

INSPECTION REPORT

WREN SPINNEY COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL

Kettering

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122158

Headteacher: Mrs Debbie Withers

Lead inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 9th – 11th February 2004

Inspection number: 259036

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:	11 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	53
School address:	Westover Road Off Westhill Drive Kettering Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN15 7LB
Telephone number:	01536 481939
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Cain
Date of previous inspection:	24 th November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wren Spinney is a school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Of the 53 who currently attend the school, 18 are post-16 students. They are taught in several different classes, alongside most of the Year 11 pupils. When they join the school, the attainment of the great majority of pupils is very well below average. All but one has a statement of educational needs. Over half of the pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and most of the others have severe learning difficulties. Small numbers have autistic spectrum disorders, moderate learning difficulties or physical disabilities. However, many of the pupils have additional needs, including visual impairment, autistic spectrum disorders or exceptionally challenging behaviour. Two of the latter pupils have individual teaching and accommodation and two others share a class. There is a separate class for four pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders. Only four pupils are not white and three are in public care. In one pupil's home, Urdu is spoken in addition to English. All pupils live in Northamptonshire. Although their socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are about average. The school caters for pupils with more complex and diverse needs than at the time of the previous inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	Art and design, design and technology, English as an additional language
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29452	Chris Emerson	Team inspector	English, religious education, music, special educational needs
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, history
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, personal, social and health education and citizenship, modern foreign language, physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

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

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's leadership provides a very clear sense of direction and ensures that all pupils are included in all aspects of school life.
- The school provides very many opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills.
- The special needs of the small number of pupils with exceptionally challenging behaviour are met very well.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have enough opportunities to use modern technology to help them to communicate.
- Because pupils are kept safe, happy and comfortable, they are able to benefit from lessons and activities.
- The skills of teaching assistants are valued and used effectively to support pupils and teachers.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection. There have been many developments, but the quality of teaching and the way in which pupils' achievements are assessed have improved especially well. Pupils now achieve better in several subjects, including English and mathematics. The curriculum has improved well, as have pupils' attitudes and personal development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' and students' achievements are **good**. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well, as do those in Years 10 and 11. The post-16 students also achieve well. Throughout the school, achievement is good in English, mathematics and science, although progress in science slows down in Year 11, because of the way in which the curriculum is organised this year. Pupils achieve very well in personal, social, health and citizenship education. In information and communication technology and religious education, achievement is satisfactory, in line with the quality of teaching in these subjects. Girls and boys with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, visual impairment or challenging behaviour all achieve well, as do the very small numbers with other special educational needs or from minority ethnic groups. Post-16 students are successful in examination courses, such as Transition Challenge.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are also very good. Pupils do their best to be as independent as possible and are confident and sociable. Attendance is very good. Pupils are seldom away unless they are ill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science and satisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to meet pupils' needs and encourage them to try hard. There are good systems to identify how well pupils are achieving and what they need to learn next. Signs, symbols, pictures and objects are used very well to help pupils to communicate, but not enough use is made of resources such as switches and other technological aids. Incidents of challenging behaviour are managed skilfully, so the learning of other pupils is not disrupted. Occasionally, the work expected of pupils is too difficult and staff then complete too much for them.

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. However, the school appreciates that pupils in Year 11 are not currently taught enough about all the National Curriculum subjects, especially science. Very many interesting activities are organised, which encourage pupils to learn and contribute very well to their personal development. Very good links with the community support this work very effectively. The school's links with parents are also very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is well led. The headteacher and senior staff ensure that the school continues to develop and improve. Management is very good. There are well thought out systems to check on the school's performance, identify where improvements are needed and plan to bring about changes. Governance is good. Governors provide valuable support and are well informed. Statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are very positive. They feel especially strongly that their children like school and are taught well. They consider that the school keeps them well informed about how their children are getting on, and that all pupils are treated fairly.

Pupils are also very positive about their school. They particularly enjoy physical education and appreciate the friends they make.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Provide more consistent opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to use modern technology to help them to communicate.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics and very well in personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- In science, achievement is good overall, but only satisfactory in Year 11.
- Post-16 students are successful in examination courses.
- Pupils frequently meet their individual targets.
- Pupils achieve equally well, regardless of their special educational needs.

Commentary

1. The school has worked very hard to make sure that pupils' achievements in English and mathematics are now better than at the time of the previous inspection. For example, the guidance of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy has been successfully modified, so pupils benefit from a wider variety of teaching styles. Additionally, improvements in the collection of information about pupils' learning have resulted in teachers matching more closely the content of lessons to what each child needs to learn next. Similarly, developments in the curriculum have had a significant impact on pupils' achievement in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Timetabled lessons are supplemented by a very good range of additional activities and opportunities – for example, for pupils to learn and practise social skills.
2. During Years 10 and 11, teaching in science is limited by the lack of facilities and because pupils this year are either taught with younger pupils or post-16 students. In Year 11, this often limits the range of what pupils learn about, because the examination courses followed at post-16 are narrower than National Curriculum science. As a consequence, in science, most Year 11 pupils do not make the same good progress as others. Throughout the school, achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education. The school has identified several necessary improvements in information and communication technology – for instance, training for staff – to make sure that more lessons are taught well. Not enough time is allocated to religious education for achievement to be more than satisfactory.
3. Students in Years 12 to 14 achieve well in Transition Challenge and Towards Independence courses. Last year, seven students gained from one to seven modules of Transition Challenge. One completed two of her five modules with no help at all – a very good achievement.
4. The school sets challenging targets for individual pupils to achieve and then calculates the overall success rates. During 2002 to 2003, a whole school target of 90 per cent success was established and, in the event, 70 per cent of individual targets were achieved fully and 21 per cent partially. This is a good indication that pupils achieve well. The school responded very decisively and effectively in the case of the pupil representing the nine per cent of targets not met. As a result, this pupil is now achieving well.
5. When pupils' particular difficulties are taken into account, their achievement and their success in meeting their personal targets are similar. This is because the school takes great care to match the curriculum and teaching methods to their individual needs. For example, although throughout the school there are pupils with challenging behaviour, those whose behaviour is exceptionally challenging are provided with a specialised environment and modified curriculum, together with staff who are highly skilled at working with such pupils. In the specialist class for pupils with

