

INSPECTION REPORT

YEWSTOCK SCHOOL

Sturminster Newton

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113965

Headteacher: John Lineton

Lead inspector: George Derby

Dates of inspection: 17 - 20 May 2004

Inspection number: 259037

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	129
School address:	Honeymead Lane Sturminster Newton Dorset
Postcode:	DT10 1EW
Telephone number:	01258 472796
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend D Seymour
Date of previous inspection:	June 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Yewstock is a large, well established, special school catering for up to 130 pupils. The pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties (SLD) and the school also caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). There are three classes for pupils with autism. The school caters for the full age range and has a small Further Education department where there are currently five students over 16 years. At the time of this inspection, these five students' needs were complex and some had PMLD. There were ten Nursery and Reception children, although up to 12 children can attend on a part or full time basis.

The school draws its pupils mainly from the north Dorset area, although some pupils come from further afield. Nearly all the pupils come from white (British) backgrounds, although there are two from minority ethnic groups. English is the home language of all but one of its pupils. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The headteacher was appointed just over two years ago and just prior to the school's last inspection when it was judged as having serious weaknesses. In 2003, the school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspector of schools (HMI) who judged the school to be making good progress in implementing its action plan.

There has been the long-term absence of one member of staff. Staff recruitment has been problematic due to the specialist skills required and the location of the school. Three teaching posts remain unfilled with permanent staff.

The school received an Investor in Careers award in 2000.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25349	George Derby	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Foundation Stage
9712	Jan Barber	Lay inspector	
10099	Sue Lewis	Team inspector	English Modern foreign language Special educational needs
18819	David Hughes	Team inspector	Science Music Post 16
23411	John Baker	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education
32055	Glan Davies	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Geography History Personal, social and health education Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. The standards the pupils achieve are good. Achievement is particularly strong in pupils' personal development. Academic achievement is good for most pupils. The teaching is good with very good features. The leadership and management of the school are good and there has been a tenacious drive to improve the quality of the provision, although some staffing difficulties have meant that improvement in some areas has not been as intended. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 – 11.
- The provision in science is very good overall and best in the secondary department where pupils achieve very well.
- The way the school helps pupils' communication through spoken language, signs and symbols supports their learning very well.
- The very strong encouragement given to pupils and the high standards of discipline in lessons means that pupils are highly attentive and work very hard.
- The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery / Reception) is very good; a very high level of expertise ensures children are provided with high quality experiences.
- All aspects of the school's work in PSHE make a significant impact on pupils' personal skills.
- The provision for students in the Post 16 department is good.
- A small number of pupils with autism or PMLD do not always learn enough because some parts of the curriculum are planned in a narrow way for them; however, they make good progress in relation to their personal targets.
- Although ICT has developed well in the secondary department, it has not been fully developed in the primary department; leadership and management of primary ICT have been weak and pupils' achievements limited overall.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not meet the needs of the pupils; this, in part, is the reason why provision in physical education is limited.

There has been good improvement since the school was inspected in 2002 when it was designated as having serious weaknesses. The headteacher has developed very good systems and structures which enable the school to run smoothly and efficiently. There is a clear vision for the future development of the school. Staff have been supported in developing their subject leadership roles. Their work is now mostly effective and some is very effective. Curriculum planning has improved and there are full schemes of work for nearly all subjects. There is good attention to meeting the needs of individuals, particularly through using a wide range of ways to support pupils' communication skills. There are more courses leading to awards, but these are still limited for some, especially higher-attaining, pupils. Curriculum monitoring is sound but there needs to be greater vigilance in checking on what is taught in some areas of the school.

