

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODLANDS SCHOOL

Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113644

Headteacher: Mrs Frances Lerner

Lead inspector: Mrs Jayne Clemence

Dates of inspection: 9th – 13th February 2004

Inspection number: 259034

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	65
School address:	Bodmin Road Whitleigh Plymouth
Postcode:	PL5 4DZ
Telephone number:	01752 300101
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Debra Barenskie
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Woodlands School has 65 pupils from two to 16 years. Pupils have wide ranging special educational needs, including physical and sensory disabilities, with a small minority having profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). There is residential provision used for up to ten pupils at any one time, staying between one and four nights a week. Currently 18 pupils use this facility. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A relatively high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils come from a white British background and represent very mixed, and often disadvantaged circumstances, socially and economically. A very small minority have English as an additional language and a very small number of pupils join and leave at times other than at the beginning and end of the school year. Woodlands School has a major Outreach Support Service to schools across Plymouth, and approximately 92 pupils from five to 19 years are supported by Woodlands staff in mainstream and other special schools. Almost one quarter of pupils from Woodlands attend mainstream schools for part of their school week, ranging from a few sessions to three days. The leadership has undergone major changes, with the appointment of a new headteacher who started in September 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22629	Jayne Clemence	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE)
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32217	Elaine Cole	Team inspector	English, geography, history, music, special educational needs
21081	Charles Hackett	Team inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign language
21822	Helen Maskew	Team inspector	Science, art and design, physical education, religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Woodlands School provides pupils with a sound education and gives satisfactory value for money. The very strong leadership of the recently appointed headteacher means that the school is improving rapidly. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and pupils' achievements are similarly satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The outstanding Outreach Support Services provide excellent quality professional support to many schools, staff and pupils across Plymouth
- The highly effective teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage means that children make rapid progress and develop very positive work habits from an early age
- The excellent provision for younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties results in high quality activities matched closely to their individual needs
- The very strong leadership of the headteacher ensures there is a sharp focus on raising pupils' achievements
- Pupils' achievements could realistically be higher with more consistently good teaching in Years 6 to 11; assessment strategies are uneven and variable between teachers and classes
- The organisation of pupils into working groups is too wide; provision is not sufficiently distinct for their wide ranging special educational needs, ages and levels of maturity
- The very good care and welfare of the pupils mean they are able to learn more effectively; high quality teamwork with physiotherapists support pupils with minimal disruption to their learning
- Pupils achieve very well in science and the performing arts due to very effective leadership, teaching and learning; pupils' achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory as their skills are not developed systematically or used consistently across the curriculum
- The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, and very positive relationships between pupils and with adults creates a very positive atmosphere for learning

Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory and most of the areas of weakness have been addressed. Roles and responsibilities for senior managers and subject leaders have been defined and the governing body has a more strategic approach to its work. Leadership roles in the residential provision have been clarified appropriately. Assessment has been slow to develop until very recently. The school is moving at a great pace to bring about further improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall. Younger children, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well because of the strong teaching in these areas. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils achieve

very well in science and the performing arts. Pupils could achieve more in English with a higher proportion of good or better teaching through the school. Achievement in mathematics in Years 6 to 9 slows because the teaching is only satisfactory in those years. Pupils' achievements in ICT are unsatisfactory as their skills are not developed systematically or used consistently across other subjects of the curriculum. The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour mean they are ready to learn and try their best. The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps prepare them more fully for life beyond school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is sound. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Very good teaching in the Foundation Stage results in children achieving very well from an early age. The excellent teaching for younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enable those pupils have excellent and very relevant activities tailored precisely for their complex learning needs. Teaching and learning in Years 6 to 11 is satisfactory overall; there are instances where the place of teaching, level of challenge and expectations of pupils could be higher in English and in mathematics particularly in Years 6 to 9. These features restrict the pupils' learning and hinder their rate of progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory and there are very good additional activities outside lessons. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage has many excellent features, and that for younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is excellent. There is very good care, guidance and support for pupils. The good and positive partnership with parents means that pupils are supported effectively in their learning at home and school. The outstanding outreach support service provides far reaching professional guidance for many schools, pupils and their families across Plymouth.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The new headteacher provides very strong and decisive leadership, and has swiftly identified the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. The leadership of the school, including senior managers and subject leaders, has been formalised and strengthened by ensuring roles and responsibilities are clear, with lines of accountability known by everyone. Management strategies have been established effectively, including more systematic monitoring of the school's progress, and evaluation of the impact of its actions. The governing body provides good governance, and since the appointment of the new headteacher, has been involved more widely and strategically than previously.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express a high level of satisfaction about the school and its work. There is considerable confidence in the headteacher. Parents receive very good information about their children's progress and about the school. Pupils say they like school, and enjoy many aspects of school life. They particularly like the friends they make and the quality of relationships they have with many of the staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to continue with its rapid improvements are to:

- Raise the pupils' achievements giving priority to
- English and mathematics by improving the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring consistently good or better teaching throughout the school
- ICT by developing pupils' ICT skills more systematically, ensuring subject leadership provides clear direction, and by using ICT more consistently across other subjects of the curriculum
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Years 6 to 11 by eradicating unsatisfactory elements and ensuring a higher proportion of good or better teaching

- Improving the quality and consistency of assessment procedures in order to track pupils' achievements more rigorously
- Improving the organisation of pupils, ensuring more distinct Year groups that reflect better their age, special educational needs and maturity

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage and excellent for pupils in Years 1 and 2 with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils' achievements by the end of Years 6, 9 and 11 are satisfactory overall. By Year 11, pupils achieve satisfactorily in English course work, and well in accredited course work in mathematics and science. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or pupils from different backgrounds.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is satisfactory and improving throughout the school because of the sharp focus on raising standards
- Pupils' achievements are hindered as they are not always organised efficiently; some groups have pupils with ranges in age, maturity and levels of attainment that are too wide
- Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in English and good overall in mathematics, though they could realistically be higher with more consistently good or better teaching;
- Children's achievements are very good in the Foundation Stage because of the highly effective teaching strategies that impact directly on their learning
- Younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make rapid gains in their learning due to the excellent provision, matched meticulously to their individual needs
- Achievements in ICT are unsatisfactory, and there are missed opportunities to develop the pupils' ICT skills
- Pupils achieve very well in science and the performing arts due to high quality teaching in those subjects

Commentary

1. The school has a sharp focus on raising standards, and careful evaluation of pupils' achievements is being undertaken currently, with appropriate strategies for improvements. These include improvements in the quality and range of the curriculum, more rigorous assessment procedures, and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning. There are variations in the rate of pupils' learning and progress in different parts of the school due to differences in the quality of teaching that impact directly on the pupils' achievements over time.
2. In some parts of the school, in particular the Foundation Stage and the younger pupils with PMLD, achievements are demonstrated very clearly through maintaining meticulous records of what pupils could do when they first started, and by recording key milestones in their learning and achievements over time. In these instances, teachers and support staff make careful observations, and recognise when the pupils have reached their targets, identifying new targets efficiently. However, the quality of assessment is variable and only satisfactory because these features are not consistent in all parts of the school. Many staff know the pupils very well and therefore ensure the work is well matched for their needs. In some parts of the school, and more specifically as pupils move up through the school, their achievements have not been tracked rigorously over time, and evidence of progress is more limited.
3. Pupils are placed in groups with very wide age ranges. In some instances there is up to five school years' difference between the youngest and oldest pupil in the group. In addition, there are often pupils with very wide ranging educational needs that could be organised more efficiently to have a greater impact on their achievements. Where pupils are only achieving satisfactorily, it is usually because teaching is not challenging the higher attainers, and work is not sufficiently modified for pupils with additional special educational needs.

4. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in English because the vast majority of teaching is satisfactory. They could do better, if there was more good or better teaching in the subject. There is scope for setting higher expectations, and challenging pupils more systematically in their language and literacy skills. Whilst pupils achieve well in mathematics by the time they leave school, and the teaching is good on balance, pupils' achievements in Years 6 to 9 are only satisfactory. This is because teaching is satisfactory overall in these Year groups and the pupils' rate of progress and learning slows down as expectations are lower.
5. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well. They are assessed rigorously in order to identify individual learning needs, and activities are matched closely to those needs. All adults know the pupils thoroughly and therefore understand what they must do to assist in the children's learning. Team work is seamless and pupils are supported very effectively at all times in order to maximise their learning and understanding of the world around them. As a result, children achieve very well in all areas of learning.
6. Younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve rapidly due to the excellent teaching that impacts hugely on their learning. Individual programmes are tailored meticulously for pupils' needs, and even the most challenging pupils make obvious gains during lessons and over time. Resources are matched very well and often made specifically for an individual in order to accelerate their achievements. Staff take great care to ensure that pupils are helped to concentrate on an activity for increasing lengths of time over the week and term.
7. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in ICT as their skills are not developed systematically in lessons or used consistently across the curriculum. Resources and equipment are satisfactory, but there are missed opportunities for developing the pupils' technical skills and there is no clear direction for bringing about the required improvements.
8. Pupils achieve very well in science as they move up the school because of the highly effective specialist teaching, very high expectations and very secure subject knowledge. Pupils are enthusiastic and absorbed in their learning, and develop an increasingly wide range of scientific vocabulary and knowledge. Pupils' achievements in the performing arts are very good. The school has a long history of developing the performing arts, and the pupils have rich and varied activities provided to develop such skills. They perform proudly at public Plymouth City wide events, and rehearse with great commitment and anticipation, with impressive and memorable outcomes. Teaching in the performing arts is very strong, and at times inspirational. Pupils strive to do their very best and develop a strong sense of self esteem and confidence in their own performing skills over time.
9. There have been satisfactory improvements in the pupils' achievements since the previous inspection, though the rate of progress has increased more rapidly in the most recent phase of the school's life.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is good and provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave very well both in and out of lessons; they are willing and ready to learn
- Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works hard to maintain a very positive atmosphere for learning as a result
- The very good relationships between pupils and with adults create a very positive atmosphere for learning

Commentary

10. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and display very good behaviour both in and out of lessons. There are very good relationships between pupils and with staff that lead to a positive atmosphere where pupils are confident and secure in their efforts.
11. Staff are successful in promoting pupils' confidence and self esteem. Lessons are well planned to interest the pupils, and staff are successful in promoting a caring atmosphere. The very good behaviour is assisted because staff set high expectations for the pupils, and lessons proceed without disruptions and mostly at a good pace. Pupils easily understand and respect class rules and are confident that staff will offer them advice, help and support if needed and their views will be listened to.
12. Relationships are a strength of the school. All adults and pupils relate very well to each other and this has a very positive impact on teaching and learning. Pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills and are keen to celebrate the success of others. Pupils are at ease together, care for one another and support others very well. They welcome visitors and were proud to show the inspection team their achievements.
13. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is overall good. Spirituality is introduced regularly through assemblies, reflection at the end of the day, awe and wonder in lessons and the PSHE programme. Pupils' moral development is well taught. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong through lessons and the PSHE programme and the "code of conduct", which has been newly established by the school council. The school encourages pupils' social development and many take part in events such as the local dance festival and joining in with other schools in concerts etc. Some lessons are planned with a nearby special school and pupils are taken to the theatre, Plymouth Pavilion, other schools, shops and shopping centres and the Plymouth Dome.
14. Pupils have good access to multi-cultural experiences by participating in the multi-cultural art week and visitors to the school include artists in residence, story-tellers and a local African drumming group. Pupils from the school regularly go for a very successful exchange visit to a French special school. These and many other activities help pupils to understand and be prepared more fully for life in a multi-cultural setting.
15. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are mainly only absent for medical reasons. Most pupils arrive punctually and lessons begin promptly. There were no exclusions last year.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.4
National data	11.5

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	
White – British	
Black or Black British – African	
Any other ethnic group	
No ethnic group recorded	

No of pupils on roll	
	60
	1
	2
	2

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality education for its pupils. The leadership and management of the headteacher and staff ensure there is a clear focus on raising standards further.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **satisfactory** overall and as a result pupils' achievements are sound over time. Assessment is satisfactory, though the quality varies significantly between classes and teachers across the school. Teaching and learning are very effective in the Foundation Stage and excellent for younger pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Elsewhere the teaching is satisfactory, and there are examples of good, very good and excellent teaching, though this is not yet consistent in all classes.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective teaching in the Foundation Stage means that children have a very positive start to their school life and learn good work habits from an early age
- Excellent teaching for younger pupils with PMLD ensures they achieve exceptionally well over time, becoming increasingly involved in the world around them
- Teaching and learning are only satisfactory overall in Years 6 to 11 and at times lack rigour, challenge and sufficiently high expectations for the pupils; assessment procedures are less rigorous in this part of the school
- The very good and sometimes excellent teaching in science and the performing arts enable pupils to achieve very well, and beyond levels normally seen for their age and special educational needs
- The satisfactory teaching in English has scope for improvement in order to raise the pupils' levels of achievement further
- Teaching in mathematics is good in most parts of the school and pupils achieve well in the subject by the time they leave school; but their rate of learning slows in Years 6 to 9

Commentary

16. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is strong and effective. The teacher, nursery nurse, teaching assistants and physiotherapist work seamlessly as a very efficient team, focused closely on the children's learning and achievements at all times. Staff are thoroughly well organised and know exactly what their respective roles and responsibilities are at any point during the day. Every minute is used productively to support the children in their learning. Children are assessed very thoroughly on entry to the school and this forms a clear benchmark and starting point for measuring their achievements over time. The headteacher has established an effective and systematic schedule for monitoring the quality of teaching, identifying areas for further improvement and noting the impact of teaching on the pupils' learning at the same time. This is bringing about further improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning.
17. The quality of teaching for younger pupils with PMLD is excellent and contributes directly to the highly effective learning that takes place.

Example of outstanding practice

The scrutiny of younger PMLD pupils' records shows that small gains in their learning are observed, noted and recorded meticulously, and from these, future targets are set. The teacher and teaching assistants know the pupils thoroughly and have very strong relationships that enable pupils to be supported, yet challenged within a very safe, secure and trusting atmosphere for learning. Activities are matched precisely for individual pupil's needs and resources often adapted or made specifically for a pupil in order to maximise their learning in a lesson. In excellent science teaching where the topic was weather and water, pupils were able to experience first hand the effects of wind on objects. Teaching assistants worked exceptionally well and were totally focused on the pupils' learning and responses. There were wide ranging resources including fans, a hair drier, hand held windmills, and mobiles to demonstrate the effects of air and wind on brightly coloured streamers, and a bubble machine that brought great delight to the pupils, as the room filled with bubbles of all sizes before they disappeared into the atmosphere. The teaching was precise and carefully structured so that all pupils covered the full range of learning, and were given many choices to indicate their preferences, whilst also demonstrating their understanding at the same time.