significant autistic spectrum disorders, alternative communication systems, such as cards with symbols, are used to help them to communicate and learn well. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are offered a curriculum that enables them to use all their senses to explore the world around them, making good progress overall in learning to make choices and communicate. However, these pupils do not have enough opportunities to use electronic devices such as switches and this prevents them making faster progress. The school environment has been specially modified to make it easier for pupils with visual impairment to move around independently and trained staff provide effective support so they achieve well. Boys and girls, pupils in public care and the very small number from minority ethnic groups achieve equally well, because the school insists that all pupils are given opportunities that do not disadvantage them. Parents are emphatic in their belief that the school treats all pupils fairly.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respect each other and know how to behave in a variety of social situations.
- The transport bringing pupils from respite care is frequently late and results in these pupils not being in class for the start of lessons.
- Pupils try very hard to do well. They pay close attention to their teachers.
- Pupils like having responsibilities and being as independent as they can.
- Very good relationships with staff support pupils' gains in their personal development.

Commentary

- Nearly all pupils behave very well in and out of school and are very helpful and friendly to each other. There were no exclusions in the previous school year. When out on a trip to a local supermarket, Year 9 pupils waited very patiently at the check out to pay, despite there being a long queue. At a small party at the end of the school day, for an eighteen year-old in their class, a group of Years 11 to 13 pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties celebrated with their friend. Although all were interested in the large bag of presents that the birthday girl had received, they made no attempt to interfere with them. Staff consistently reinforce the difference between right and wrong behaviour. The small number of pupils who have exceptionally challenging behaviour make very good progress in learning to manage their own behaviour. This is because they have very good individual support and clear and detailed behaviour plans which are followed consistently. Consequently, the number of serious instances of challenging behaviour has declined significantly. The staff who work with these pupils are subjected to physical attacks, but these are managed very well.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	0
National data	11.2	National data	0.7

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

- Attendance is very good for a school of this type. This is especially noteworthy because many of the pupils have to take time off school for medical reasons. A few parents are concerned that their children do not always arrive at school on time. The school has invested a lot of effort into working with the transport providers to make sure they are punctual. Overall, most school transport does arrive at school for the start of the school day, but the vehicles bringing pupils in

from respite care frequently have to go to a number of schools in the morning, and this often makes them late.

8. Pupils enjoy playing a full part in lessons, and this encourages them to try very hard – for example, when pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are challenged to reach out for objects or experience new tastes, sounds, or activities. In learning about the diversity of cultures in society, all pupils have tasted and cooked food from India, listened to Indian music and dressed in Indian clothes. They also try very hard to achieve their own personal best. A Year 8 pupil with exceptionally challenging behaviour, preparing a breakfast for herself and staff, thought carefully about the correct way to set the table, going back to change the setting after considering exactly how the fork and knife would be used. Pupils' pleasure in new experiences is especially evident in the boost to their self-esteem from residential visits – for example, to Euro Disney or Caister in Norfolk. Pupils of all abilities make it very clear that they enjoy each other's company and the change of surroundings when they go away together. Parents feel very strongly that their children enjoy being at school and pupils report that they especially value the friends they make. There was genuine joy when a Year 7 pupil had her card selected as the next participant in the 'Hello' song at the start of the school day. She could not wait to clap her hand to her chest and sing 'Me, me, me' as she revelled in the sharing of the day's greeting.
9. The staff encourage pupils to be as independent as possible and to take on whatever responsibilities they can. Occasionally, they wear a badge identifying to others that they are on a 'mission' and are to be allowed to make their way freely about the school. When they arrive in the mornings, the welcome at the school door is very warm, but staff have very relevant guidance as to how each pupil is to reach their classroom. For example, they may be advised, 'Independent, but watch' or 'Shadow closely, as likely to run off'. Whenever they can, pupils take on a range of jobs, such as returning registers, caring for the class rabbit or tidying up. They are encouraged to respect themselves and pupils often demonstrate that they understand that others have different needs and may need special care and attention.
10. All pupils have confidence in the people in the school who are there to help them, which means that they are prepared to take on challenges. Staff are very quick to notice when pupils are beginning to need less help and are making the move towards being more independent. For example, at the end of the day, one of the younger pupils, with profound and multiple learning difficulties and visual impairment, was successfully managing to walk, on his own, along the corridor towards the entrance and his transport home. As he neared the front door, a teaching assistant who worked closely with him appeared and was clearly thrilled that the boy had done so well. The pupil wanted to take his hand, but he was firmly but very kindly left in no doubt that he did not need this physical support any more.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is very effective.
- When planning lessons, teachers make very good use of their detailed knowledge of pupils and their needs.
- Signing, symbols, pictures and objects are used regularly to help pupils communicate, but technological aids are not.
- Pupils who have behaviour that challenges are managed very well.

