of the new 'Faith Garden', visits to churches, collective acts of worship, and attendance at an emotional leavers service at Chester cathedral, all contribute very well to pupils' spiritual development. The moral and social development of pupils is very good. They know right from wrong and work well with each other in their learning and play activities. Pupils are exposed to a very rich variety of cultural traditions in art, religious education, music, and other areas of the curriculum. Feast days and festivals are very well celebrated and the school ensures that pupils are aware of their own and other cultures.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10.2	School data	1.0
National data	10.8	National data	0.6

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

10. The school has maintained a satisfactory level of attendance since the previous inspection. Pupils are seldom absent unless they are ill or have medical appointments. Despite the school's good promotion of attendance, unauthorised absence was high in the last school year because of a very small number of pupils. Punctuality to school is good and lessons start promptly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are **good**. Pupils are cared for, guided and supported **very well**. Partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The assessment of pupils' work is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers choose and prepare activities and learning resources very well to match the special needs of pupils.
- The partnerships between teachers and other staff make very strong contributions to pupils' learning and achievement.

- Work is usually matched closely to pupils' needs but occasionally it doesn't take enough account of their individual targets.
- A few teachers misjudge the time needed for different elements of the lesson and this results in the rate of pupils' learning slowing down.
- A suitable whole-school assessment system has been introduced and is beginning to provide valuable information about pupils' progress.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 59 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (5%)	26 (44%)	24 (41%)	5 (8%)	1 (2%)	0	0

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

- Teachers are nearly all highly skilled and experienced in working with pupils who have special educational needs. This means that, for example, they are able to gauge very accurately the most effective ways of making areas of learning, subjects and courses relevant and exciting, whatever the pupils' limitations or strengths. This is especially so in the separate classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, where teachers' very high expectations and ingenuity combine to produce almost consistently very good lessons. For instance, during a religious education lesson, pupils in Years 7 to 11 worked in three groups to create collages representing themes related to Buddhism, with visually impaired pupils catered for very well through the use of scented and textured plants. This main activity, plus Buddhist chants, scented candles, a fibre-optic spray and a short period of stillness and quiet, motivated pupils to make determined efforts and resulted in very good learning and achievement. Teaching in the classes for pupils with multi-sensory impairment is good overall, but the teaching by the specialist teachers is very good. These teachers are very skilled in enabling pupils to participate in lessons through signing, use of symbols, tactile materials and tasks closely matched to the needs of pupils with visual and hearing impairment. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, parents indicated extremely positive opinions about the quality of teaching.
- Lessons run very smoothly, owing to effective planning which involves all adults being very clear about their roles and pupils' needs. For example, in a design and technology lesson for pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 7 to 9, the teaching and welfare assistants were very well briefed and deployed to give particular support to pupils with hearing impairment or challenging behaviour. As a result, one of the staff observed and pointed out to the teacher that a boy with hearing impairment and English as an additional language wanted to listen to the digeridoo being shown to the class. It was placed close to his ear, so he could feel the vibrations, and the joy he experienced was palpable. Therapists regularly work alongside teachers – for instance, during physiotherapy or in lessons when pupils are being repositioned. This teamwork results in pupils who have confidence in the adults who work with them, and who are very willing to co-operate and work hard.
- Teachers are very aware of each pupil's needs and stage of development and they make effective use of this, when planning lessons. For instance, in lessons for those with severe learning difficulties, pupils will typically be placed in one of two groups, according to what they already know, understand and can do. As a result of these arrangements, pupils' needs are met and they make good progress. However, in the very good lessons, teachers pay especially close attention to pupils' individual targets, refining their plans to cater more precisely for each one. For example, in a careers education lesson for post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, each one had a particular objective linked to an examination course. At the start of the lesson, the teacher reminded them – and the support staff – of these, and the activities planned enabled students to work towards them. Later, all staff joined in a

concluding session, where students' success was evaluated and recorded, enabling the teacher to maintain an overview of their achievement, praise their efforts and identify where students were ready to take the next small step in learning. Where teachers do not attend so rigorously to every pupil's individual targets, learning tends to be good or satisfactory, rather than very good. In a few instances, where one or two pupils are capable of working at higher levels than the rest of their group, they are not given tasks that challenge them to try really hard. This happens most often in lessons for pupils with severe learning difficulties or sensory impairment and very rarely in the separate classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

14. Because they plan lessons so carefully, teachers mostly make very efficient use of the time available for learning. For example, they organise a variety of tasks that keep pupils interested, so they work hard throughout. In an English lesson about 'Alice in Wonderland', pupils in Years 4 and 5 with severe learning difficulties, a few of them with hearing impairment or autistic spectrum disorders, enjoyed taking part in such contrasting activities as dropping an Alice doll down a cardboard tube (the rabbit hole), describing how she felt, and reading and writing about her. Although several of the pupils found it hard to concentrate for long, the range of tasks meant that they did not get bored and consequently they learned well. Occasionally, time is used less effectively. For instance, teachers may persevere with activities when it is clear that pupils have had enough. As a result, they learn less well. Alternatively, when one part of the lesson is going very well, it might be allowed to take up too much time, reducing the amount available for another section. Often, the part that suffers is the final, rounding-off activity, which means that learning is not reinforced sufficiently and the teacher does not find out enough about what each pupil has achieved or struggled with.
15. Since the previous inspection, when the school's procedures for measuring attainment and monitoring progress were criticised, good improvements have been made. All the pupils have individual education plans and the targets within them are precise and measurable, enabling teachers to keep track of how well they are learning and plan future work. Over recent years, the school has trialled a number of assessment systems to establish pupils' achievement using national scales for those working below National Curriculum levels. It has now adopted a particular set of measures, also being used in other Cheshire schools. Data has been stored in a computer program and this will build up over time to allow the school to analyse assessment information efficiently – for example, to compare how different groups of pupils are achieving. Assessment procedures are currently very good within the specialist classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In a few subjects, such as religious education, assessment systems have only just been introduced. In information and communication technology and personal, social, health and citizenship education, assessment is thorough, used to respond to individual needs and ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve their work. In English, assessment is used very effectively to identify higher attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties who would benefit from the recently reintroduced Early Literacy Support programme. Assessment is also used very well to define the needs of children joining the school in the nursery and reception years and to plan their programmes and targets.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. The accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school caters well for the special educational needs of all pupils, particularly those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- A very wide range of activities is provided to make learning interesting.
- Planning for pupils to develop their personal and social skills, and their understanding of citizenship, is very good.