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	good
Year 6	good	good
Year 9	good	good
Year 11	good	good
Year 13	good	good

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

The good attention to planning, both for individual lessons and in the longer term in most subjects, and the good quality teaching, are the main reasons why **pupils' achievements are good** for most groups. The wide range of ways of supporting pupils' communication through signs and symbols helps pupils understand better what they are to do and learn. This is especially so for pupils with autism and very young pupils. Pupils' achievements in Years 1 to 6 in ICT are unsatisfactory overall. In some subjects, a few autistic pupils and some with PMLD make only satisfactory progress because the opportunities offered are too narrow. Achievement in pupils' personal skills and development is good because of the wide range of ways pupils have to learn these, especially for those who have opportunities to study at mainstream school and college and who take part in work-related learning.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have a very keen interest in their lessons and behave very well. Attendance is good; most absences are due to illness. There is a slightly higher level of unauthorised absence compared with other schools, although this relates to two pupils who are persistently absent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good. It is very good in the Foundation Stage. Teachers plan their lessons well, thinking about what will interest and motivate the pupils and the activities that will match the pupils' needs. They 'push' them hard and give them every encouragement. As a result, the pupils really enjoy lessons and respond very well. Teaching assistants know the pupils very well and often provide very good support. Other aspects, such as the very good quality of care for pupils and the good links with parents and the community, very strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress. The curriculum is satisfactory but could be even better, especially if there was a full systematically planned programme for ICT from Years 1 to 6 and in physical education across the school. The school has worked hard to improve facilities and accommodation. However, the latter limits some pupils' experiences and opportunities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The work of the governing body is developing well and is sound. Some aspects of the leadership of the Foundation Stage department are very good. The headteacher's and governors' determination for high standards and to ensure all pupils are as fully included in school and community life as possible is highly successful. The school leadership team is a strong supportive body but lacks representation in relation to the needs of autistic pupils. There is a very good vision for the future and this is supported by strong staff teamwork. Planning for the development of the school is effective and central to the school's work, and includes staff, parents and governors.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have positive views of the school. Most parents at the pre-inspection meeting were effusive about the school. Overall, a few had concerns over homework and about bullying, but these views were not substantiated by the inspection team. Pupils like their lessons and activities very much.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that all pupils, no matter what their special educational needs, have access to the full curriculum and that planning enables them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Improve pupils' progress in ICT in Years 1 to 6 and in the aspects of physical education across the school which they do not currently take part in.
- Ensure that the accommodation meets the demands of the curriculum and all pupils' needs, especially those who are physically disabled.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The attainment of pupils is very low when they enter the school. This is due to their severe, profound or other learning difficulties. Pupils' achievements are good overall and very good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is good across the rest of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils make good progress and achieve well in most subjects; they achieve very well in science.
- The very good use of signs, symbols and objects significantly aids pupils' progress although pupils' writing skills could be better supported.
- In ICT in the primary department, and in physical education across the school, pupils make limited progress.
- A few pupils whose programmes are narrow and which rely largely on working to specific targets, only make satisfactory progress in subjects; progress towards their individual targets is good, however.

Commentary

1. The sound improvement in pupils' achievement in most subjects since the last inspection is because of the number of key improvements in the school's work. Although pupils' achievements were good in many subjects, the previously narrow curriculum meant that teachers did not always know what had been taught previously or what they should teach next. This reduced the effect of the good teaching and the progress that pupils subsequently made. In most subjects pupils' achievements have now been strengthened and are mostly good. This improvement is because of:
 - the good and often very good teaching;
 - the very good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs and how to support their most significant difficulties;
 - the wide range of ways of helping pupils to communicate and to learn;
 - a curriculum which better meets pupils' needs;
 - a good range of ways of assessing pupils' needs and tracking of pupils' progress with information used soundly to adapt programmes for pupils;
 - carefully considered target-setting to raise attainment;
 - good development of most subjects through improved subject leadership.
2. In English, mathematics, ICT in the secondary department, art and design, design and technology, personal, social, health and citizenship education, religious education and the Post 16 department pupils make good progress and achieve well. The writing aspect of English is not as well developed as reading or speaking, listening, watching and signing where pupils achieve well. The pupils make only satisfactory progress in writing. More use of ICT and of a variety of ways to promote writing in other subjects would support pupils' development in this area. In science the pupils achieve very well. This is because of a high degree of expertise by staff and the school's considerable emphasis on using and applying scientific knowledge in investigations and experiments. Some pupils in some of the secondary classes approach levels of attainment reached by their peers in mainstream schools. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, the children's and pupils' achievements are very good. This is because of the very good knowledge that staff have of the pupils' needs and the very good way they use assessment information to plan work for them.