18. Teaching and learning in Years 6 to 11 is satisfactory overall, though there is significant variation in the quality of teaching and learning between groups and subjects. There is a minority of unsatisfactory teaching where activities are not sufficiently demanding, and expectations for what the pupils could achieve too low. The pace of lessons is slow, and achievement is limited as a result. Assessment procedures are less robust in this part of the school and therefore work is not always so well matched to the pupil's individual needs.
19. The school is now introducing a new assessment scheme, which allows profiles of pupils' achievements in all areas of the curriculum to be stored and illustrated clearly in graph form. Staff will be able to make use of this information to highlight the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and be in a good position to push ahead in the areas that need improvement. The full implementation of this scheme should ensure that there is greater consistency in assessment throughout the school.
20. The high quality and sometimes excellent teaching in science is characterised by strong subject knowledge, lively and interesting delivery of the subject and activities that engage and challenge the pupils. As a result, pupils are very keen and interested in the subject, thoroughly absorbed in their learning and willing to try hard in order to improve. In the performing arts, the very effective and occasionally excellent teaching captivates the pupils' interest and fires their imagination, due to the highly creative use of resources and materials. Performances are of very high quality and pupils grow in confidence and self esteem in the process.
21. Teaching in English is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good and very good teaching in English, though this is yet to be consistent throughout the school. Pupils with additional special educational needs in Years 3 to 6 achieve well and sometimes very well because of the very good teaching. In the best teaching, planning is detailed, and activities matched closely to the pupils' wide ranging needs. In less effective teaching, activities are not sufficiently challenging for higher attainers, or modified appropriately for those with more complex needs. The current organisation of pupils means that they are not always able to access activities in language and literacy that are appropriate for their age or maturity. This in turn hinders their learning.
22. Teaching in mathematics is good overall, and some pupils by Year 11 have gained external qualifications that prepare them well for the future. The quality of teaching is inconsistent though. In Years 6 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall, with a minority that is unsatisfactory. It is only satisfactory because the challenge is not sufficient for higher attainers and pace of lessons is slow, leading to lost learning time. In some instances, resources are not prepared efficiently enough and therefore time is wasted in finding what is required for an activity. In other instances, the purpose of the lesson is not clear enough and therefore the learning intentions are lost.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 47 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6(13 %)	15 (32 %)	10 (21%)	12 (26%)	4 (8%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. The additional activities, including performing arts, sports and music are very good. Pupils' learning is supported by satisfactory accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an excellent and very relevant curriculum in the Foundation Stage that helps children make sense of their learning
- There is very good provision for pupils with additional special educational needs; the curriculum for younger pupils with PMLD is excellent for the range and complexity of their needs
- The curriculum for ICT is unsatisfactory, and its use across other subjects is limited
- There is a very good range of enrichment activities in many subjects, particularly the performing arts and sport
- The curriculum is enriched greatly by the many opportunities for pupils to be included in other schools
- The curriculum for life skills in Years 10 and 11 is underdeveloped

Commentary

23. Overall the curriculum is satisfactory. It meets all statutory requirements, including the teaching of RE. Pupils in the Foundation Stage enjoy an excellent curriculum, which is appropriate and relevant. It is based on practical experience, including visits to local venues where children have 'real life' experiences, which support their learning very well. The accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory, and support the pupils appropriately in their learning.
24. The curriculum for science is very good because the pupils' skills are built on systematically and there are many opportunities for practical investigations that interest the pupils and develop their curiosity. It is satisfactory in English and mathematics because there is a consistent approach to planning and ensuring pupils' prior knowledge is built upon systematically, but unsatisfactory in ICT. This is because ICT is not taught systematically, and opportunities for using ICT skills across other subjects of the curriculum are underdeveloped.
25. The school provides a very good variety of activities that extends the pupils' learning opportunities, particularly in the creative arts and sport. Within these subjects, teachers take good advantage of local amenities and places of interest to provide interesting experiences. Visits further afield are well planned to stimulate, challenge and encourage pupils to look outwards from the school and discover more about themselves and the world around them. For example, the Ten Tors weekend on Dartmoor provides extremely physically challenging experiences for secondary aged pupils, as well as providing excellent opportunities for social links with their mainstream peer group. Good links have also been made with a school in France for annual exchange visits.
26. Provision for PSHE is good and pupils make good gains in developing their personal and social skills. This is often through the many social opportunities they have beyond Woodlands School and the wide range of links with mainstream schools that provides many rich, varied and realistic social situations for them. A significant proportion of the pupils enjoy learning in settings beyond the security of Woodlands, as they attend for different lengths of time in other schools.

Pupils gain particularly in the development of their personal and social skills as they learn alongside their mainstream peers and have to make their own way in very realistic surroundings of school life.

27. The curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. The range of options and vocational courses provided by the school is small, but in their final year pupils have the opportunity to attend local colleges for 'taster' days where they familiarise themselves with college life and sample courses. The school takes effective steps to ensure that pupils are well informed as to the next stage of their educational provision. Day visits are organised to the colleges and centres where they will move at 16. All pupils have opportunities to take part in work experience. There is no specific development plan for vocational education, which hinders the drive for further improvements. Further development is also needed to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to obtain sufficient skills in English to enable them to access Foundation Level GCSE. Qualifications in the foundation subjects are not yet offered, though there are different levels of the National Skills Profile available to pupils in Years 10 and 11.
28. There is excellent matching of teaching and support staff in the Foundation Stage, and for primary aged pupils with additional special educational needs. The school has a good number of teachers with a corresponding breadth of expertise and qualities that are helping to move the school forward. Teaching assistants complement the teaching staff, and in some cases make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Teamwork with other professionals, such as the physiotherapist, is of a high quality.
29. Improvements to the curriculum have been satisfactory since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety very well. It provides them with very good support and guidance and is enabling them to become increasingly involved in decision making.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff at the school provide a high level of care and support to the pupils; they are treated with the utmost dignity and respect
- The skills of many different professionals are used very effectively to maximise the pupils' learning
- Relationships at the school between pupils and adults are very good; and the atmosphere for learning is very positive as a result
- The excellent links with other professional agencies help pupils have wide ranging and relevant support in other schools
- The very good induction arrangements help children and their families feel a valued and important part of the school from an early stage
- Procedures for the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are at an early stage of development

Commentary

30. The school provides a very high standard of care, guidance and support for its pupils. Pupils have a very good and trusting relationship with adults in the school. Staff monitor pupils' personal progress informally, but pupils are very well known to all members of staff who relate to them extremely well.
31. The school is very successful in using the skills of many professionals to the overall benefit of the pupils including teachers, learning support assistants, and other professionals. As a result of this holistic approach to pupils' care and welfare, they thrive and make good gains in their

personal development. The school benefits from the appointment of a full time nurse and other medical staff including physiotherapists and speech therapists all of whom combine their professional skills to ensure that pupils receive very high standards of care.

32. The school has very good relationships with outside agencies and the excellent work and planning by the school's Outreach Support Teachers ensure that a significant proportion of the pupils are able to be successfully integrated into mainstream and other appropriate schools for their education. These opportunities are relevant and tailored carefully to the individual's needs. At the same time, the activities are challenging to the pupils and assist their development further.
33. Induction arrangements for pupils are very good. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator carries out useful home visits prior to the admission of all pupils and all parents are invited to an admission meeting to meet nursery staff and the teacher. Parents are invited to stay with their children as long as necessary and can come into school to see their child's progress whenever they wish. As a result of the very sensitive and well arranged induction procedures, pupils settle very quickly into school life and make very good progress.
34. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is at an early stage of development but overall is satisfactory. The School Council has been newly formed, where pupils meet regularly to discuss items of interest. Pupils are appointed as Class Monitors and School Helpers. Every pupil is given the opportunity at their Annual Review to give their views on what improvements they would like to make at school and their views are additionally obtained during "circle time" where they discuss more personal issues, and at PSHE lessons.
35. Pupils who replied to the questionnaire and were interviewed during the inspection week confirm that they felt their views were valued and taken into account and they were treated with dignity and respect by staff.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents. Links with the local community are very good and those with other schools and colleges are excellent. The Outreach Support Service is built upon a foundation of excellent networks of schools across Plymouth, with Woodlands School a central link.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has established an effective partnership with parents
- Parents receive very good information about the school, about pupils' achievements and progress
- The excellent links with other educational establishments provide very positive opportunities for Woodlands pupils to be included more widely into mainstream school settings
- The school's Outreach Support Service is excellent and ensures many professional, pupils and parents across Plymouth are supported in wide and varied educational settings
- There are very good arrangements for pupils in the transfer to the next stage of their education

Commentary

36. School links with parents are good. Parents are welcome into school at any time and a small number help in several ways such as, helping in the classroom, helping pupils in swimming lessons and escorting pupils on school trips. The school warmly welcomes their involvement.
37. Annual Reviews on pupils' progress give very clear indications to parents about their children's achievements and what they have studied, their progress in every subject and an explanation of targets for improvement. These Annual Reviews are extremely well produced and are welcomed by parents. The school holds three parent evenings every year, where parents are fully consulted on the individual education plans of their children. In addition, there is a very

useful 'open door' policy where parents can come to see staff at any time if they have any concerns. Although the school does not yet seek the views of parents in a formal way, this is planned for the future and parents are encouraged to pass their views and opinions to the headteacher for discussion.