- Good procedures are in place to record and check on the progress which pupils make.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13 (30%)	24 (56%)	6 (14%)	0	0	0

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

11. Time is allowed after school for the staff who work with each class to meet together and review the day. They discuss how this evaluation will affect the lessons planned for the next day, and this means that all concerned are aware of what is to happen and why, and their own role in the proceedings. These reviews also help staff to build up their knowledge of each pupil's needs and achievements and which approaches work best for them. Crucially, they are alerted to what are to be the next small steps in pupils' learning, so the members of the team are all able to provide the right amount of support or challenge, to help them to be successful. For instance, a very good lesson in the food technology room, contributing to the Towards Independence course, involved two Year 13 students working with two teaching assistants, to complete a meal to share with their guests. Because the staff were so well informed, they were able to gauge very accurately how much physical or verbal prompting was needed by each student. This lesson had been planned and organised by the teaching assistants, with the teacher working with the rest of the class. The school regularly uses this method to make full use of the expertise of support staff. It provides good opportunities to extend or modify the curriculum according to pupils' needs. At other times, teaching assistants work in class alongside teachers, supporting individuals or leading small groups of pupils. Very occasionally, support staff are underused or are not entirely effective – for instance, being too passive and not fully involved in encouraging pupils to learn.
12. As a rule, teachers plan their lessons very carefully, making full use of their knowledge of pupils in order to provide resources and activities that meet their particular special educational needs. This is especially evident during lessons in English and mathematics, where pupils' individual targets are very evident – for example, in the way they are grouped together and the resources provided. These same targets are employed to enhance pupils' learning during lessons in other subjects or day-to-day activities. For instance, in the daily personal, social and health education lesson for a class of pupils in Years 9 and 10 with profound and multiple learning difficulties, staff demonstrate their detailed knowledge of each pupil's achievement in communication and literacy. Two were shown their own photograph and encouraged to make the connection between this and themselves, but the other, highest attaining pupil was presented with two and correctly identified her own picture. Throughout the school, teachers make the most of the time available for learning – for example, by planning a variety of activities, so lessons are interesting and pupils remain motivated. In a very small proportion of lessons, particular activities are allowed to go on for too long, resulting in pupils becoming bored and reluctant to make the necessary efforts. Because teachers have high expectations for pupils to achieve, it is very rare that they are given work that is too easy for them. However, occasionally, the tasks are too demanding. In these instances, staff have to give pupils more help than would be necessary if the work were matched more accurately to their needs. Pupils do not learn as well when staff enable them to go through the motions of an activity, without them appreciating what they are doing.
13. Very consistent use is made of a variety of methods of communication and staff match these very well to the needs of individual pupils. For example, they use signing or a picture exchange system, when these are required. Especially good use is made of objects to signal particular lessons – such as bells for music – helping to prepare pupils for learning or make the transition from one room to another. During 'hello' sessions and English lessons, large switches operating

recorded messages are employed to help non-verbal pupils – especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties – to communicate. However, these are not used very frequently or imaginatively during lessons in all subjects and the school has identified this as an area for development. In information and communication technology and religious education, teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, with pupils' achievement being correspondingly satisfactory.

14. A small number of the pupils have exceptionally challenging behaviour, and others present varying degrees of behaviour that is potentially disruptive or difficult to handle. Staff throughout the school are particularly skilled at dealing with any incidents, so all pupils are safe and able to continue learning. In many instances, they pre-empt problems by handling pupils sensitively and meeting their needs in such a way that they are thoroughly involved in enjoyable activities, with no desire to show disapproval or demand attention. Although all pupils are given equivalent opportunities to learn, staff modify lessons to take account of their behavioural needs as well as their learning difficulties. For instance, when visiting a supermarket, one pupil was not required to join the others in the café, because he would have found this experience too demanding. However, the plan for the lesson accommodated this, and he had a snack on the bus, instead.
15. Assessment procedures have developed very well since the previous inspection. However, because some aspects of assessment have only been introduced very recently, detailed information is not yet available to show how well pupils are doing in all subjects. The assistant headteacher has established a very clear framework so that teachers record the progress which pupils make in lessons to ensure that their individual programmes are well matched to their learning levels. Detailed individual pupil profile booklets are currently being introduced which will show how well pupils are progressing in all subjects. These systems complement the assessments which are carried out to measure progress in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 9 and 11. The school has begun to make collections of assessed work to ensure that teachers are consistent in the decisions which they make about how well pupils are doing. Data which the school obtains from assessment is very effectively used. For example, the school has begun to compare the progress of groups of pupils with particular special educational needs. Evidence gained from assessment is also very carefully used to group pupils for particular activities, such as the 'cohort' days, where pupils work with others whose attainment is similar.

The curriculum

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school arranges very many activities in school and in the local and wider community to make learning interesting and fun.
- Lots of opportunities are planned, in lessons and at other times of the day, to develop pupils' personal and social skills.
- The specialist provision for the small number of pupils who have exceptionally challenging behaviour is very good.
- The curriculum for pupils in Year 11 is not as good as that for pupils in Years 7 to 10 and for students post-16.
- The accommodation is good overall, but science facilities remain unsatisfactory.

Commentary

16. Learning is enriched by many visits to theatres, Shakespeare performances, pantomimes, places of worship, other towns, shops, cinemas, restaurants, and residential holidays. Pupils take part in sports days and maypole dancing. At a leisure village they trampolined, played netball, football, and hockey, and go roller skating and bowling. Pupils learn from many visitors to school – for example, a music therapist, woodwind group, the Salvation Army band, artists and wood

carvers. All pupils take part in the annual production and in drama workshops. Pupils from other schools visit to learn alongside pupils from Wren Spinney. All these events support pupils' learning very effectively.