3. In the primary department, a few classes have a limited range of opportunities to use ICT and pupils do not learn enough, while other classes are taught by the school's co-ordinator and those pupils achieve well. Pupils make limited progress in physical education across the school due to deficiencies in curriculum provision and unsatisfactory indoor and outdoor accommodation. The long-term absence of the co-ordinator has meant that planned development of the physical education programme of study has not gone ahead. Although the headteacher has worked hard to forge increased sporting links, and has been very successful in doing so, some aspects of the work are still narrow and pupils make limited progress overall.
4. The headteacher has worked hard, despite recruitment difficulties and some staff absence, to engage staff who have good knowledge of the National Curriculum and the national strategies. In addition, existing staff skills have been developed and particularly training and LEA support in the implementation of the Year 7 to 9 national strategies have made a big difference to teaching and pupils' achievements. The good emphasis on subject vocabulary and the ideas relating to this have meant that pupils build on what they already know more quickly.
5. The knowledge of pupils' special educational needs, especially those pupils with autism and PMLD, is good and overall the pupils with additional needs make good progress. Some individuals make significant progress and there are examples of pupils who have been in the school only a short time making really good strides in their learning. A significant strength has been the way teachers now consistently use signs, symbols and objects throughout their lessons to support pupils' communication and understanding. There is room for improvement in the way they could use these in social areas such as the playground. However, a few teachers plan their lessons around pupils' individual targets which are often considerably wide-ranging but do not always emphasise all aspects of what pupils should be learning sufficiently. For instance, in one class of autistic pupils, there is little in their targets about data handling or shape in mathematics. While these pupils make good progress towards their individual and personal targets, the effect of this way of planning limits the progress they can make overall. This, however, only affects a very small number of pupils and the school is aware of the deficiencies in this area. The achievement of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is the same of the rest of the pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Other aspects of their personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development are good overall. Cultural development is sound. Most pupils' attendance and punctuality are good and have improved over the last two terms. The high quality of this aspect has been maintained since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils try very hard with their work and enjoy lessons thoroughly; this contributes to their good achievement.
- The school is successful in helping pupils to develop confidence, to think about what they do and to develop a sense of responsibility.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school.
- Pupils are given opportunities to have a voice in running the school.
- Unauthorised absence is higher than would be expected.
- Attendance levels are improving as a result of good monitoring and support.

Commentary

6. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are happy and feel safe. This is because of the very good relationships they have with all the adults in the school which are based on high levels of trust, encouragement, respect and care. Adults have high expectations of all pupils and provide every opportunity for them to succeed. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties smile at the adults who work with them, listening and

responding to what is being said to them. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour are very good. There are clear rules, rewards and sanctions which are consistently applied. The positive rules are consistently reinforced so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them in terms of behaviour around the school. They are polite to visitors and spontaneously open doors for them and offer to get them chairs, when required. On visits out of school, behaviour is usually highly commendable. Pupils' behaviour is equally good at lunch and playtimes when they play together well, with no signs of unruly or oppressive behaviour.

- No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school this year, but there have been three temporary fixed term exclusions. This is in line with the school's policy and has been effective in dealing with a few pupils' difficult behaviour.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	123	3	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle very happily into school and very quickly learn essential routines and expectations of behaviour. They respond very positively in work and play activities.
- Staff set a very good example to the pupils and as a result pupils follow this example by showing respect for each other and for everyone who works in the school. Older pupils help younger ones; an example of this is shown by older pupils taking the hand of younger ones to escort them from the school buses into school. These very good relationships between older and younger pupils are reinforced by the school council members who have time allocated on a weekly basis to discuss with younger pupils their ideas for school improvement.
- Many pupils take part in day-to-day routines by helping, for example, to take the register to the office, and even the youngest children in the Nursery show independence by selecting activities, whether in lessons or at play. As they progress further through the school, opportunities are given for election to the school council and for selling produce from the mini-enterprise scheme at the local market.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are good. Assemblies encourage pupils to reflect about their own and others' lives. Good links are made between personal experience, the experience of the school community and the wider world. There are good opportunities for reflection in lessons. There are also good opportunities throughout the school, and particularly through the personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) programmes, for pupils to understand and develop a strong sense of right and wrong.