38. The headteacher provides regular and informative newsletters, giving well written information about school activities and events that the school promotes. The school prospectus is professionally produced and written in a user friendly style giving good quality information to parents about the school's ethos and policies. The school has arranged several information evenings for parents with visiting speakers to give parents full information about aspects of their children's education.
39. The school has very good arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the next stage of their education. The Connexions team comes into school to advise pupils from Year 8 on possible courses that are available to them and the Outreach Teachers link exceptionally well with colleges and further education to provide access courses for pupils in Year 10 and 11. Planning for pupils' further education commences after their Transitional Review. Regular meetings are held with careers teachers and Connexions staff to discuss various options that are available. Colleges are visited by both pupils and support staff to ascertain suitability for pupils' needs and pupils attend for 'taster days' during their final days at school.
40. Links with other schools and colleges are excellent. The school is a member of a group of schools comprising five primary and secondary schools and one special school, and regular meetings are held to discuss matters of mutual interest. The school has joint art festivals with local primary and secondary pupils that link them further with other pupils. The Outreach Teachers work in a total of 33 schools and the teacher for visually impaired pupils visits two additional special schools to give support to pupils. Local secondary pupils come into Woodlands for work experience and placements are provided for students training to become teachers. All these examples ensure that Woodlands School has excellent links with its local and wider community for the overall benefit of Woodlands pupils and others across Plymouth.
41. Links with the community are very good. The local community centre raises valuable funds for school use and the school is used as a venue for community activities and local blood donor sessions. The school uses the local shopping centre as a source for geography and life skills and pupils at the school raise money for both national and local charities such as Jeans for Genes, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Air Ambulance and Comic Relief. The school actively participates in local festivals and the hydrotherapy pool is used by adult members of the community. The school benefits from speakers from the local emergency services such as police, fire brigade and ambulance.
42. The support offered by the school's Outreach Support Teachers is outstanding. The Outreach Support Teachers give expert advice and professional insight to other schools and local hospitals on the educational implications of disability. A significant number of pupils at the school are supported on a part time basis in mainstream schools and because of the excellent benefit that pupils receive from the Outreach Service, they make considerable progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The headteacher's very strong leadership is providing very focused and clear direction for the school's future. Leadership elsewhere across the school is satisfactory. The school is managed efficiently and governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a sharp and realistic overview of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses and a very clear vision for raising standards

- The senior management team is in its earliest stages of development; roles have been clarified recently, and senior staff understand their responsibilities more clearly
- Governors have broad and relevant experience that helps the school; they both challenge and support its work effectively
- Subject leadership is in its early stages of development, and in ICT it is unsatisfactory, as there is no clear direction or strategy for its future improvement
- There is outstanding leadership of the outreach support services and far sighted vision for the school's future that helps pupils to be included into mainstream school settings wherever possible

Commentary

43. The headteacher inspires and motivates staff, pupils and parents alike in striving for further improvement. There are high aspirations for pupils to do their best, though aspects of the school's organisation and leadership structure are at their earliest stages of development and therefore their impact is yet to be fully realised on pupils' achievements. Management strategies are effective and improving fast, as new initiatives, including monitoring the school's progress and evaluating the impact of its actions on standards, teaching and pupils' achievements, are being formalised.
44. Woodlands School is rapidly improving because of the headteacher's strong leadership skills. There is a united and cohesive team across the school who recognise the need for further change and are willing to move forward swiftly in their own professional practice for the overall benefit of the pupils. The senior management, and newly formed extended management team has a clear understanding of its responsibilities and remit. Although at its earliest stages of development, there is already considerable energy, enthusiasm and commitment within the team to contribute fully to the school's vision and future direction. The deputy headteacher's role is satisfactory and being developed more widely and strategically.
45. The governing body is efficient and effective in its work. The governors have been more strategically involved in the life of the school in recent months, and make a useful contribution to its overall direction. The governors are led ably by a Chair who has direct, relevant and first hand experience of special educational needs and disability. Many other governors have a comprehensive overview of the school and its work, and visit regularly to find out for themselves what is happening. The governor with responsibility for residential provision, for example, visits both formally and informally to see for himself the quality of provision. This enables a rigorous contribution and more probing approach to discussions at governors' meetings. The school's resources are managed most efficiently and finances are tracked closely over time.
46. Subject leaders are developing in their roles and responsibilities, though aspects of their work, particularly in monitoring teaching and learning first hand, are yet to be fully embedded into practice. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their posts and have limited awareness and knowledge of what is happening in their subjects across other areas of the school. The leadership for ICT is unsatisfactory as there is no clear plan for improving the subject or direction for its future development. The pace of change in the subject is too slow and pupils' achievements are hindered as a result.
47. The leadership and management have developed a very positive atmosphere for learning. All adults' and pupils' contributions are valued and respected. There is a high level of care and consideration for individual pupil's needs and much dignity and sensitivity ensured throughout the school day. These values are embedded throughout the school. The strong sense of team work and effort from staff impacts directly on the pupils. Staff take pride in their work and in the pupils' achievements.

Example of outstanding practice

The outstanding leadership of the Outreach Support Services provides exceptionally strong support to well over half the schools in Plymouth. Pupils with wide ranging disabilities are supported in many schools including secondary, primary and other special schools. Teachers from far and wide have a growing understanding of how best to support pupils with complex special educational needs in their schools, with the assurance that professional guidance and help is at hand. Pupils from Woodlands have the very best chance of being included for some of their school life in other school settings, as headteachers are confident and reassured in the support they will receive when offering a place to Woodlands' pupils. There are many additional benefits as pupils far beyond Woodlands understand how to include others with a disability and learn first hand how to treat people with additional special needs. This in itself is a powerful learning experience in shaping their outlook and attitudes to disability and impacting upon the drive for a more inclusive education for all.

48. There are far reaching and visionary plans for the school to be sited on a nearby secondary school campus in the future. Whilst such ideals are some way ahead, there is realistic planning and robust project management taking place, and a genuine sense of momentum and anticipation about the school's future, albeit in a different setting.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,003,295
Total expenditure	994,891
Expenditure per pupil	15,074

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	48,130
Balance carried forward to the next	98,558*

**The balance carried forward was inherited by the current headteacher and has been allocated fully for the purposes of increasing resources and enhancing accommodation.*

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

The provision in the residential unit is **satisfactory** and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff provide a high quality of care in which the physical and medical needs of pupils are well catered for
- Within the residential unit, there are warm and trusting relationships between adults and pupils
- Good work is being done to upgrade the quality of the accommodation but there is a need for a more appropriate environment for the pupils' ages and genders in order to meet the needs of older pupils more effectively
- The toys and other play equipment available are very suitable for younger pupils particularly girls, however there is a lack of resources that are appropriate for teenage pupils
- Evening activities are being well developed but the choice for pupils could be extended further to address their wide range of interests
- The head of care and her team, well supported by the headteacher, are working hard to address the weaknesses identified in the recent National Care Standards report
- Although, there are sufficient qualified care staff the unit would benefit from the appointment of male staff to provide care and role models, particularly for teenage boys.