- The school provides very high quality resources which successfully encourage pupils to work hard.
- The science curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not provide enough opportunities for pupils with severe learning difficulties to achieve well.
- Currently, the new post-16 accommodation is not big enough to provide equal opportunities for all of the post-16 students who have severe learning difficulties.

Commentary

16. There are very effective procedures in place in the specialist classes to meet the needs of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. A strong feature is the way that the work planned for them is very carefully matched to each pupil, particularly to make full use of their senses to enable them to learn. Pupils who have multi-sensory impairment in the special classes, and other pupils with hearing or visual impairment, benefit from the skilled support from specialists in school and from the community. This includes the use of sign and adaptation of materials to augment pupils' vision by using items such as special low vision aids and a tactile means to read. Since there is effective support, several pupils with multi-sensory impairment are able to spend part of their day with pupils in other classes to enhance their learning. Throughout the school, the effective use of signs and symbols and the picture exchange communication system ensure pupils are able to take part in lessons and activities. For example, these support those with autistic spectrum disorders and a small number also have access to well-positioned 'work stations' to help them to focus on their work.
17. There are very many interesting visits into the community – for example, to places of worship, museums, theatres and environmental areas. Pupils also have plenty of opportunities for sport – such as swimming, gymnastics, football and athletics. The school performs very well in competition with other special schools. Pupils benefit from the use of college facilities for swimming, dance and drama. Specialist coaches for dance, gymnastics and football help pupils to achieve very well in these subjects. Pupils perform in musical events alongside mainstream schools. An annual Spring festival involves all pupils performing or displaying their work. Vibrant displays around the school reflect their enthusiasm for the many art and craft projects that school provides, including one as part of the horse riding programme. The Duke of Edinburgh Award, Sea Scouts, a girls' club, a boys' club, and a drama club all add richness to the older pupils' learning opportunities.
18. Planning for personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good, and helps pupils to make very good progress. For instance, citizenship lessons for pupils and students in Years 7 to 14 are planned very effectively to ensure that all the necessary elements are taught. Pupils learn about becoming informed citizens and develop communication and participation skills. The school council and Duke of Edinburgh Award course enable them to practise becoming involved in democratic processes and from Year 10 onwards their achievements are recognised through suitable examination courses.
19. In Years 10 and 11, National Curriculum subjects are planned through a youth award scheme, 'Transition Challenge'. In science, this programme has not been enhanced sufficiently well for the pupils with severe learning difficulties. In Years 1 to 9, planning in most subjects is based upon a commercially produced scheme. Again, teachers have adapted the science component of this with mixed success. For pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 3 to 9, this has resulted in uneven coverage of the various elements of science and, consequently, most pupils achieve less well in science than in other key subjects.
20. Teachers adapt learning resources very well to meet pupils' needs – for instance, the use of symbols to support reading. The many communication devices and switches available to pupils extend the means for all pupils to take part in lessons and make choices. The accommodation provides well for pupils' needs overall and the use of community resources, such as for games and sports, make up for those deficiencies on site. However, at present there are too many post-16 students for them all to be accommodated in the new and very high quality sixth form

accommodation. As a result, a small number who are educated with pupils in Years 9 to 11, have less time than their peers to work towards examination certificates, and fewer opportunities to socialise in a more adult setting. The school is making exciting improvements to the grounds with the introduction of a garden to encourage pupils to reflect upon major faiths. The impressive quality of the display of pupils' work reflects the high regard staff and pupils place on achievement. The school ensures a good level of high quality staff through using its own funds to augment the allocation it receives.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good and very good** support, advice and guidance are provided. The ways in which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New pupils are helped to settle in quickly.
- Post-16 students are prepared very well for leaving school.
- There are very good procedures for child protection and to support those in public care.
- The school is very vigilant in providing for the hygiene, health and safety of pupils.
- Pupils' views are valued and they have increasingly good opportunities to express them.

Commentary

21. Induction arrangements for new pupils are very effective. Parents agree that the school is very successful in its efforts to help their children adapt to school routines. For example, older pupils and students assist with the settling in of new pupils. They will welcome them, take them around the school, introduce them to their peer group, accompany them to a special 'welcome' assembly and into lunch and generally care for them for the first few weeks at the school. The number of sessions attended by children in the nursery and reception years increases until they are attending full-time and their parents are very welcome to stay in school until all agree that the children are ready to be left.
22. Staff use their detailed knowledge of pupils and their families in order to support them very effectively as they move up through the school. For example, when post-16 students are in their final year, they are supported very well into their next stage of education, training or care.
23. There is good careers guidance, which begins in Year 9, through a well planned programme. In addition, the Connexions personal adviser provides effective support. She attends parents' evenings and pupils' transition reviews and sets up mock interviews with the pupils and students. Work experience is mainly achieved through students working within school, doing office support or gardening, for example, and learning to work with minimal supervision. Placements are well matched to students' learning needs and the school is always alert to the possibility of them coping with community placements. Last year, for instance, students worked in a pub, greengrocer's and supermarket.
24. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good improvements in its procedures concerning child protection and health and safety. The designated officer for child protection is fully trained and deals with any issues very effectively. Staff are given very good guidance about their roles and responsibilities and they are all highly vigilant. The school works very effectively with the social services department to ensure that pupils in public care have equal opportunities to other pupils and are able to achieve at equivalent levels.
25. Pupils' health, safety and welfare are given very high priority. For example, risk assessments for individual pupils are very detailed to ensure their safety and that of others and staff are very well trained in lifting and moving pupils and using specialist equipment. There is a good range of specialist support available for pupils, including nursing and physiotherapy, although there