12. From the Nursery onwards, children learn to co-operate with adults, work in pairs and small groups and socialise with one another. Several members of staff eat with the pupils at lunchtime, creating a family atmosphere. This offers social opportunities, fostering the development of good table manners and conversation. As pupils grow older there are opportunities, on residential trips, school visits, sporting competitions and performing arts events, for them to socialise with a wide range of other people, often working as part of a team. There are also opportunities for pupils to socialise with mainstream peers through the range of activities which take place with the local community and local primary and secondary schools.
13. Cultural provision is satisfactory. In religious education, the pupils study world religions and cultures, including Hindu celebrations. They are encouraged to respect and tolerate the faiths and beliefs of others and respect the differences between people. There is some exploration of other cultures, for example, in art and in geography, where pupils have looked at the Aztec way of life.
14. Attendance, at 90 per cent, is above the national median for similar schools and unauthorised absence is higher than would be expected. This has been due to a tiny minority of non-attenders; the situation is now improving and the attendance level for the present year is over 92 per cent.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	2.2
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching is good. Other aspects, such as the very good quality of care for pupils and the good links with parents and the community very strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress. The curriculum is satisfactory but could be even better, especially if there was a full systematically planned programme for ICT from Years 1 to 6 and in physical education. The school has worked hard to improve facilities and accommodation. However, the latter is unsatisfactory and limits some pupils' experiences and opportunities.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good with very good features. Over a third of the teaching seen during the inspection was very good. Teaching is strongest in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 where it is very good. In the rest of the school it is good overall. Assessment is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in most subjects is good and sometimes very good.
- The very good encouragement given to pupils helps them persist with their work even in the face of difficulty.
- All staff strongly insist that pupils act sensibly and behave well; teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils, especially when they occasionally find it difficult to sit and listen.
- Although ICT is used to support learning, this is inconsistent across the school.
- Assessment is used well to respond to the pupils' individual needs; the monitoring of progress is strongest in the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science, and PSCHE; it is also good in ICT where it is taught by the co-ordinator.

Commentary

15. Pupils learn well because lessons are generally motivating, sometimes exciting and overall capture pupils' imaginations and interests. As a result of the very good encouragement they get in lessons, and the high quality support by teaching assistants, the pupils try very hard and work very hard. There are a small number of individual pupils who have had a history of disaffection in their previous schools and non-attendance at lessons, and some who have refused to go to school altogether. These pupils' negative views or even fear of school have been significantly transformed. The pupils are often seen in lessons, like most others, working very productively and showing a very keen interest in their learning.
16. The teaching is good in English, French, mathematics, ICT, religious education and PSHCE. In many of these subjects the teaching had very good features. In science, the teaching is very good. Only a small amount of teaching was observed in the other subjects and it is, therefore, not possible to make a judgement about its quality.
17. In English, the emphasis on speaking and listening and pupils' communication (often through the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS) helps pupils to learn well. The use of signs, symbols and objects in most lessons where there are pupils with communication needs is also successful in helping them understand what they are to do and learn. However, opportunities to develop writing skills in a range of subjects, and using a range of methods (including ICT), are limited. In mathematics, teachers use the three-part lesson structure of the National Numeracy Strategy well to plan their lessons. This is particularly successful in developing pupils' mental mathematical skills as well as introducing them to different ways of solving problems. In most mathematics lessons the pace of the teaching and learning are good; pupils stay on task and learn well as a result. In science, teachers plan their lessons well and provide pupils with a good range of scientific experiences that allow them to make choices and draw conclusions from their observations and the data they collect. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of science and how to help pupils learn. The quality of questioning, the use of scientific vocabulary, and the considerable attention to scientific methods result in a very good pace of learning.
18. Teachers' demonstrations of what pupils are going to learn in ICT are strong and lessons are presented well. Vocabulary is sometimes insufficiently emphasised, however. Although improving (and satisfactory overall), the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is not always consistent across the school. For instance, there is some really good use in the Foundation Stage and Post 16 departments and in some mathematics lessons in Years 7 to 11. However, in some classes it is used little.
19. The considerable expertise of staff and the way work is precisely matched to the needs of pupils are why teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Teachers plan and teach the right things in very small steps so that the children gain success and develop very well. Their knowledge of children's development, especially in communication, aids them to design most effective activities. Symbol timetables, verbal and visual prompts and very good use of PECS ensure that children and pupils contribute effectively. The teaching of students in the Post 16 department is skilful and perceptive and is based on a very good knowledge of their needs.
20. Features of the good and very good teaching across the school also include:
 - Good attention to making clear what pupils are to do and learn in lessons and the assessments made against objectives in the plenary session at the end of lessons. However, in some lessons this session is short and merely reviews what pupils have done.
 - Work which is planned to meet the needs of the different pupils in the class and which is well matched to these. In the best lessons, the teachers identify what they expect each group to have learned by the end of the lesson.