Commentary

49. At all times staff show real concern for pupils' wellbeing. Staff have established good routines for waking and helping pupils to get up in the morning and be ready for school. Throughout each evening, careful attention is given to meeting each of their individual physical and medical

needs. Staff are very diligent in watching pupils carefully to ensure that they are not experiencing any difficulties, and react quickly when pupils need support.

50. The positive relationships between staff and pupils have a calming effect on the atmosphere in the unit and ensure that if a pupil is distressed a member of staff can quickly come to their support. Pupils report that they are confident if they have a difficulty, there are people that they can go to talk to.
51. There are sufficient staff to manage and look after the pupils. Night-time staffing arrangements and cover is good, and ensures there is sufficient staff on call. However, currently there is only one part-time male member of the care team. This gives an imbalance to the staff team and means that particularly the older boys are lacking care staff, who have similar interests to them and could help them by acting as appropriate role models. The lack of availability of male staff to deal with older pupils' basic hygiene needs is a limitation and would be a valuable additional feature.
52. Considerable work has been done recently on improving the quality of the accommodation. It is now far more homely and pupils are contributing to the plans for the decoration of their bedroom areas. However, the lounge area is designed primarily for younger pupils, particularly girls, and contains lots of dolls and junior play equipment, such as building blocks. This is not appropriate for teenage pupils and they would benefit from a more age appropriate area where they could relax in their free time.
53. Evening activities have been extended; a 'rebound' club on a Monday using the trampoline is popular with pupils, as is the art club which takes place later in the week. Pupils also enjoy having the opportunity to visit two youth clubs. There is though a need for greater imagination in the range of activities that are offered to pupils and the level of choice that they can be given, particularly again for the older pupils who have different interests to the younger ones.
54. The residential unit was subject to a recent inspection by the National Care Standards Commission. The result of this confirmed that the unit offers a high level of care but also highlighted a significant number of elements that the school needed to improve to meet to the standards expected for such residential units. The school has worked hard to address these. As part of meeting these requirements, the Head of Care is accepting a necessary expansion of her role and with the very positive support of the headteacher is beginning to establish a more structured and efficient management overview of the unit's work.

OUTEACH SUPPORT SERVICES

The outreach support services provide outstanding support to individual pupils and to their parents, other schools and agencies.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent practical advice offered to colleagues in other schools
- The key role Woodlands plays within the Plymouth local education authority's inclusive approach to educating pupils with physical difficulties
- The detailed and sensitive assessments undertaken on pupils
- The excellent and supportive links the school has with parents and with other agencies

Commentary

55. The work of the outreach support staff team is regarded very highly and much appreciated by mainstream schools. Staff in mainstream schools report how very effective the support is for their work with individual pupils with physical difficulties. Many individual examples of how the support has made a significant difference to the quality of education of individual pupils have been brought to the attention of the inspection team. For example, a mainstream special

educational needs co-ordinator reported how through the excellent support of the outreach support worker a pupil with a degenerative condition was able to continue his education in his mainstream school with his friends. During the inspection pupils on full and part time placements were all seen to be benefiting from the support of the outreach worker. In addition to this level of practical support, schools will often contact the outreach worker by telephone for advice.

56. Woodlands staff provide formal assessments of pupils, particularly for pre-school aged children. These provide accurate information on the best approaches that can be used to work with children. These assessments make significant contributions to the decisions made as to the best environment for a child to receive his/her education. Other agencies who work with this age group of children report how effective and important this service is.
57. The school is particularly sensitive in the manner it supports parents who request advice and help in dealing appropriately with their child's condition. A particularly effective approach has been a swimming club, 'Aquatots', in the hydrotherapy pool, which encourages parents to come along with their children and take part in the pool activities. This club is particularly effective in getting dads involved.
58. The work of the Outreach team supports strongly the local education authority's inclusive approach. This has therefore meant that pupils are given every possible chance to be educated with equal opportunities to their more physically able peers. The school has very effective links with other special schools, who all report that they are confident that they will receive appropriate support. This is particularly the case with pupils who experience visual impairment as well as their physical difficulties.

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

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements are made in relation to the provision for each subject. Within this context, provision refers to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the curriculum, the resources and accommodation and any other significant aspects.

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

59. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very effective, with some excellent features. Children have a very positive start to school life and develop very good work routines from an early age. All children starting at the school have a wide range of very complex learning difficulties. Their individual needs are assessed comprehensively and targets are identified swiftly for future learning. These are precise, measurable and small enough to note progress and their achievements clearly over time. Children achieve very well because of the high quality teaching that impacts strongly on their learning. The support staff work together with the teacher in an exemplary manner and make a very significant contribution to the overall quality of the provision. The high quality provision for children at this stage of their school life has enormous benefits to them as they move through the school. Parents establish a very positive rapport with staff from the earliest opportunity and this develops from strength to strength as they move up the school. Staff know the children exceptionally well, and understand thoroughly their specific and very individual and complex needs.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching ensures that children are encouraged to become as independent as possible within the limitations of their special needs
- The excellent relationships between children and adults, established from an early age mean children are at ease in school, enjoy their learning and are willing to learn and cooperate, thus promoting their social and emotional development

Commentary

60. All staff help the children to make choices and become more independent over time. They have photographs that help them identify preferences and adults help children do certain tasks before letting them go some way themselves.
61. The teacher and support staff create an excellent atmosphere for learning, setting clear expectations and appropriate routines from the very beginning of school life. From the time they enter school at the beginning of the school day, children learn that they are an important, special and valued member of the group. They are welcomed warmly with genuine affection by all staff, as children arrive one by one, and learn to recognise their own names and greet one another.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher and support staff ensure there is a strong emphasis upon developing the children's language and communication skills

- Parents are helped systematically with strategies that promote their children's language and communication skills.

Commentary

62. The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure many opportunities are created for the children to communicate and use language with one another and adults. The teacher nursery nurse and teaching assistants are meticulous in their observations of the children and how they communicate, and note carefully the children's responses. Every opportunity is taken to engage the children, look for their responses and offer them choices, noting their preferences carefully. Children take part actively in stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, absorbed thoroughly in the emerging story. They take delight in using props such as chairs, bowls and spoons and listen for sustained periods of time in the process.
63. The high quality home/school diaries provide much useful and relevant information about the children and their experiences both at home and school. This in turn helps parents to talk with their children at home about the school day, and in the same way, the school is able to talk more knowledgeably to the children about their life at home.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good links for children's mathematical development across other subjects of the curriculum
- Children are encouraged successfully to use their mathematical knowledge in practical contexts wherever possible

Commentary

64. The daily routines are very well organised to assist the children's sense of order and sequence of events and awareness of time. They are helped to recognise the beginning and endings of lessons and staff work systematically to ensure children understand changes moving from one activity to another in a coordinated and sensitive manner. Children use ICT equipment systematically and mathematical programmes very effectively to assist in their recognition of numbers and objects. During the school day, staff take every opportunity to include the children in counting for a purpose. Teaching is very effective in developing the children's mathematical vocabulary.
65. There are many resources adapted for the children to use and explore, and daily routines are used most appropriately to develop further the children's mathematical vocabulary, such as more, less, big and small.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have very good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world that relate directly to their own understanding

Commentary

66. The classroom is organised very effectively to encourage the children's wider understanding of the world. Photographs are used very effectively to link children with their own experiences and families.
67. There are many opportunities for children to show curiosity, develop an awareness of change and understand their own and other cultures. They celebrate special days through the year and use different artefacts and objects to assist their understanding. Children understand the importance of health and hygiene, for example in washing hands before touching food. The classroom has many interesting resources that help children explore their world further.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **excellent**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent teamwork with the physiotherapist enables children to remain part of physical development lessons, whilst at the same time have the required therapy to assist their physical mobility further

Commentary

68. Teachers, support staff and physiotherapy staff work as an excellent team to support and develop further the children's levels of mobility. Children are helped to move as independently as possible and to negotiate their own space where practical. Adults are exceptionally effective in helping less mobile children gain a sense of movement and freedom.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged successfully to explore a wide range of materials
- The high quality listening opportunities help develop a strong sense of creativity as children join in the musical activities