17. Exciting activities such as these also contribute extensively to pupils' very good achievement in personal and social development. Additionally, daily routines – such as registration, snacks and lunchtime and reviews at the end of the day – are used consistently to encourage pupils to interact with others, take responsibility for themselves and be as independent as possible. Opportunities for personal development are also provided through the half-termly 'cohort' days. Each of these has a theme relating to the curriculum – the science of water, during the inspection. Because pupils throughout the school are grouped according to their levels of attainment, they work alongside others of different ages, with whom they don't work as a rule, providing really effective social development opportunities.
18. The arrangements for pupils who have additional special needs are good. The school has been very successful in developing individual programmes for pupils who have exceptionally challenging behaviour. Accommodation has been adapted to provide a safe environment for these pupils and carefully planned behavioural strategies are consistently followed. Pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder follow a suitable curriculum in a specially adapted classroom with a good emphasis on the use of visual strategies. The school has responded to specialist advice to develop the curriculum for pupils with visual impairment. For example, colour schemes have been chosen to help the pupils to move confidently around the school. Pupils who have difficulty communicating and expressing themselves benefit from weekly sessions with a music therapist. They enjoy creating sounds and making choices, becoming more tolerant of new experiences and able to sustain their interest for longer periods.
19. The timetable for pupils in Years 7 to 10 covers the breadth of National Curriculum subjects, except a modern foreign language, where all pupils have been disapplied. Their curriculum is relevant and meets their needs well. Students post-16 also follow an effective curriculum, planned round the Transition Challenge and Towards Independence examination courses. Students learn literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. They also learn independent living skills, how to express choices, build their confidence and self-esteem, develop personal and social skills, and learn to take the lead in activities. Because of the ages and special educational needs of the pupils currently attending the school, almost all the Year 11 pupils have been placed in classes with post-16 students. These Year 11 pupils follow the post-16 programme which has much that is of value for them, but they are not taught enough about all the National Curriculum subjects, for example, science. As a result, their achievement in science is satisfactory, rather than good. The school is fully aware of this and has plans to remedy the situation.
20. There are still no specialist science facilities but there are proposals to use an adapted laboratory in a local mainstream secondary school. Teachers are restricted in the range of investigations that they can plan in science. There is no shortage of learning resources for particular subjects, but not enough technological equipment to help pupils to communicate. Funds have been allocated to rectify this.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are looked after very well and their medical needs are supported by the full time nursing cover in school.
- The school ensures that its child protection procedures are as effective as possible.

- All staff are trained in positive handling techniques to bring challenging situations under control.
- Pupils' views are sought on a regular basis in lessons, activities and, where possible, annual reviews.
- New pupils are helped to settle in quickly.

Commentary

21. Methods of making sure pupils are well cared for are very good – for example, the procedures for the necessary moving and handling of pupils are very well organised. All pupils requiring medication or treatment in school have a suitable individual care plan. Staff provide very good care and help for pupils at lunchtime, and individual feeding programmes are well written and available for them to consult. Parents especially appreciate the nurses' presence, as they can liaise with them on a daily basis over their children's medication, care, specialist feeding arrangements and treatment.
22. All members of staff have completed general training in child protection procedures. A few of them have completed more specific training in order to be able to support the headteacher in her role as child protection co-ordinator. The school's procedures are supported by the school nurses who are fully trained in carrying out the systems for child protection established by their own service.
23. The very clear health and safety procedures extend to individual risk assessments for pupils who require specific positive handling and physical restraint. All staff are trained in suitable methods, incorporating a range of risk reduction strategies which include non-verbal, verbal, and where absolutely necessary, physical intervention. These enable staff to safely step in when a pupil may be a danger to themselves or others, and allows pupils with exceptionally challenging behaviour to regularly join in activities with other pupils. For example, one such Year 11 pupil participated in a science activity. With the support of his teachers and teaching assistants, he safely and successfully worked alongside others in order to investigate the effectiveness of using clear or soapy water when washing the school buses. Parents appreciate the way in which all pupils are given the support they need in order for them to have the chance to take part in every type of activity. All incidents where restraint is used are recorded carefully.
24. The school works hard to give pupils a voice, and a choice, in their lives. Commercially produced programmes are used very effectively in order to help pupils make decisions and communicate these. For example, pupils in each class gather together at the end of the day, to give their opinions about what they have enjoyed most. Such experiences support pupils when they need to contribute to a decision – such as what they want to do when they leave the school – providing them with the skills to help them do this. This goal is supported satisfactorily by the Connexions service. The school is currently investigating ways of giving pupils opportunities to be democratically represented and have their views communicated formally – for instance, through a school council.
25. Induction procedures are very well organised. One parent stated that she was very impressed with how quickly the school sorted out transport issues for her child and accurately established his precise needs and identified opportunities for him to be independent. A new Year 11 pupil who has previously had very few opportunities to attend a school, has quickly settled into the school routines and is making rapid progress in learning to play and co-operate. Staff use their detailed knowledge of pupils and their families in order to support them very effectively as they move up through the school. For example, individual pupils are often given opportunities in different class groups, because they are showing particular aptitude or would benefit socially from working in another environment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive a good range of very useful information about how their children are getting on.
- They have an effective dialogue with the school and a number regularly volunteer their help.
- Pupils have access to a very wide range of opportunities based in the local community.
- Links with colleges are limited.