- All staff's insistence on pupils behaving well, respecting others' contributions and working together collaboratively. The latter was exceptionally strong in the Year 11 class for pupils with SLD.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 99 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	34 (34%)	50 (51%)	14 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Assessment

21. Assessment procedures have improved well since the last inspection. They are good overall and particularly strong for tracking pupils' personal development. Assessment is very good in the Foundation Stage where planning is adjusted daily on the basis of staff's observations and notes. Teachers have strong formal and informal understanding of what pupils know and can do. The school now collects a good range of data on pupils, assigning it to P level descriptors and National Curriculum levels, in addition to keeping samples of pupils' work. Photographs and written observations are also used well to document the achievements of pupils with more complex needs. Occasionally, teachers are not confident in assigning levels which leads to inaccuracies, but the school is aware of this. Some strong day-to-day observational assessments are made by teachers and support staff in relation to individual pupils' responses to lessons. All these give a good picture of pupils' achievements, over time, as do the reports that teachers write for Annual Reviews.
22. The school's and teachers' use of the information gained through assessment is satisfactory overall, but variable. Most teachers use the information that they have about pupils' levels well, for example to plan reading and mathematical activities for them and when planning their lessons in subjects. However, in some subjects such as ICT in part of the primary department, records kept and assessments made are unsatisfactory and teachers do not have a clear enough view of what pupils can do and understand and need to learn next. Some individual teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' broader skills and needs to plan for their learning in all subjects; this means opportunities are sometimes lost for reinforcing a particular skill. This is particularly so when a number of teachers teach a child and where the Individual Education Plan is unhelpful in identifying the most important things that a pupil needs to learn which all teachers should take account of in their planning. The school is currently re-considering the ways in which it sets its targets both for individuals and for groups and the school as a whole, as part of its commitment to raise standards even further. It now has a good range of data to enable it to do this and is rightly considering setting targets based on the progress of differing cohorts of pupils and their differing needs.

The curriculum

The school provides a generally broad and satisfactory range of learning opportunities. These are very good in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 and 2 and in the Post 16 department. For pupils in Years 3 to 11 they are satisfactory. Opportunities to enrich pupils' learning are also satisfactory. The quality of the accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts learning for some pupils. Resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and reflects the aims of the school; however, a few pupils have a narrower range of opportunities than others.

- The number, experience and expertise of staff to meet the wide range of needs of pupils is good, although some staff expertise is underused.
- Curriculum development is good and the introduction of new subject policies, together with the enhanced role of subject co-ordinators, has resulted in a marked improvement since the last inspection.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation limits some pupils' opportunities.
- There is a wide range of accredited courses open to the large majority of students; opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to gain appropriate qualifications are improving but are still limited for some.