Commentary

69. Children become totally absorbed in the creative activities provided. The excellent organisation of activities ensures that pupils can explore for themselves as far as possible. They take part readily in songs, rhymes and tunes, and in the process become more aware of the world around them and the impact they can make when using certain materials such as shakers.
70. In excellent teaching in a lesson where children's musical awareness was being developed, the learning environment was sensitively arranged so all children were positioned comfortably on fleecy rugs. The lights were dimmed and there was a great sense of anticipation as every child was supported individually. The wide range of music and rhythms helped the children to stay interested and focused throughout. Scottish Island music was enjoyed with soft coloured squares moving gently overhead. There were songs to greet the children and others encouraging them to bounce, rock and relax. The physiotherapist worked sensitively and discretely to support individual children, whilst at the same time enabling them to remain part of the overall activity. Children were enthralled and towards the end of the lesson, left to lie quietly

on their own, thus soaking up more of the atmosphere of calm, quiet and stillness before moving on to lunch time routines.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Inspectors were able to see lessons in all Year groups as well as looking at pupils' work

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication skills are promoted well during English lessons. Pupils are taught to listen to teachers, other adults and each other, attentively
- The teaching of pupils with additional special educational needs in the lower school is very good
- Assessment procedures are currently inconsistent; data being collected is not always used systematically to inform teachers' planning and to help pupils do as well as they might
- Pupils' assessment records show consistent progress over time in speaking and listening, reading and writing
- Links between curriculum planning and individual pupil targets are not always rigorous enough
- The pace and challenge of some English lessons does not always enable pupils to achieve at the level at which evidence suggests they are capable
- The recently appointed subject coordinator has a clear understanding of priorities for further improvement

Commentary

71. The development of communication skills is being focused upon effectively throughout the school. Pupils' contributions are valued. The high level of co-operation between all staff helps pupils to communicate with increasing independence. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills effectively through the use of language, signs, symbols, individual picture exchange books, or individually programmed talkers. As a result they are able to make choices, share what they have done, join in discussions, express opinions and answer questions. Pupils listen attentively when adults or other pupils are talking. For instance, Year 9 to 11 pupils studying *'Macbeth'* are able to use persuasive language and non-verbal communication techniques confidently to demonstrate their understanding of Macbeth's plight and to gain the attention of the audience.
72. Pupils' progress over time in English is satisfactory overall. In the lower school, pupils with additional special educational needs, achieve well and sometimes very well due to very good teaching. The pupils responded well to the stimuli of an experience that used their senses to interpret the story of *'The Winter King and the Summer Queen'*. They communicated and engaged fully with the story to develop their interest in reading. By the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are able to respond well to the structure of the National Literacy Strategy and where planning and organisation is good and expectations high, higher attaining pupils can sequence a four picture storyboard and write a sentence to match each picture independently. By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils were encouraged successfully to reflect on a poem about weather. Higher attaining pupils were able to brainstorm words to describe a storm and worked co-operatively in ability groups matching adjectives to weather words to create a simple poem. By the end of Year 9, as a result of the

variable quality of teaching and learning, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils have the skills to read independently. At the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. During Years 10 to 11 pupils work towards taking GCSE entry level examinations and/or National Skills' Profile modules.

73. Good or better teaching is a direct result of detailed planning and organisation, with good use of assessment data and clear links with pupils' individual language and literacy targets being made. In the best lessons, teachers spend time and effort ensuring that planning, teaching strategies and resources engage, motivate and match the needs and ability of individual pupils. For example, in preparing for entry level examinations, pupils in Years 10 to 11 are learning to use planning, drafting and editing processes to improve their writing and recording skills. Where there is effective deployment, teaching assistants are clear about their role, support pupils in becoming more independent as learners and evaluate their work with the pupils effectively. Less effective teaching is identifiable where lesson content and activities are not always matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, the pace and challenge of the lesson do not enable all pupils to achieve as much as they can. Additionally, teachers do not always share learning intentions with pupils. Because of this, pupils are not always clear about what they are going to learn.
74. Leadership and management of English is satisfactory overall. The National Literacy Strategy, suitably adapted and modified, has been successfully managed and implemented in Years 1 to 6. The more recent use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy guidance and resources for English has yet to impact fully. As a result, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have less opportunity to access reading and writing activities which are more suited to their age. Furthermore, the present formation of class groups means that pupils are not always working in the most age appropriate setting. As a result, pupils have less opportunity to access language and literacy activities which are more appropriate for their age group.
75. Since the last inspection, progress in English has been satisfactory. The newly appointed co-ordinator however, has a clear vision for developing the subject, in particular for pupils moving into the senior school. With this translated into practise and through her own teaching, there is the potential to impact significantly on the overall provision for English and pupils' individual achievement throughout the school. A revised subject development plan has been established. This includes further development of the library and schemes of work and long and medium term planning for pupils in Years 7 to 11.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

76. Provision for developing pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory. For example, in a History lesson, pupils in Year 6 listen and reflect on the poem '*The Roman Wall Blues*' and begin to empathise with the Roman soldier and how he might have been feeling. In lessons where the range of alternative communication methods, teaching strategies and resources are not used consistently to reinforce language and literacy skills or to develop more independent learning styles, pupils rely too heavily on adults to support them with their work. However, where pupils in Years 8 to 11 used a range of resources including video, costume and camera to support their acting out of the ball scene from '*Romeo and Juliet*', they transferred and consolidated their knowledge and understanding of the play well into the wider context of drama, dance and music.

French

As only one lesson was seen during the inspection that spanned Years 6 and 7 it was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision in French

77. Pupils have the opportunity in Years 6 to 9 to study French and records show that pupils cover a good range of topics aimed at increasing pupils' awareness of another European country and the use of a different language. Pupils' experiences benefit from an annual exchange trip to

France, which, from discussions with pupils, is popular and contributes well to their cultural development. Higher ability secondary pupils take and succeed in entry level GCSE examinations in French

78. In the one lesson observed a few pupils show they know the French for the names of various items of food. One pupil is able to put together a simple sentence, requesting an item of food. Others are at the stage of beginning to recognise there are differences in the vocabulary. The planning for the lesson, however, did not show how the obvious different ability levels within the group would be offered appropriate work to ensure they all achieved equally well.

MATHEMATICS

Inspectors saw lessons taught to pupils in all Year groups and were able to look at pupils' work.

Provision for mathematics is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching for pupils in the first four classes and for higher attaining secondary pupils is good overall, and often very good
- The use of interactive white boards has added to the quality of resources available but overall ICT is not used effectively for the teaching of mathematics
- Teaching is less effective in Years 6 to 9 of the school
- Higher ability secondary pupils take and succeed well in public examinations
- The subject leader has initiated sound improvements since the previous inspection but has not had sufficient impact on ensuring consistently good teaching of mathematics throughout the school

Commentary

79. The best teaching of mathematics in the school is characterised by teachers:

- Planning their lessons very carefully thus enabling pupils to achieve well
- Setting learning objectives for individuals and for small groups of pupils
- Matching activities to meet these objectives
- Making full and effective use of the other adults available for support in the classroom
- Checking with pupils what they have learnt at the end of the lesson

This good quality teaching is effective because it meets the wide range of ability within each group and so ensures that each individual pupil makes good progress.

80. Teaching is not as effective in Years 6 to 9. Although, for these pupils, mathematical activities are planned and teachers strive to ensure that the environment is pleasant and that relationships are positive, they do not take into account sufficiently the wide range of different ability in their groups. For example, they do not challenge rigorously the higher ability pupils to achieve at a suitable rate. This approach slows down the learning of pupils of all ability. There is a greater need for teachers to focus on 'small steps' of learning for each individual pupil and tailor the activities to meet these needs.
81. The subject leader makes good use of the facility to project a computer screen on to a whiteboard. This together with the very appropriate programmes used, including those that have short video clips, support the teaching well. Pupils show a lot of interest and respond well to the stimulation this provides. Other forms of ICT, though, are not consistently used in mathematics lessons. Older pupils have the opportunity to take examinations and one pupil last year achieved a GCSE pass.