has been an interruption in the provision of speech therapy, recently resolved. The senior nurse gives very good advice and guidance to governors, staff, parents and pupils, and parents very much appreciate her presence in school. Arrangements for first aid are very good and pupils are very well supervised at all times – for example, arrivals and departures are very effectively organised. Pupils' personal care needs are met discreetly, efficiently and sensitively.

26. Pupils are given many opportunities to express their views and make suggestions, especially through membership of the school council. For example, they have played an important role in the development of the multi-cultural 'Faith Garden'. Pupils participate in school council meetings enthusiastically, making their voice heard whilst learning about democracy and making decisions. The school is in the process of extending the membership of the school council to include younger pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very welcoming towards parents.
- It provides very good information to parents about their children's work and achievements.
- Parents make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home.
- The school has established many links in the wider community that enrich learning.
- Pupils' achievement and personal development benefit from the school's very strong links with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

27. Staff are always happy to meet with parents to discuss any concerns or problems. Parents are periodically consulted on particular matters. For example, they were recently asked for their views on religious and multi-cultural education. Other opportunities have included membership of working parties, considering issues such as sex and drugs education, and the 'Healthy Schools' group.
28. Parents have many chances to find out about the school and how their children are doing. Annual school reports for pupils are very detailed and easy to understand. Topics of study and pupils' achievements are covered very well and parents are informed about future learning targets. There are very good arrangements for annual reviews and very good levels of parental attendance. Helpful newsletters are issued regularly concerning whole school matters, forthcoming events and dates to remember. Home/school books are valued by parents and staff, who refer to them regularly at the start of the day and take account of any messages they contain.
29. The 'Friends of the School' work very hard to organize popular social and fundraising events. The group has helped to buy many learning resources for the school, such as the computerized white board in the hall and swimming pool equipment. The parents' 'sharing group' meets each half term and is a very useful forum for parents to focus on particular issues – the availability of facilities and resources to support them, for example. A number of parents give their time generously to the school. For example, they help with the 'teddy bears picnic' for children in the nursery and reception years, swimming and Christmas services. The school organizes regular workshops for parents so that they can get even better involved in their children's learning. Parents are very pleased with events such as the workshop about examination courses, finding this one particularly useful.
30. Partnerships in the community include ones with several churches, making a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, churches take turns to lead assembly in school, each fortnight. St Mary's Church operates a pre-school playgroup with very

good integration opportunities for nursery and reception aged children, who attend its 'Praise and Play' sessions. A host of sports clubs and organizations provide skills coaching in school, including for cricket, football, athletics, and table tennis. Many visits, for example, to theatres, art galleries and museums take place and contribute to pupils' good achievement at this school.

31. The school has an excellent link with Mid Cheshire College. This collaboration is moving from strength to strength regarding the learning and integration opportunities for students attending lessons at college. Russett's students with severe learning difficulties mix confidently with mainstream students at the college as they move between lessons and activities such as dance, art and library. Mainstream integration links with primary schools are developing very well and the school is involved in bids for specialist status by two secondary schools. Pupils take part in many sporting events in competition with similar schools and join in music festivals and performances.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **good**. Leadership, management and governance are each **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very determined and effective leadership, with strong support from other key staff.
- Effective management systems are in place, but the school is not yet able to easily compare the rates of progress of different groups of pupils.
- The governing body is very supportive and is very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff training needs are identified clearly and provided for very effectively.

Commentary

32. The headteacher has high aspirations, a clear sense of direction and leads the school very well. Her determination to raise standards in all aspects of the school's work has contributed significantly to the very good improvement made since the previous inspection. She has ensured that there is a strong sense of teamwork within the school, with all adults working very closely together to provide as well as possible for each child and to bring about further improvements. The headteacher is well supported by the senior management team, particularly the deputy headteacher, who fulfils her responsibilities very effectively. The senior team has very recently been reorganised, demonstrating the headteacher's commitment to delegating tasks and developing the leadership and management skills of others. The members of the team are currently establishing themselves, enthusiastically and conscientiously, in their new roles. Subject leadership ranges from good to very good and is good overall.
33. Good systems and strategies are in place to check on the progress of developments and evaluate their effectiveness and impact on raising standards. Subject leaders keep a close eye on the quality of the work done by pupils and teachers and have identified appropriate areas for development. The school improvement plan is a useful tool for moving the school forward, with responsibilities, timescales and cost implications set out very clearly. It is the result of the school's extensive self-evaluation systems, which enable the headteacher to maintain an accurate view of how well different aspects of the school are performing. The current system for assessing and recording pupils' levels of attainment has not been running for long. Consequently, the school is not yet able to compare how well different groups are performing or make comparisons with pupils in other, similar schools. The management of finance is good both on a day-to-day basis and over time and the school has good systems in place to help it to obtain best value for money. The school manages its budget carefully to retain the good level of staffing. Expenditure is tracked regularly, together with an analysis of predicted future spending.