Commentary

26. Good use is made of pupils' home/school books in order to let parents know what their children have achieved in the day and what they have enjoyed most. Occasionally, these are supplemented by digital photographs, so that parents can see exactly what their child has been doing. Annual reports on pupils' progress are written, in addition to the annual review reports. These both give a very accurate overview of each pupil's progress towards their individual targets. Parental attendance at annual review meetings is very good and this gives the school a very effective opportunity to discuss any significant changes in pupils' needs and establish their targets for the coming year. Parents welcome the half-termly newsletters they receive and enjoy the sections on what has happened in each class. They consider themselves very well informed about how their children are getting on.
27. Parents are made very welcome and a number see the staff regularly as they bring their children to school each day. Others help in the school – for example, during hydrotherapy sessions or when they accompany residential trips. Recently, a parent has helped the school with an audit of its resources for information and communication technology. The school consults parents about their views on the school improvement plan and curriculum issues – such as the sex education provision. The 'Friends of Wren Spinney' group is evolving into a mechanism for offering specific meetings to address issues such as 'managing behaviour' and 'feeding and nutrition'. These have been identified through questionnaires as areas most likely to benefit parents and pupils, although the school is still keen to maintain the fund raising and social opportunities for families that the original 'Friends' provided.
28. Photographic displays and pupils' records reflect the very wide range of links with the community that the school has fostered. Pupils benefit, for example, from the visits of musicians and theatre groups, specialist health workers, artists and dancers. Visits to local supermarkets support each pupil's personal and social development as well as their learning in National Curriculum subjects. The local leisure village generously supported the school's Sports Day. The school is itself used as a resource by a Mother and Toddler group and a fitness club. A specialist work experience provider offers opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple and severe learning difficulties to have brief work placements.
29. The school is a popular choice for mainstream pupils and students seeking their own work experience and offering very good personal development opportunities for Wren Spinney's pupils. For the vast majority of pupils and students catered for by the school, there are no suitable college link courses in the area. When considering their future beyond school, Year 11 pupils and their parents are required by local colleges to make an initial approach themselves before the school can be involved in setting up the link. This, together with the inconsistent attendance of the Connexions Service at transition reviews, places limitations on the college opportunities open to pupils. Once parents or carers have made the first move, the school works very quickly to establish a transition programme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. Leadership and governance are **good**. The school is managed **very well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher leads the school very well, with strong support from the assistant headteacher.
- Good strategic planning built on regular monitoring leads to effective responses to problems and new initiatives.
- There are very good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the different aspects of the school.
- Financial management is very good.
- Governors provide good support and challenge but their visits into school often lack a clear and agreed focus.

Commentary

30. The headteacher has established a very clear vision of how the school will develop and improve. There is a fundamental commitment to providing the best possible quality of education for all pupils. This is shared by the assistant headteacher, the senior management team and the staff, resulting in a very strong sense of teamwork. One example of this is the way in which staff regularly evaluate how well various areas of the school – such as its improvement plan or particular year groups or subjects – are developing, by identifying strengths and weaknesses. Information from these exercises is used very well to plan what to do next and to identify priorities. The school has planned carefully its response to the changes in the nature of the pupils admitted, ensuring that their increasingly complex needs are met well.
31. By creative use of the school budget, the assistant headteacher has been freed from class responsibility for the current year, in order to lead and manage developments in the curriculum and assessment procedures. This initiative is having a positive impact on the quality of education the school provides. A comprehensive staff training programme, tied in to good performance management systems, is closely linked to the school's priorities for improvement. The school improvement plan is very clear and well structured. It has identified areas for focus through consultation, monitoring and evaluation, in a shared document that governors and all staff have an involvement in at some level of its construction. It demonstrates effectively the intention to keep the school moving forward. Additionally, there are action plans for each subject, which show how they are to develop. Ranging from very good to satisfactory, subject leadership is good overall.
32. Systems to check the quality of teaching and analyse pupils' achievement are very good. All teachers are involved in a rolling programme, enabling them to observe lessons taught by others. Staff are deployed thoughtfully, ensuring that teachers are effectively supported at all times. The school's leaders are alert to the possibility that staff working with individual pupils might become isolated. Accordingly, they provide good opportunities for them to be involved in wider aspects of the school, at the same time capitalising on their particular expertise – for instance, in information and communication technology. The school is outward looking and opportunities for pupils to experience life in other settings are explored with enthusiasm. It readily enlists help and advice when areas for development are identified. For instance, support has been enlisted from the local education authority to help staff to make more effective use of electronic aids to communication.
33. The bursar and her administration assistant colleague are very efficient. All financial decisions are carefully linked to the school improvement plan and arrangements to control and manage the budget are very tight. A considerable amount of money has been accrued as a result of the school's previous association with a national charitable organisation. Since the connection has ceased, arrangements to use this money effectively have been carefully put in place; for

example, a number of building improvements, improving resources for information and communication technology, and the maintenance of a large number of teaching assistants, to support the work of teachers. As a result of these measures, the balance will be significantly reduced by the end of the current financial year.

34. Governors are supportive, play a real role in decision making and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have ensured that the issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with, that statutory duties are fulfilled and they are well informed through a variety of sources. There is, in principle, a commitment to a governor visiting programme, but this lacks rigour in that it is not carefully planned and organised so that governors visit the school for a specific purpose – for example, to observe work in a particular subject.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	971,880	Balance from previous year	113,890
Total expenditure	868,409	Balance carried forward to the next	103,471
Expenditure per pupil	14,473		

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

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4 AND AT POST-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Five English lessons were seen. The school has elected not to teach a modern foreign language. The pupils are all formally disapplied from this National Curriculum subject.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality visual aids to learning are used consistently and effectively throughout the school to develop pupils' skills in speaking, listening and reading.
- Modern technology is not used enough to help pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to communicate.
- The school has developed good resources to help pupils to develop their understanding of literature through sensory experiences.
- Good strategies are now in place to develop pupils' ability to record their work.
- English is very well led and managed.
- Pupils' skills in literacy are promoted well during lessons in other subjects.