82. Teachers of these groups seek to ensure that pupils are actively involved in learning and use their good subject knowledge to make the lessons interesting. In an excellent lesson seen during the inspection for Years 10 and 11, the teaching was consistently stimulating and challenging and as a result pupils learnt at a very brisk rate.
83. The subject leader for mathematics has sought to improve the provision since the last inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted and used appropriately throughout the school and an audit of resources undertaken. Teachers have also been given the chance to visit and observe the teaching of leading mathematics teachers in other schools. However, the subject leader has not yet ensured that there is a high quality of teaching throughout the school and that all pupils are making similar rates of progress. As a consequence leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory despite the overall standards of achievement and teaching being good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

84. Mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Pupils' mathematical skills are practised in a few other subject areas. For example, during the inspection, very good consideration was given to numeracy in a religious education lesson for a group of pupils in Years 3 to 6. The lesson was about the positive qualities of sharing. As part of trying to understand this, pupils played a short game that involved taking turns in counting in groups up to five. This re-enforced their numeracy skills well and linked them to a practical situation. There is, though, no planned approach to ensure that this is the case in all subjects and opportunities are missed to integrate mathematical skills into the teaching of other subjects.

SCIENCE

Inspectors saw science lessons that spanned all Year groups, and the pupils' work was scrutinised.

The provision for science is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader provides a very good role model for other staff through his own very good teaching
- Teachers have high expectations that pupils will achieve well and improve on their previous best
- There are good links between science and other subjects of the curriculum that help pupils understand the relevance of scientific knowledge in different situations
- The oldest pupils in the school make very good progress in developing their thinking skills because of the very good teaching they receive
- The use of ICT in science is underdeveloped and there are missed opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in the subject
- Staff use simple, but effective resources to give good, practical experiences of science that make lessons fun

Commentary

85. Pupils' achievements in science are very good. By Year 6, pupils are beginning to develop very good investigative strategies. They grasp the basic principles of pulling and pushing motions, can name parts of the body, and observe and measure the growth of seeds, which they have planted themselves. These skills are built upon and developed in the secondary department so that, by Year 11, pupils are showing very good knowledge and understanding in their exploration of basic scientific principles and are able to predict the outcomes of experiments. For example, they show very good knowledge of some of the properties of carbon dioxide. Higher attaining pupils remember that it can be produced by mixing baking powder with vinegar. They correctly predict that the outcome of their experiment will provide sufficient gas to blow up a balloon. All

pupils remember the symbols for a variety of chemicals and can break them down into their component parts. This very good achievement is substantiated by the consistently good results they achieve at the end of Year 11, when all those entered for the GCSE Foundation Course achieved Levels 1 and 2.

86. Overall teaching and learning are very good. All lessons seen were either good, very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers plan lessons in detail and prepare materials and worksheets perceptively to match the capabilities and needs of the pupils. This motivates the pupils to attempt progressively challenging demands. Expectations of pupils' achievement are very high and that, combined with challenge and the use of simple, but highly appropriate resources, results in pupils being stimulated to learn and wanting to make progress. Above all, teachers make the lessons fun. For example, to demonstrate the motions of pushing and pulling, staff take Year 4 pupils to the ice rink where they can demonstrate it for themselves. Pupils visit the local garden centre to purchase seeds, plant them and monitor their growth. Pupils are also encouraged to think for themselves. In one Year 9 lesson there was a magical moment when a lower attaining pupil used his thinking skills to work out the chemical symbol for carbon monoxide, using his prior knowledge of the symbol for carbon dioxide. The teacher allowed him time to think it through and the whole class was focused with him, celebrating his success when he provided the answer unaided. Relationships are very good in the classroom and play a key role in maintaining the quality of learning. All pupils respond very well and are very keen to participate and show what they know, understand and can do, by answering questions, making suggestions and predicting what will happen next.
87. There is good consolidation of scientific knowledge through links with other subjects. In preparation for an assembly based on a Hindu story, Year 4 pupils made shadow puppets that linked to their science topic on light. They could relate the fact that the shadows became smaller and sharper as they were moved closer to the screen.
88. Subject leadership is very good. The subject coordinator has a clear vision of how the department should develop and what is needed to make it even more effective. There is now good monitoring of teaching and learning throughout the school. As a result plans are in place to ensure that pupils with additional special educational needs in the lower end of the school will be provided with a practical and relevant science curriculum. Assessment is used effectively, both to monitor individual pupil's progress and to ensure the science curriculum is developed appropriately. The co-ordinator has developed good contacts with the science department of the local secondary school for access to equipment and advice. However, although ICT is used effectively with secondary aged pupils, increased use in the rest of the school would support pupils' achievements in science even further. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Inspectors saw lessons for pupils in Years 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Pupils were observed using computers in other lessons and ICT files were scrutinised showing evidence of previous ICT work.

Provision for ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership in ICT is unsatisfactory and pupils' ICT skills are not developed or tracked systematically
- Pupils' achievements in ICT are hindered by unsatisfactory provision
- The overview of the use of ICT across other subjects is unsatisfactory and there are missed opportunities for pupils to use their skills more widely
- The use of ICT to support pupils' communication skills is underdeveloped
- Teaching assistants' ICT skills are uneven and variable; further training is a priority
- The ICT suite is poorly located and too far away from the main teaching areas to be efficient

- The subject leader for ICT encourages pupils to take an active interest in ICT; some individual lessons are taught well and enable pupils to achieve well on specific tasks

Commentary

89. ICT subject leadership is unsatisfactory as there is no clear direction for bringing about the required improvements. Currently, the pupils' ICT skills are not developed systematically and the use of ICT across other subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped. Pupils' ICT achievements are not being developed fully and their previously acquired skills not built upon systematically.
90. There is an overall plan of what will be taught in the subject but this is too vague and fails to show how the pupils' achievements will be monitored. It is not clear what action is being taken to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to develop skills in all the different aspects of ICT, such as control technology. This level of planning is particularly important given the wide age groups in classes and the differing ability levels.
91. The subject leader is adept at fitting clicker switches but there is no planned approach to how all pupils can access ICT to improve their means of communication. In lessons observed during the inspection there were occasions when pupils with poor hand skills would have been able to contribute more fully if they had access to more appropriate forms of technology.
92. A small number of teaching assistants have developed good skills in using computers and other forms of technology. There are others, though, who lack the confidence and skills to support pupils effectively when they are using computers. They rely too much on the teacher's expertise and this slows down the pupils' rate of learning.
93. A room within the residential unit has been set up as the ICT teaching suite. Although there is a good range of resources, the room is cramped and has insufficient space for whole class groups to have lessons together. This has an impact on the timetable as a few teaching groups have to have ICT lessons once a fortnight rather than weekly. It is also a difficult room for pupils to get to and this reduces the teaching time available.
94. The teacher responsible for ICT plays a key role in the life of the school. There is effort and enthusiasm in individual lessons, and this approach leads to pupils achieving well in some instances, though this is not consistent.

ICT across the curriculum

95. The use of ICT across other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are some examples where ICT is used in the teaching of other subject areas. In science, internet access is always available, there are good graphic displays in art and in maths the interactive whiteboard is used frequently. Improvements to assessment arrangements are also being developed through the use of a computer programme. However, there is no consistent use of ICT in many other subjects. This means there is no planned way in which pupils' ICT skills are practised and used to further their learning.