34. The governing body is highly committed, fulfils all statutory duties and plays an important role in influencing the school and its policies through a combination of challenge and support. A strong and effective feature of governors' approach is the way in which they receive regular reports from each class teacher and from the teaching and non-teaching representatives. These contribute to the governors' very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and their ability to use this knowledge to contribute to future developments. Governors also inform themselves by active involvement on school life. For instance, they have agreed that at least one governor attends every school event, which also means that staff and pupils know them well. During a citizenship lesson, older pupils explained that the governors visit lessons and help the headteacher.
35. The effective formal procedures for performance management are supported by a comprehensive programme of visits to lessons by subject leaders and external consultants. These, plus checks on pupils' achievement and teachers' plans, contribute to the very effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of staff. Priority is given to training needs associated with the school improvement plan and those identified as a result of individual performance management reviews. The headteacher is fully aware of where there are weaknesses in teaching and takes decisive action to rectify these. For instance, a music teacher is currently employed temporarily, to compensate for the permanent staff's lack of specialist skills. The induction programme for new staff is very well organised and ensures that temporary staff are able to make an effective contribution to teaching and support for pupils.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1333575
Total expenditure	1312154
Expenditure per pupil	11830

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-3280
Balance carried forward to the next	21421

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

Ten lessons were seen involving children in the nursery and reception years.

36. The 12 children in the Foundation Stage are taught in three different classes according to their special educational needs. In two of these classes, they work alongside pupils in other year groups. Several of the children attend school on a part-time basis. It is not possible to compare children's achievement with that at the time of the previous inspection, as the Foundation Stage was not reported. Although none of the teachers has specific responsibility for co-ordinating the curriculum for Foundation Stage children, the staff work closely together and leadership and management are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive relationships with staff mean that children are relaxed and happy and confident to tackle new activities.
- Personal and social skills are promoted at every opportunity.

Commentary

37. Children are taught very well. Additionally, classroom staff and therapists work together very effectively in order to help children develop the attitudes and skills they need to become confident learners. For example, during a session led by physiotherapists, a teacher and a teaching assistant also encouraged the children, all visually impaired, to undertake challenging activities, such as standing up after sitting inside a large plastic wheel. Children were willing to attempt this because they knew that an adult was close by, ready to give a guiding hand if needed. Daily routines – such as snack time or, for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, transfers from wheelchair to standing frame – provide regular opportunities for children to practise eating and drinking independently or co-operating with people who are helping them. Children with severe learning difficulties pay a weekly visit to a local church to take part in a 'Praise and Play' session with local children who do not have special educational needs. These sessions enable the children to develop and demonstrate their social skills – for example, a higher attaining child was fascinated by a baby and offered toys to amuse him.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff pay constant attention to promoting children's communication skills.
- A wide range of methods of communication is used.
- At snack time, children with severe learning difficulties make good use of a picture exchange system but this needs to be extended to other activities.

Commentary

38. Throughout lessons in all areas of learning and during daily routines, staff encourage children to communicate. They provide very good models for children by speaking or signing clearly and create regular opportunities for them to respond to questions or communicate their needs or intentions. All aspects of the area are supported very well by the teachers' careful analysis of what each child knows, understands and can do and the next small step in their learning. For instance, a child who is both hearing and visually impaired and can use large switch to operate sound effects during a story, moved on to make a choice between two switches. At the same time, staff prompted her to use her voice as much as possible. This reflects the way in which all avenues are explored – gestures, signs, facial expressions and the exchange of picture cards also provide opportunities for children to interact with others and make themselves understood. Food and drink are used regularly to motivate children and those with severe learning difficulties choose from two or three pictures to indicate their choices of drink or snack. Several children are now ready to extend their skills – for example, by choosing toys or activities. Children equally achieve very well in reading and writing, because they are taught very well, with accurately matched and interesting activities.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning resources are used very effectively in most lessons.
- Lessons for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties are occasionally too low key.

Commentary

39. Children are taught well and are highly motivated by the toys and other resources provided to help them achieve well. The range and quality of these are very good and they are chosen for their relevance to the theme being applied across all areas of learning – teddy bears, during the inspection – and children's age and interests. For instance, in one lesson, children with visual impairment were encouraged to find plastic teddies that were floating in water. One lower attaining child achieved very well because she clearly understood that the bears were present in the water. In this lesson, familiar songs were used very effectively to help children recall and anticipate numbers, to add and subtract. Activities are usually very stimulating and prompt children to try very hard and maintain their concentration. However, in one lesson for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the pace of learning was rather steady, with insufficient changes of activity. As a result, children's achievement was satisfactory, rather than good.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged to explore their world by using as many senses as possible.
- Children with severe learning difficulties have infrequent opportunities to use computers and programmable toys.

Commentary

40. Children are taught well and this results in good achievement. Because many of them have only limited use of one or more of their senses, teachers provide plenty of opportunities to

enable children to make the most of what skills they have and develop alternative ones when necessary. For instance, children with visual impairment are taught how to find their way around the school – feeling with their hands for walls and doors and the symbols that tell them which room they have reached. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are encouraged to explore materials such as sand and shells and respond to the textures they experience. Children with severe learning difficulties venture further afield – for example, by going for a walk in a wood and observing trees and flowers. Although children with sensory impairment and profound and multiple learning difficulties regularly use switches and other electronic resources, the teacher of those with severe learning difficulties has identified correctly the need to provide more opportunities for them to learn through the use of information and communication technology.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy make strong contributions to the development of many children.
- Children with severe learning difficulties learn very well how to handle tools and materials, but need more opportunities to develop skills such as running, climbing and balancing.