Commentary

23. Overall the curriculum is good for many of pupils and students. This is largely due to the improved leadership and management by subject leaders. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught to the majority of pupils and this is a marked improvement since the last inspection. All subjects, with the exception of physical education across the school (due to the absence of a co-ordinator) and some primary classes, where provision in ICT is unsatisfactory, now have sound programmes of work and policies.
24. The curriculum provided for pupils in the Foundation Stage is very good, and that for students who are above the statutory school-leaving age is good. There is, however, some variation in the quality and quantity of learning opportunities offered to pupils who display complex learning difficulties (mostly some autistic pupils and those with PMLD). A few pupils' curriculum is based on subject targets identified in their Individual Education Plan. Although these are wide-ranging for some, and pupils mostly achieve well in relation to these, for others, they do not represent enough of the elements of what they should learn in a particular subject. This reduces the good and often very good effect of the teaching and means that these pupils only achieve satisfactorily. Because of the school's restrictions due to the limited accommodation, some pupils are unable to move classrooms as there are inadequate facilities to meet their needs. This means that some older pupils do not have access to learning a modern foreign language.
25. Curricular provision in science remains very good, especially in relation to older students. The school has appointed an overall curriculum manager. The work here has resulted in the overall curriculum no longer being 'inadequate' although there remain some weaknesses. At the time of the inspection there were a range of developing schemes and strategies to enhance and widen the curriculum to meet individual need such as the "On Target Club", but these are limited in scale and not applicable to all pupils. The school supports pupils' special educational needs well by providing supplementary communication programmes for individual pupils such as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or the Signalong signing system
26. There is a sound range of accredited courses for the majority of pupils and students in Years 10 and 11 and the Post 16 department. This is based mainly on ASDAN Youth Award schemes or Entry Level certificates. Although improving, the range remains too narrow for some and is not sufficiently challenging for higher-attaining students. Students' work is well supported by a range of work experience placements and access to a range of vocational and academic courses.
27. There is a satisfactory amount of opportunities outside lessons to enrich the curriculum. However, this mainly applies to older students. The curriculum is also enhanced by contributions from individuals and groups outside the school. Visiting professionals such as speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and doctors make important contributions to pupils' learning. Additionally cultural activities are promoted, for example, by visiting musicians and pupils and students benefit from their involvement. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn outside formal lessons, best embodied, for example, by the mini-enterprise scheme, in Years 7 to 14 where pupils produce artefacts, consumables

and plants to distribute and sell locally through their own company. This enterprise has been of great benefit to the school, for example, the horticulture poly-tunnel was financed by the mini-enterprise profit and this in turn enabled the enterprise to extend its range of goods.

28. The changing population of the school has resulted in the accommodation being unsatisfactory to meet the needs of the pupils the school now has. Improvements have been made to certain areas of the school, for example, by the provision of extra demountable classrooms. However, their flimsy construction makes these inadequate for use by some groups of pupils. For example, poor acoustics and walls that resonate make them unsuitable for pupils with hearing loss or who have autism and many rooms do not have facilities or suitable access for physically disabled pupils.
29. There is a good number of well qualified and experienced staff to provide for the needs of the pupils and to support the curriculum. All staff have good on-going training and many staff have obtained additional qualifications to meet the challenging needs of pupils admitted since the previous inspection. Enthusiastic and committed teaching assistants play an important role in planning alongside teachers and ensuring pupils' individual targets are addressed consistently. However, the school does not fully utilise some of the specialist skills of trained support staff or of some teachers as effectively as it could.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its pupils' welfare, health and safety. Staff provide the pupils with satisfactory support, advice and guidance through effective monitoring of their personal development and progress. The way the school involves pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very strong emphasis on pupils' care and welfare.
- Pupils are routinely involved in decisions especially through the school council.
- Teaching and support staff are very caring.
- Work experience and careers programmes provides good support for pupils.