Commentary

35. The school has developed a range of resources, including photographs and symbols for commonly used words, to support pupils' speaking and listening and to help them to learn to read. These aids are used in all English lessons. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8 with profound and multiple or severe learning difficulties, symbols accompanied by sign were used to support the teacher's introduction to a class discussion. This enabled the pupils to understand what would happen next. Pupils who have limited spoken language, such as those with autistic spectrum disorder are able to make choices by pointing to pictures or symbols. Consequently, they make good progress in communicating their needs. Visual aids are used well to help pupils to learn to build the skills which underpin reading. As a result of detailed individual programmes and good support, pupils learn to match similar objects. They build on this skill as they progress through the school and begin to match pictures and symbols. A small number of pupils learn to recognise and read their name and a few common words.
36. There is insufficient modern technology to support communication and the technology which is available is not used enough. This means that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have easy access to equipment such as switches which can be programmed to help them to communicate simple phrases. Consequently, their opportunities to develop independent or spontaneous communication are restricted. However, the school has allocated funds and put in place a rolling programme to purchase suitable equipment.
37. All pupils have good opportunities to develop their confidence to communicate through participating in plays and performances. For example, pupils have taken part in a performance of 'Peer Gynt' at the Masque Theatre and a theatre workshop on 'The Witches'. Pupils' understanding and participation in drama and other literature is greatly enhanced by the good collections of materials which the subject leader has assembled to promote learning through touch, taste and smell. This was evident in a lesson where Year 9 pupils with profound and

multiple learning difficulties, including pupils with severe visual impairment, were read the story of 'The Selfish Giant'. Very good opportunities to handle silk flowers and textured grass, to experience smells of flowers and apples and hear bird song promoted their understanding of the Giant's garden very well. Pupils have access to a wide range of books including ones that have simple text but are interesting for older pupils and students.

38. In the previous inspection report, the writing skills of pupils in Years 10 and 11 were judged to be unsatisfactory. This issue has been tackled successfully and pupils throughout the school now achieve well in recording what they have done. There is a good emphasis on helping pupils to develop the motor movements which are required for writing. An example of this was in a lesson where Year 9 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties made very good progress in holding and threading objects as a result of carefully planned activities. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise handwriting skills using pencils or felt pens and make good progress in learning to hold a pencil and make marks on paper. A small number of higher attaining pupils can form letters and compose simple words. Many pupils find learning to write very difficult, but teachers are skilled at helping them to record what they have done using other methods. For example, several pupils and students in Years 11 to 14 have recorded work they have carried out as part of their Transition Challenge award by taking digital photographs and cutting up and pasting symbols to make sentences.
39. The subject co-ordinator has been very effective in developing provision for English and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is now good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Staff have all been trained to structure lessons to follow the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy. The quality of teaching and planning is carefully checked and there is an induction pack for new teachers to ensure consistency and quality in English teaching. Good procedures are in place to assess and record pupils' progress as they move up the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Provision to develop pupils' language and literacy skills across the curriculum is good and pupils make good progress in applying these skills in other subjects. This is because the same visual aids are used consistently throughout the school to help pupils to communicate and to record their work. Consequently they are able to practise and develop their skills in different settings. An example of this was in a personal, social and health education lesson where Year 13 students sequenced photographs to show how they had made shepherd's pie and linked these to symbols for the recipe.

MATHEMATICS

Four lessons were seen.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their knowledge of pupils well in order to match activities to their particular needs.
- Activities are often linked well to everyday living.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- Mathematics is well led and managed.
- Teachers take good advantage of opportunities to promote mathematics during lessons in other subjects and during daily routines.

Commentary

41. Regardless of their special educational needs, pupils make significant gains in their knowledge, understanding and use of mathematics, building on what they learn each year. This is because

they are taught well. For example, in one class a very profoundly visually impaired pupil was able, because of the involvement of the teacher and teaching assistant, to achieve great success using a switch to count three objects. Again, in a class of pupils with significant autistic spectrum disorders, the activity was carefully chosen to ensure that pupils could cope with it, despite their difficulty in communication.

42. Teachers have high aspirations for their pupils, being determined to use the subject to provide them with an understanding of the world around them and to develop their independence. In a Years 9 and 10 lesson, pupils quickly learned which was the plate to choose in order to have the most objects. Again, in a class of pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 11 to 13, the teacher used the morning 'hello' session to promote pupils' sense of time. They were able to point out that if today was the ninth of February then tomorrow would be the tenth. Pupils often undertake mathematics activities which enable them to relate to life outside school. For example, in one class, pupils were preparing to go shopping and they considered, with very good support from adults, issues such as how much items cost and how much money they had.
43. Lessons in mathematics attempt to roughly follow the structure suggested by the National Numeracy Strategy. The introduction and ending are planned carefully to ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and finally they are reminded about what they have been doing and have learned. Activities chosen usually capture and maintain pupils' interest. Teachers use information and communication technology when appropriate, in order to reinforce skills and knowledge. For instance, pupils in Years 7 and 8 with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefited from the imaginative use of fluorescent items in the darkness of the sensory room, ensuring that they were aware of the counting taking place. Teaching assistants are used effectively in mathematics lessons; they have good understanding of what is being taught and know the pupils extremely well.
44. Currently, one teacher is leading the subject on a whole-school basis, but is currently being joined by another teacher. The subject leader's knowledge of mathematics is very good and she has established effective assessment arrangements to track pupils' progress and indicate their learning needs. At present, her opportunities to monitor the subject are limited to looking at planning and pupils' work. Observations of teaching are set to take place in the near future. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

45. Mathematics is used well in, and taught through, a number of subjects. For example, in a personal, social and health education lesson, pupils were asked to 'take three more' and 'take one more'. Simple databases are used by pupils in information and communication technology and in food technology they weigh ingredients. Staff are aware of the need to reinforce mathematics in order to help pupils make sense of the wider world and opportunities to use numeracy are usually identified in lesson planning.

SCIENCE

Six lessons were observed.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 10 enjoy lessons and make good progress across the breadth of National Curriculum science.
- Pupils in Year 11 achieve well but in only a narrow range of science topics.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan activities that are suitably matched to pupils' individual learning needs.
- Accommodation for science remains unsatisfactory.