Commentary

41. Children achieve well overall, in line with the quality of teaching. However, those with sensory impairment or profound and multiple learning difficulties have their specific needs met very effectively and so make very good progress. For instance, one child has learned to walk as a result of the combined efforts of the teacher and physiotherapists. During hydrotherapy, the necessarily high staffing levels mean that children get individual attention and intensive activity. Because relationships are so good, children co-operate and relax and enjoy the unaccustomed freedom and mobility. The children with sensory impairment or severe learning difficulties achieve very well in the programmes designed to help them develop their skills, such as holding and using a brush or a spoon. For example, during a very effective teddy bears' picnic, children with severe learning difficulties worked with staff and parents to prepare a range of food, demonstrating skills such as cutting up vegetables and rolling out biscuit dough. However, although they play outside – for instance, on swings or wheeled toys – the older children with severe learning difficulties do not take part in enough planned activities to prepare them for physical education lessons in Year 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make sure that children have plenty of opportunities to express themselves and develop important skills.
- Role play is often used well to help children learn, but music does not always feature enough in lessons.

Commentary

42. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Staff make sure that they learn skills and are encouraged to make full use of them. For instance, children with severe learning difficulties practised using scissors as they created teddy bear puppets, choosing from a good variety of fabrics and papers. Although many children still prefer to play on their own, they are guided

towards co-operating and communicating with others. For example, children with sensory impairment pretended to have breakfast with their teddies and those with severe learning difficulties used their imagination as they chose food and packed a picnic basket. Children enjoy music and often respond enthusiastically, as when a child with profound and multiple learning difficulties smiled and moved spontaneously when music was played during a personal, social and emotional development lesson. However, there is scope for more opportunities for children with severe learning difficulties to join in songs and rhymes during lessons in all areas of learning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4 and at post-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Eleven lessons were seen in English. French and Italian are taught in various parts of the school and one lesson of French was observed. Judgements have not been made about modern foreign languages.

French

43. Several primary and most secondary aged pupils have regular opportunities to learn to speak French vocabulary and simple phrases. Last year, several post-16 students achieved a unit award in French holiday transport. The post-16 co-ordinator has recently introduced an examination course in Italian for post-16 students.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been very good improvement in English since the previous inspection, as a result of very good leadership and management.
- High quality visual aids, signing and communication aids are used consistently and very effectively throughout the school to develop pupils' and students' skills in speaking and listening and reading.
- Drama is well promoted throughout the school, particularly with pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school has developed very good resources to help pupils and students to develop their understanding of literature through sensory experiences.
- Achievement is good in reading and writing.
- Pupils' and students' skills in literacy are promoted very well during lessons in other subjects.

Commentary

44. The majority of pupils and students of all abilities and additional needs, including those with visual and hearing impairment, achieve well. However, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, who are taught in specialist classes, achieve very well. This is all in line with the quality of teaching and is a very significant improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was satisfactory overall. This is largely due to the enthusiastic subject leader, who has worked so hard to secure this improvement. She has ensured that all teachers have focused on developing pupils' and students' communication and writing skills, with considerable success. Staff have all been trained to structure lessons to follow the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy as well as incorporating the themed approach of the school's chosen curriculum framework. The quality of teaching and planning is checked and evaluated carefully by the subject leader and the information gathered is used to inform the subject's action plan. The Early Literacy Support programme has been established and is helping higher attaining

pupils with severe learning difficulties to achieve even better and Year 11 pupils and post-16 students now have their achievements recognised through examination courses.

45. Achievement in communication, speaking and listening is very good throughout the school. Criticised at the time of the previous inspection for its limited use of communication aids and signing, the school now has a wide range of resources. These are used very well to enable pupils and students take a full and active part in discussions and for making choices. When needed, signing is used consistently by all staff, pupils and students. The vocal pupils and students are very keen to engage visitors in conversation and lively and informative discussions take place within lessons. Pupils and students listen attentively to staff and are confident and eager to express their views. This was evident during a post-16 lesson on current affairs. Students with severe learning difficulties discussed the problems of the immigrant workers within the European Union, the escalating violence in Iraq and the special relationship between Tony Blair and George Bush.
46. Drama features significantly within literacy lessons and there are good opportunities for pupils and students to develop their communication skills through participating in plays and performances. For example, post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties took part in a performance of 'Romeo and Juliet' as part of their examination course. Pupils' and students' understanding of drama and other literature is greatly enhanced by the very good collections of materials which the subject leader and teachers have assembled, to promote learning through touch, taste and smell. This was evident in a lesson where pupils in Years 10 and 11 with profound and multiple learning difficulties, including pupils with severe visual and hearing impairment, performed 'Pygmalion' using switches to enable them to speak their lines. They reacted with squeals of delight to their costumes, smelling the flowers and listening to the music being played at the beginning and end of their performance.
47. Throughout the school, pupils are confident to read in class. For example, a higher attaining Year 9 pupil with severe learning difficulties read a Shakespearian sonnet from the interactive white board while he and the rest of the group were studying metaphors and similes. Lower attaining pupils are helped with their reading by the extensive use of a picture exchange communication system and symbols. During a reading session for younger pupils with visual and hearing impairment, they were encouraged to feel their individual books on 'Bear Patrol' and 'Goldilocks', which gave the Years 1 and 2 pupils a very tactile experience of the furry bears and shiny Goldilocks. In addition, their knowledge of Moon¹ symbols helped the pupils appreciate all the characters in the two books.
48. In the previous inspection report, the writing skills of all pupils and students were judged to be unsatisfactory. This issue has been tackled very successfully and pupils and students throughout the school now achieve well in recording what they have done. There is a good emphasis on helping pupils and students develop the motor movements which are required for writing. Younger pupils with severe learning difficulties have regular opportunities to practise handwriting skills using pencils or felt pens and make good progress in learning to hold a pencil and make marks on paper. A number of higher attaining pupils can form letters and write simple sentences. Many pupils find learning to write difficult, but teachers are skilled at helping them record using other methods. For example, several pupils in Years 10 and 11 have recorded work they have carried out as part of their Transition Challenge award, by taking digital photographs and cutting up and pasting symbols to create sentences.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. The arrangements to develop pupils' and students' language and literacy skills across the curriculum are very good and pupils and students progress very well in applying these skills in all subjects. This is because the same visual aids are used consistently throughout the school to help pupils and students communicate and record their work. Teachers and other staff take

¹ Moon is a system of reading and writing, similar to Braille.

full advantage of all opportunities to stimulate conversation. During a 'healthy option snack time', there was intense discussion about the taste of a grapefruit. One Year 11 pupil remarked that it was 'sweet and sour at the same time and takes your breath away with its tang'. Pupils and students show very good use of subject specific vocabulary. For example, in a mathematics lesson, post-16 students talked confidently about handling money and the importance of budgeting for events they wished to organise.