HUMANITIES

96. Religious education, history and geography were sampled due to timetable constraints. One lesson was observed in geography covering Years R, 1, 2 and 4 and two lessons in history covering Years 6, 7, 8 and 9. In RE, only one lesson was seen covering Years 6, 7, 8 and 9. No judgement is made on the overall provision for RE, history or geography.
97. The curriculum for history and geography ensures that, as they move up through the school, pupils are provided with the opportunity to build up their knowledge of the world around them. Pupils learn about the passage of time through daily routines and about events in the recent

and distant past. For example, in geography, pupils in Year R,1,2 and 4 are studying homes. During an earlier lesson, the class had been out to visit each pupil's home in the immediate environment. Photographs and a video camera were used to record the visit. Back in the classroom, pupils work on recognising their own and each other's houses. As the video and photographs are shared with the pupils, one pupil is able to recognise a majority of the class's houses as they re-visit the journey around the houses. In history, pupils in Year 6 to 7 learn about life for a Roman soldier in Britain and make comparisons between his life and their own. In Years 8 to 10 pupils learn about transport during the Victorian age and begin to understand how canals were the major transport system.

Religious education

No overall judgement is made on the provision for RE as insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection. The following are strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' work during the inspection indicate good achievement over time
- Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn how to share and work together
- There are few opportunities for moments of quiet reflection in lessons
- There is good use of visits to support the teaching of RE
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is yet to be established systematically

Commentary

98. Achievement is good overall. Pupils in Year 2 begin to have a good awareness of basic religious themes, especially those of generosity, sharing and concern for others. Higher attaining pupils give examples of miracles, including turning water into wine, and the story of Jesus walking on the water. They identify the feeding of the five thousand as a miracle story, and describe how the food was shared out with those who were hungry. They consolidate their learning by showing their awareness that sharing makes others happy. This makes an excellent contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Year 9 pupils have good knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Hindu religion; they also describe well the practice of meditation and explain its benefits, particularly its calming effects.
99. No overall judgement could be made on teaching and learning because too few lessons were seen. Teachers used a range of good resources and techniques to support pupils' learning about a variety of religions. Very good use is made of visits to local churches and religious centres. These are recorded on video and used as effective teaching aids in the classroom. Good use is also made of discussion to reinforce social and moral values.
100. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has schemes of work in place and is currently expanding assessment information for pupils through the further development of portfolios of their work. Although there are plans for her to monitor teaching and learning across the school this is not yet in place. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection because, and there is a designated subject leader in post with a clear vision for its development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Inspectors observed one lesson in Years 5 and 6 in design and technology, one lesson in music for pupils in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 and one lesson in Years 6 and 7. A limited amount of the pupils' work was scrutinised.

101. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for design and technology. A scrutiny of the planning documents shows that pupils will experience a range of interesting activities over a two year rolling programme. These activities

will include topics such as investigating torches, food for other countries and making Easter eggs and packaging. Planning for the topics for Year 1 and 2 pupils shows very clearly how the work will link to the aspects expected to be covered within the expected science curriculum. However, the planning for the lessons with older pupils fails to show how pupils will experience and learn about a sufficiently wide range of aspects as they move through the school.

102. In the lesson seen during the inspection for Years 5 and 6 pupils were joining the teacher in evaluating their work from a five week module based on designing and decorating three chairs. In the lesson a few pupils were able to articulate why they chose particular materials and what the finished chairs now looked like. Later in the lesson pupils attempting to show what they would do when faced with a similar challenge in the future. Whilst the lesson gave pupils very appropriate opportunities to evaluate their work, it didn't maintain pupils' interests, allow for their different ability levels or provide them with a sufficient range of means of expressing themselves.

Creative Arts

The provision for creative arts is **very good**

Inspectors observed many pupils from Years 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 as they performed at a public event in Plymouth with many other pupils from across the area. Work was also scrutinised.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are provided with a very good range of opportunities in the creative arts, both within and outside school
- The standards of displays around the school shows that pupils are achieving well in art
- There are very good opportunities for extending communication and language skills through drama and good links with other subjects in the curriculum
- Creative arts provide a very good vehicle for raising self esteem and forming good relationships inside and outside the school
- There is still a tendency for a few staff to give too much help and direction rather than letting pupils experience activities for themselves.

Commentary

The pupils have a wide range of opportunities for all aspects of creative arts, which are incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum. Staff take every opportunity to include drama and role play in lessons. Very good examples were seen in English where Year 9 pupils dressed up and acted out selected parts of 'Romeo and Juliet' with a great deal of enjoyment and fun. Pupils in Year 5 narrated a shadow puppet show based on a Hindu story, making the puppets and composing the music. As well as supporting their speaking and listening skills, it also increased their knowledge and understanding of how shadows change in response to a beam of light. These activities also encouraged them to learn to work collaboratively.

Although there were insufficient lessons seen to make an overall judgement on teaching and learning, pupils are achieving very well in art when the evidence from displays and scrutiny of their work is considered. They are offered a wide variety of techniques and materials to work with. Currently they are preparing for an Indian Arts Week, designing Batique coverings for a puppet theatre and showing good levels of skill and understanding in that technique. On a few occasions some staff are too ready to intervene and take over tasks that require more fine control of brushes or pencils; this leaves the pupils watching passively. Modified resources, provided according to the individual needs of pupils, would ensure that they could participate with more independence. Staff ensure that all pupils are offered the opportunity for enrichment activities, and there is good attendance at the after school Arts Club. During the week of the inspection many pupils took part in a

local Arts Festival, working on projects with pupils from mainstream schools and performing in front of an audience. The school has received the 2003 'Artsmark' award.

The co-ordinator for art leads the subject very well and has produced a very comprehensive portfolio of exemplars of standards of work that pupils can achieve. This is a significant aid to assessment of their work and a model of good practice which provides very good information for the further development of the curriculum. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection

MUSIC

As a result of timetable constraints, only one music lesson was observed in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 and therefore no overall judgement is made on the provision.

103. Music plays a very important part in the life of the school. It is used to increase pupils' communication skills and learning. In a sensory drama lesson for pupils with additional special needs, music is the cue for pupils to recognise the beginning and end of the lesson. Taped music and musical instruments, coupled with a colourful and wide range of sensory experiences, are used to identify the changes in the water cycle. A crisp start to the lesson fully engages pupils, who are animated and show their enjoyment and excitement by smiling, vocalising and clapping. At lunchtimes, pupils have the opportunity to learn the keyboard and recorders. They are taught to read the music and they make good progress. Two pupils in Year 7 and 8 at keyboard club are developing a three chord sequence to play in assembly. They set up the keyboard, play the introduction, demonstrate the three chords and play these in a short tune. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy the session. Concerts, workshops and performances also contribute to the pupils' overall musical experiences and personal development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

Inspectors saw three lessons covering Years 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are systematic opportunities planned for pupils to develop their personal and social skills
- Pupils develop a growing understanding of the meaning of good citizenship as they move through the school

Commentary

104. There is an appropriate and well balanced programme for developing pupils' PSHE and citizenship skills. In addition, time spent socially in between lessons is used effectively to promote further the pupils' personal skills.

105. Although there was limited first hand evidence of citizenship being taught, discussions with pupils provided useful additional evidence. Pupils have a growing sense of responsibility for themselves and others, and show considerable confidence and maturity in their outlook on life. Many are realistic about the challenges they face and understand they have a part to play in helping others to understand their difficulties. They make useful links and realise that people need one another to live and thrive, and recognise the importance of making a contribution to one another's daily lives.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Inspectors saw two lessons in PE covering the Foundation Stage and Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

106. Insufficient lessons were seen to make an overall judgement about the standards of physical education achieved by pupils. But planning and curriculum provision are very good. One of the main strengths of the department is in the very good range of equipment provided, which has been well selected to match the wide range of needs of the pupils. The hydrotherapy pool and the new trampoline extend opportunities for physical activities in school. There are also very good opportunities for sporting activities, within and outside the school, which provide enjoyment as well as challenge. As a result of very good teamwork with the physiotherapists, physical education and physiotherapy are very well integrated. Planning for each pupil's physical development is of a very high quality.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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	1

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).

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