Commentary

46. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 have good quality, weekly science teaching enabling them to achieve well. They increase their knowledge and skills in a broad range of topics about, for example, growing plants, the human body, effects of heat and cold on solids and liquids, properties of materials such as wood, metal and plastic, electricity in the home and push and pull forces. Occasionally, teaching in all years involves too much talking, and the language used is not simple enough, especially for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
47. Most of the Year 11 pupils are in post-16 classes where their access to science is limited. Year 11 pupils, as well as the post-16 students, make good progress in well taught units of work about healthy foods and horticulture, for example, which are part of their examination courses. Unlike pupils in Years 7 to 10, these Year 11 pupils do not have a broad enough course of National Curriculum science. The school is very aware of this issue and there are plans to resolve it.
48. For one afternoon during the inspection, the whole school re-grouped for science lessons based on the topic of water. This interesting initiative was well organised and managed, taking good account of assessment information to group together pupils of similar science capability. Pupils from another special school also joined in. Higher attaining pupils from Years 7 to 13 worked together to predict and find out if large and small objects displaced different amounts of water. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders worked well in this group which included a pupil from another school. Pupils with challenging behaviour were managed very well and were able to work safely with equipment. Groups of lower attaining pupils from Years 7 to post-16 were very well supported to participate in a number of sensory science activities. For example, they communicated through facial gestures and pointing, for example, if they preferred the feel of wet or dry materials, and whether they liked the vibration of a washing machine. They investigated floating and sinking, working with great excitement in the swimming pool to find out how many pupils could sit on a floatation mat before it sank.
49. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, especially achievement and teaching in Years 7 to 9. The subject is well led and managed because the new co-ordinator is very well supported by the assistant headteacher. There are still no specialist facilities for science and this limits the range of investigations that teachers can plan. There are proposals to give pupils access to specialist science facilities in another school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Only one lesson was seen, but a number of lessons in other subjects also contributed to the judgements made.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan enjoyable activities that encourage pupils to try hard.
- The subject is an area for development in the current school improvement plan.
- Switches are used regularly to enable pupils to perform tasks independently, but less frequently as a means of communication.
- Records of what pupils have learned are not maintained consistently.

Commentary

50. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in their ability to use a range of programs and applications, because teaching is satisfactory. As a result, higher attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties are able to use a computer keyboard, albeit typing very slowly and hesitantly. Pupils learn best during lessons where information and communication

technology is the focus. For example, during a lesson for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 11 to 14, the teacher had organised a variety of practical activities based on the use of switches. A strength of the lesson was the teacher's clear intentions for each pupil to build on their previous learning – such as developing their ability to predict what would happen when a switch was used. As a result, each pupil was actively involved in the lesson and learned well. Teachers make satisfactory use of the school's resources – for example, battery operated toys or computers – to provide pupils with a suitably wide range of opportunities. Tasks are often linked to everyday activities, such as writing a shopping list using a symbols program, to help during a visit to a supermarket. Relevant activities such as this help pupils to appreciate the importance of the subject. However, the starting point for lessons is quite often what needs to be done in other subjects, rather than what pupils should learn next in information and communication technology.

51. The school is very keen to develop the subject and a number of initiatives have been carefully planned in order to bring this about. For instance, governors allocated significant funds in order to establish and equip a dedicated resources area. This is now up and running and includes computers and an interactive whiteboard. Future plans involve more staff training and the appointment of a technician, demonstrating the school's commitment to moving the subject forward. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Recent developments, including the resource area and the subject leader's ability to dedicate more time to the subject and to supporting other staff, are already having an impact.
52. Teachers often use resources imaginatively. For instance, during a history lesson, pupils in Year 9 with profound and multiple learning difficulties used a switch to start the music that accompanied their 'jousting'. Again, a switch featured in a design and technology lesson for pupils in Years 11 to 14. Here, a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties clearly understood that the harder he pressed the switch, the faster would go the sewing machine to which it was connected (operated by a teaching assistant). In these ways, the subject makes a valuable contribution to enabling pupils to exert control over their environment. However, although teachers currently record what activities pupils have experienced, their level of achievement is not always evident – for example, how much support was needed. A new recording system is about to be introduced, which will make it easier to track pupils' progress and hence tailor work more closely to their needs.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

53. Pupils' use of information and communication technology in other subjects is satisfactory. They use the skills they have learned through direct teaching in other situations – for example, in English, mathematics and music. However, in many lessons the experiences pupils gain are not recorded, so their contribution to achievement in information and communication technology is not evident. Staff are not sufficiently alert to opportunities for pupils without speech to use switches to make themselves understood by operating recorded messages. Often, this use is restricted to saying 'Hello' at the start of the day.

HUMANITIES

One lesson was seen in geography and one in history. Judgements have not been made about these subjects. In religious education, only one lesson was seen but information was gathered from other sources such as teachers' planning and pupils' records.

Geography

54. Pupils learn about geography during their lessons in humanities. They become aware of the school environment and how to find their way around, visit places in the immediate locality and further afield, and learn about life in other countries. During the inspection, pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 7 and 8 learned very well about foods

that come from North America. The teacher had provided a very good range of resources for them to explore.

History

55. Teachers make history relevant to pupils – for example, by asking them to reflect on and recall the day's happenings and celebrate events such as birthdays. When teaching them about the distant past, exciting activities and interesting artefacts are used effectively. High quality displays of work about the Vikings, Middle Ages and Victorians enhance the school environment and remind pupils what they have learned and experienced.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is not always a sufficient emphasis on religious education as a distinct subject within the teaching of humanities topics.
- Although pupils occasionally have good opportunities to visit places of worship, the use of the local community is underdeveloped.
- Teachers are imaginative in their choice of resources to enable all pupils to learn.
- Photographic evidence in pupils' records is not always annotated or dated to show exactly what pupils achieved and how much support they required to achieve it.