MATHEMATICS

Eight lessons of mathematics were seen.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well in mathematics.
- Teachers and support staff work well together and their partnership leads to effective teaching and learning.
- Practical activities are used well to help pupils to learn but, on occasions, activities last for too long.
- Computers are not always used effectively to support pupils' learning in mathematics lessons.
- Mathematics is well led and managed.
- Numeracy skills are promoted effectively in other subjects.

Commentary

50. Pupils and students' good progress is a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the provision for mathematics was judged to be merely satisfactory. Post-16 students now achieve unit awards in topics such as handling money and telling the time. Teaching is good overall and almost all lessons are well taught. Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and manage them well. As a result, pupils are confident to contribute in lessons. The structure of lessons follows that recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy and successfully keeps pupils on task and learning. There is usually a warm up activity and a main part of the lesson, followed by an effective summing up. Teachers challenge pupils and students appropriately according to their capabilities, including those who have more complex needs. Because teachers and support staff know their pupils so well, they are able to use this knowledge effectively in lesson planning and assessing and recording the progress made by each one. For instance, in a lesson for pupils in Years 8 and 9 with severe learning difficulties, the tasks for those of different abilities ranged from identifying two-dimensional shapes to using a calculator to work out percentages. This close match to pupils' differing ability levels ensured that they all learned very well.
51. Teachers make good use of practical learning resources to help pupils' understanding. During one lesson, pupils in Years 5 to 7 with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders enjoyed a variety of tasks to promote their understanding of weight. For example, they handled a range of heavy objects – such as pebbles and potatoes – in boxes, describing whether they could lift them or if they were too heavy. In all lessons, key mathematical words are introduced and used appropriately. This was especially relevant in a lesson for pupils in Years 5 to 11 with multi-sensory impairment. Pupils made very good progress in learning to sign the names of prepositions, such as 'in' and 'behind', so they began to use the words independently. Pupils and students enjoy their mathematics lessons and they try hard to succeed. In a few lessons, their interest wanes when activities go on for too long. On other occasions, not enough time is left at the end of the lesson in order for learning to be reinforced and for teachers to check how well each pupil has learned.
52. Information and communication technology is used effectively in a minority of lessons. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties hit switches to communicate

their responses and pupils in Years 8 and 9 use a computer program about geometric shapes. However, the school has identified rightly that there is scope for modern technology to be used more frequently to help pupils to learn and this is a target within the subject action plan.

53. The subject leader has worked hard to ensure that teachers are consistent in their approach throughout the school. She is currently setting up portfolios containing moderated examples of work for different year groups to help maintain standards and show the good achievements that the pupils make.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Pupils and students have good opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in a Year 7 to 9 physical education lesson were encouraged to count the number of laps covered and the number of bean bags collected. However, although teachers often take advantage of opportunities to promote numeracy skills, they do not consistently plan to include these in all lessons, which makes it harder to ensure that they are provided for all pupils.

SCIENCE

Five science lessons were observed.

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils often learn well in individual lessons but they do not achieve as well over time because there are inadequacies in the long term planning for the teaching of science, particularly for pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11.
- Younger pupils, and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, achieve well because they participate in a broad range of practical and sensory activities.
- The new science co-ordinator is developing good links with a secondary school to compensate for the lack of specialist science teaching and accommodation.

Commentary

55. Although the quality of teaching in lessons observed was good, and visits enrich science learning, achievement over time is mostly merely satisfactory because longer term planning is not as good as planning for individual lessons. Teachers have not adapted the school's chosen curriculum framework consistently well. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, however, experience a good breadth of science through their active involvement in many practical and sensory tasks. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for example, learn very well about materials on a sea shore because resources are planned and used very well; and teaching and support staff match tasks very skilfully to individual learning needs.
56. From Years 3 to 9, achievement is more variable, mainly satisfactory and occasionally good. Whilst individual lessons are taught well, and pupils learn effectively in them, it is the quality of science planning over each year that determines whether a class achieves well enough over time. In Year 5, for example, pupils with severe learning difficulties achieve well because there is broad and well planned science coverage. In Year 6, however, good achievement is confined to only a narrow range of science topics because the curriculum is not broad enough.
57. In Years 10 and 11, science is planned as part of a youth award scheme called 'Transition Challenge'. Achievement in individual topics is frequently good, because pupils are taught well. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for example, experience science through well planned sensory and practical work – such as when they taste foods and indicate their preferences. The achievement of pupils with severe learning difficulties, however, although

satisfactory overall, is not as good as it could be, because not enough National Curriculum science is planned for them through the youth award scheme. Post-16 science related work is part of a unit awards scheme. Most students gain awards in understanding how to use electrical equipment safely, how to grow plants from bulbs and seeds, and how to use garden equipment. Currently, a small number of Year 12 students with severe learning difficulties are taught with pupils in Years 9 to 11. As a result they have only Years 13 and 14 in which to achieve their science awards.

58. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Curricular planning has improved but requires further development in order to give pupils a better opportunity to achieve well over time. The recently appointed subject leader has made a good start, leading new developments, including contact with a secondary school to boost resources and draw on its specialist teaching and accommodation. She is leading and managing the subject well. Although the initial focus on Years 7 to 9 has been relevant, improvement in planning for Years 10 and 11 is now urgent to enable pupils in Year 9 to build on their achievements when they start Year 10.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Five lessons were observed.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in the classes for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties and enables them to achieve very well.
- Pupils enjoy the success they achieve in lessons.
- Good subject leadership has had a strong influence on driving forward improvements.
- Regular support is provided for staff by the subject leader.

Commentary

59. The overall quality of teaching is good and this enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers in the classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make very effective arrangements for them to benefit from using specialised equipment. For instance, pupils in Year 2 succeed in operating a special switch to play a recording of bird song in a lesson about the seaside. In the remainder of the school, pupils with similar needs receive good opportunities to utilise the very good resources. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve well, for example, when persevering to operate switches to choose between paper and plastic when learning about recycling in geography. A frequent example of the effective use of equipment throughout the school is the use of a recording device to help pupils to communicate. For instance, it enables pupils to say 'Hello' to the other pupils in the class and answer questions.
60. Pupils throughout the school are very keen to learn and make good progress in most lessons. This is because teachers plan well to match the tasks to their needs and this ensures that they succeed well. Pupils up to Year 3 with multi-sensory impairment are very keen to touch the computer screen to continue the story in the interactive book about Goldilocks. In Years 7 to 9, pupils with severe learning difficulties made very good progress in a lesson during which they worked towards producing a multi-media presentation about themselves and their families. They are proud to demonstrate how to look at photographs and text about themselves and their interests, accompanied by recorded sounds, such as their favourite music.
61. The subject leader has taken effective action to move the subject forward and raise pupils' achievement well since the previous inspection. This has been achieved through improvements to equipment and the development of staff skills. It is particularly noteworthy that he provides regular after school 'refresher' courses, open to all staff. This has a positive impact in keeping

staff up to date with the rapid development of new ideas and engendering their enthusiasm for the further anticipated improvements planned. An efficient method of recording how well pupils have learned has been put in place. Resources are good and are used well by staff. In the classes where the equipment has been enhanced with permanent interactive large screens, pupils have a greater opportunity to participate in lessons and consequently make very good progress. There are good plans to extend this equipment to more classes to raise standards further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. In most subjects, teachers ensure that lessons often provide opportunities for pupils to use computers and devices to support their learning in most subjects. For instance, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are improving their skills in written communication as they learn how to open e-mail messages from the teacher and write a reply. In religious education, post-16 students use a computer to take a virtual tour of a mosque, and this successfully enables them to make good gains in learning about world faiths.

HUMANITIES

One lesson of history and one of geography were seen. Judgements were not made about these subjects. Four religious education lessons were observed.

Geography

63. At a young age, pupils become aware of the school environment and how to find their way around. For example, pupils with multi-sensory impairment are guided around the school to take messages; they are encouraged to feel door knobs, textures of walls and generally to familiarise themselves with their school environment. In addition, pupils visit places in the immediate locality and further afield, and learn about life in other countries. During the inspection, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 7 to 11 learned very well about recycling waste materials as they handled and explored objects made from tin, plastic, paper and bottles. This provided a very good sensory experience for these pupils and the lesson contributed well towards their examination course.

History

64. Teachers make history relevant to pupils, for example, through role play. In the lesson observed, pupils in Years 1 to 3 with severe learning difficulties learned well about being by the seaside in the early 20th century and to appreciate the significance of the lighthouse light depicting danger. When teaching them about the distant past, exciting activities and interesting artefacts are used effectively. Very high quality displays of work about medieval heraldry, Roman settlements and Anne Frank enhance the school environment and remind pupils about what they have learned and experienced.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in religious education is good overall, and pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well.
- Teachers make very good use of resources to support learning.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The co-ordinator develops, plans, leads and manages the subject very effectively.

Commentary

65. Religious education is taught successfully, because teachers focus on the tangible artefacts, ceremonies and traditions of world faiths and this is highly appropriate for the pupils' special educational needs. They create lots of stimulating opportunities for pupils to be practically involved in lessons and special events, through role play, drama, music, art and stimulation of their senses. Pupils respond very well to the many interesting methods used to help them learn about world faiths. Post-16 students achieve unit awards in religious education – for example, 'Introduction to Islam' and 'Introduction to Sikhism'.
66. Teaching is good overall, and the teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is particularly effective. Teachers match activities well to pupils' learning needs. Post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for example, use their senses to experience the importance of prayer in Sikhism. They create and decorate special pages of prayers to make a holy book. The teacher creates a calming and peaceful environment using music, subdued lighting, and candles. Pupils enjoy the touch of water on their faces to represent waves, and the sound of leaves rustling to represent trees, whilst they listen to traditional prayers. Younger pupils in Years 7 to 11, also with profound and multiple learning difficulties, work as a team to create a mandala, or decorated circle, a symbol of the Buddhist faith. Peaceful music, Buddhist chants and scented plants all help to create the right atmosphere for learning and contribute very effectively to pupils' spiritual development.
67. In their religious education lessons pupils respond very well to the calming moods that teachers create with music, light effects and scents. Older pupils with severe learning difficulties learn the value of fund raising, for Children in Need, for example. Pupils learn to share, take turns, and work together, for public performances of the Christmas story, for instance. Pupils learn about the cultural traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. They wear authentic costumes, eat the foods, handle the artefacts, and listen to the music associated with these faiths.
68. Leadership and management are very good because the co-ordinator is exceptionally hard working and committed to the subject. It has developed well since the previous inspection. She has been instrumental in developing the innovative 'Faith Garden' and developed good links with the local clergy who support the school very well in collective acts of worship. Links between the curriculum for religious education and the themes for assemblies are planned very well by the co-ordinator.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

One lesson was seen in design and technology. Judgements have not been made about this subject.