Commentary

56. Religious education is taught alongside history and geography as part of humanities topics. Depending on the particular topic, this can mean that pupils do not have regular experiences of the subject as they move up through the school. There are good examples of teachers providing exciting activities that promote pupils' understanding and knowledge. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 13 with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour have visited two medieval churches as part of their topic on medieval Britain. They have stood in the lectern and the pulpit and looked at the stained glass windows. This has helped them to understand what happens in a church and to appreciate that religious buildings are special. However, all pupils do not have regular opportunities to visit religious settings.

57. Teachers give pupils a range of rich, sensory experiences which develop their understanding of world faiths well. An example of this was when Year 9 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties listened to Hindu and Sikh music, smelled incense and made Divali cards as part of their topic on India. However, as teachers do not always make full use of opportunities to emphasise religious education in humanities topic work, pupils' achievements are only satisfactory, in line with the quality of teaching.

58. The school keeps photographic records to show what pupils have done in their religious education lessons – for example, celebrations of festivals such as Christmas and Easter. However, notes which accompany the photographs are not always sufficiently detailed to show what pupils achieved and how much support they required to achieve it. The subject leader provides satisfactory leadership and management and checks the quality of teaching and planning. She has a clear view of how to develop the subject by ensuring that teachers place a greater emphasis on religious education in topic work. There has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons were seen in design and technology. Judgements were not made about this subject.

Design and technology

59. A new programme of work is about to be introduced, increasing the opportunities for pupils to work with resistant materials and textiles. Teachers make effective use of the good quality food technology room. With significant verbal and physical prompts, pupils learn how to use equipment safely in order to prepare and cook food. Great attention is paid to hygiene; pupils know that, for example, their hands must be washed before they start to cook.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

One lesson was observed in art and design and one in music. Judgements have not been made about these subjects.

Art and design

60. Recently, a new subject leader, who is a specialist in art and design, has been recruited. She has begun to identify systematically how the subject needs to develop. For example, 'cohort' days are planned for later in the year, to involve professional artists. A new programme of work has been developed and is to be introduced shortly.

Music

61. Photographic evidence in pupils' records shows that with support they create music using percussion instruments and other objects and materials. For example, pupils in Year 9 with profound and multiple learning difficulties have made sounds by patting, shaking and stamping on materials such as bubble wrap and tin foil. As part of their weekly music therapy, sixteen pupils benefit from weekly opportunities to make music and take part in activities centred on listening to and responding to music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Three physical education lessons were observed. Judgements were not made about this subject.

62. Pupils comment on how much they enjoy their exercise programmes and swimming sessions. The school provides a variety of physical education activities, linked closely to pupils' particular needs and strengths. For example, a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders learn well to stretch out gently and exercise on soft mats in the hall, away from the confines of their wheelchairs. They develop the confidence to try new movements, take turns, and to work with different combinations of support staff. The school's hydrotherapy pool is used well. Pupils develop their confidence in water, learning to float and change position, using swimming aids. Though their privacy and dignity are respected in the changing cubicles, there are no showers in the pool area. When their skills have developed sufficiently, pupils go to a public pool, learning to use the facilities and mixing with other people.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Thirteen lessons were seen. In addition, a variety of other activities also contributed to the judgements made.

Personal, social and health education and citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in all years achieve their personal and social targets very well.
- There are very many opportunities for pupils to develop confidence, trusting relationships with adults, responsibility and independence.
- Post-16 students are prepared well for leaving school.
- Staff have not yet received enough guidance to put the new personal, social, health and citizenship education programme into practice.

Commentary

63. From arrival to departure, staff take every opportunity to promote pupils' personal development. As a result, they achieve very well. Teaching is good, and often very good, with very good support from an extensive team of skilled and experienced teaching assistants. Teachers quickly and accurately identify personal targets for new pupils. A girl with profound and multiple learning difficulties, for example, is making very good progress learning to sit at a table, choose a drink and snack, eat and drink without grabbing or spilling. A Year 9 boy improves his fine motor skills because he perseveres to find objects that the teacher has buried in fine sand. Pupils with autism or extremely challenging behaviour often learn to work productively with or alongside pupils from other classes.
64. In all lessons, whatever the subject, pupils learn to trust staff and accept support. As a result, relationships in school are very strong. Activities during snack, lunch and break times, visits and residential holidays strengthen these relationships. These activities contribute very effectively to pupils' achievements. Lunchtime in the dining hall is an important time of day for pupils to develop their personal and social skills, and they succeed very well, exercising great patience when their meals have to be left until cool enough to eat. All pupils have feeding targets, but their targets are not always taken to the dining hall for reference.
65. Post-16 students become more independent as they prepare to leave school, although visits from the Connexions service have not been as frequent this year as last. In the dining hall students collect their own lunches and clear away. Students are taught well and know how to shop, prepare a meal, choose healthy food, visit a restaurant, go to the cinema, use leisure facilities, and participate in mini enterprise. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve their individual targets, for example, to sign 'Hello', or to make eye contact. A higher attaining student who attends college once a week and has learned the route from home to college, is developing good social skills, like hosting a coffee break for another pupil and their helpers. Through Transition Challenge and Towards Independence courses, post-16 students learn how to make their opinions known and how to communicate choices.
66. Leadership and management of the formally taught aspects of the subject are satisfactory overall. A new policy is well written and sex education is thoroughly planned. However, so far there has not been enough guidance to help staff introduce next term a new programme that incorporates citizenship education. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been significant improvement in pupils' achievements and attitudes and in the quality of teaching.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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.