69. There is consistent planning for design and technology which covers National Curriculum expectations and give pupils a broad range of experiences in the subject. Pupils and older students have the opportunity to respond to a range of sensory experiences and work with a range of common materials and tools. They observe and explore familiar products and find out how things work. During the inspection, pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 7 to 9 built effectively on their experience of using a potter's wheel at a craft workshop as they made a thumb pot, because they were taught well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

One lesson was seen in art and design and one in design and technology. Judgements were not made about these subjects.

Art and design

70. The very good displays of pupils' work around the school demonstrate the varied work that they participate in. The wide range of paintings and collages of flowers is particularly eye catching. There are many examples of pupils creating art in the style of famous artists. For instance, students at post-16 completed an effective group picture clearly identifiable as based upon a Turner masterpiece. Lessons often provide opportunities for pupils to use art to extend their learning in another subject. For example, pupils in Years 1 to 3 with multi-sensory impairment made models and tactile pictures of the three bears to enhance their reading. Art contributes very well to pupils' cultural development. This is evident, for example, in their work based on African tribal masks.

Music

71. Music is a feature of many lessons. Teachers often plan for pupils to sing familiar songs to accompany lessons – such as in mathematics, to encourage addition and subtraction. Several classes receive music lessons taught by a very skilled visiting specialist. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 with severe learning difficulties were very highly motivated to perform by the teacher's violin playing of the 'Skye Boat Song'. The teacher then accompanied them on the keyboard as they sang enthusiastically about the 'Drunken Sailor.' Pupils throughout the school have many opportunities to appraise and participate in music, often using the very good range of musical instruments available. There are good arrangements for several pupils to join in lessons at mainstream schools.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Five lessons of physical education were observed.

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in physical education is very good; in swimming it is excellent.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teaching and coaching, and from the use of sporting facilities in the community.
- Pupils achieve very well in competition with other special schools.
- Leadership and management of physical education are very good.

Commentary

72. Higher attaining pupils in Years 5 to 14 attend swimming lessons at a college pool. They receive excellent teaching and support and their achievements in the pool are excellent. During one lesson, a Year 9 boy with severe learning difficulties learned for the first time to swim on his back without the support of an assistant. There was spontaneous applause from all the staff and pupils at his achievement. Those in the early stages of swimming have lessons in a 'learner' pool, helping them to gain confidence. The achievement of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is supported very effectively by the work of physiotherapists – for example, during hydrotherapy sessions. Additionally, their teachers organise very relevant activities to help them to make the most of their mobility. For instance, during one lesson, post-16 students made very good progress in developing their awareness of their bodies as they responded to various types of hand massage. Although achievement in physical education is very good, no opportunities are provided for post-16 students with severe learning difficulties to enter for examinations in the subject.
73. The quality of teaching in physical education is very good. For example, in a combined drama and physical education lesson at a local college, led very effectively by a specialist, post-16 students with severe learning difficulties express themselves through movement. They

practised facial expressions, fluttered like newspapers on a windy day, and moved as if inside a bubble. Pupils in Years 1 to 3 receive very good specialist dance teaching. They try very hard to 'swim' like fish and sway like sea anemones. Pupils visit a gymnastics centre and receive specialist coaching. They are also coached by the Cheshire football association. Residential opportunities at an outdoor camp have helped older pupils with severe learning difficulties to canoe, abseil, and rock climb.

74. Strong links have been established with other special schools to give pupils opportunities to compete in sporting events. Recently, the school came first in the Cheshire Youth Games. Pupils also achieve very well in inter-school football, athletics and swimming events.
75. The subject has been very well developed, mainly by the deputy headteacher over the last few years and more recently by a newly appointed subject leader. This has led to very good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is very much improved, in part because the school draws very well on the skills of specialists.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Eleven lessons of personal, social, health and citizenship education were seen.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very well planned curriculum, which successfully promotes the personal development of all students and pupils.
- The examination courses followed by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students provide a wide range of activities that promote personal, social and health education and citizenship well.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

76. The programmes of work for all ages and special educational needs include a wide range of relevant topics. Pupils and students learn to understand themselves physically, emotionally, socially and sexually. Teaching is very good and ensures that all pupils and students, including those with more complex special needs, build on their skills and knowledge as they move up through the school. The very good relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils feel valued and work very hard. For example, during one lesson, post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties responded very positively to the praise and encouragement of the teacher and support staff. They took part as best as they were able in the preparation of sandwiches to eat at break time, exerting considerable mental and physical effort.
77. Lessons are very well planned so pupils learn in a caring but challenging atmosphere. All pupils and students have personal, social, health and citizenship education targets as part of their individual education plans and progress towards these targets is very good. Younger pupils learn to be considerate and help each other, learn the basic rules for keeping safe and develop their individual confidence and sense of responsibility. Older pupils and students take part in a well-planned programme of work experience and careers education. They use community facilities, such as the leisure centre and their examination courses – Transition Challenge and Towards Independence – include a wide range of activities effectively promoting independence. In other areas of the curriculum, such as physical education, pupils and students are encouraged successfully to work well together in teams. They are very supportive of each other, appreciating others' achievements.
78. The new subject of citizenship has been introduced very successfully from Year 7 onwards and pupils have very good opportunities to learn about all the aspects of the subject, in very

relevant ways. The whole area of personal, social and health education and citizenship is well resourced and teachers use these resources effectively to provide stimulating activities. The taught programmes of work are enhanced by a very good focus, by all staff, on promoting pupils' personal and social development and their behaviour, throughout the school day. The previous inspection report did not include the subject, so it is not possible to judge improvement since that time.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3²
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
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	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

² In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.