Commentary

30. There are very good features in the way pupils' well-being, general care, welfare and safety are promoted in the school. Procedures for ensuring child protection are good. The headteacher and the two designated staff members are well trained and provide extensive guidance for all staff. As a result, all staff are aware of their responsibilities and any incident is managed sensitively and efficiently.
31. The school building, classrooms and grounds are very well cared for and health and safety checks are regularly carried out. Swift and effective attention is given to any necessary repairs. Litter and graffiti are non-existent due to the vigilance of the site manager and the care of their environment by the pupils. The welcoming displays, especially on corridor walls, help to ensure that pupils treat the school with respect.
32. There are clearly defined procedures for medicines and first aid treatment. Management plans for each pupil needing medication are clear and risk assessments are carried out before school trips and also for individual pupils. For example, to enable PMLD students to attend the nearby Family Centre safely to use the hydrotherapy pool, a detailed risk assessment is carried out. Security measures for pupils leaving the building during school hours by filling in the off-site activity form are scrupulously adhered to.
33. The school strives to include all pupils as much as possible and where this happens pupils are supported well. There are many good examples where pupils are successfully supported in the school and through opportunities in mainstream schools. An example of this support is when older pupils with autism integrate for lessons in other parts of the school pen-portrait folders are used to provide essential information on communication and behaviour.

34. Information is used satisfactorily from assessments to help pupils improve and the monitoring of pupils' targets is efficient and effective. The understanding and knowledge of pupils by staff ensures that the personal development of each pupil is monitored well. The school receives good support from other agencies and visiting professionals, for example, there are weekly visits from the physiotherapist and occupational therapist. There is a shortfall in the provision of speech and language therapy, however.
35. There are very good procedures for supporting new pupils to make sure they settle well into school. Parents of children entering the Nursery always receive a visit at home by the Nursery teacher prior to the child entering school. This ensures that parents are involved with their children's education from the start and is a valuable opportunity to voice any concerns and for the exchange of information. There is also thorough attention given to the process when pupils return to mainstream schools, either for particular subjects or on a permanent basis, through well-established links.
36. The ethos of the school supports pupils' very good behaviour. Bullying and oppressive behaviour occurs rarely and is not generally a problem. On occasions when isolated incidents occur, they are well handled. The pastoral care is very good. The very good relationships between staff and children enable pupils to build trusting relationships with one or more members of staff. Procedures to promote and encourage positive behaviour and for improving attendance are good and are followed by staff. Pupils recognise and appreciate the system of rewards and sanctions and most of them respond positively. Good procedures are adhered to in communicating with parents about any unexplained absences. In the last academic year the level of attendance was good for the vast majority of pupils. Improving attendance for all pupils is taken seriously by the staff and governors. The educational welfare officer visits the school regularly and supports the school in investigating any unexplained persistent absence.
37. Pupils' views are sought on a range of issues and these views are discussed by staff. The school council is effective in obtaining the views and opinions of pupils. It is ably chaired by a student and committee procedures are carefully followed. The school council has been instrumental in improving the school environment in areas such as the sensory garden, developing and implementing the minibus cleaning rosters, and displays of art work around the school. They have also been involved in consultations regarding the provision of the proposed new outdoor adventure playground equipment.
38. The teaching staff have forged particularly good links with employers and colleges of further education which maximise the choice available for students when they choose a college course or future career. This is exemplified by the work experience available and the many taster courses on offer in subjects ranging from bricklaying to horticulture and hairdressing.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school works well in partnership with parents, other schools and the community. The school has good links with the local community. There are positive links with mainstream schools and with colleges of further education. The school's provision to support pupils from mainstream schools with special educational needs ('Outreach') is satisfactory. Overall this represents a good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Positive links have been forged with mainstream schools.
- There are good transition arrangements from school to college.
- Effective links exist with the local community.
- Parents are provided with good information about how well their children are progressing.
- Parents' views are valued.
- The school's commitment to sharing its skills and supporting others in mainstream schools is strong.

Commentary

39. The school works hard at establishing an effective partnership with parents before children start at Yewstock and this contributes to a smooth transition from home to school. Parents consider staff to be approachable and welcoming and are generally confident in raising concerns informally with them. There is a useful telephone call log kept in the office for staff to refer to if there are any ongoing issues. As parents often live some distance from the school this is particularly helpful and ensures good communication. The school deals effectively with any concerns or complaints. There is a supportive parents' association, Friends of Yewstock, which raises considerable sums of money for the school.
40. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Regular informative newsletters are sent home both from the school and the parents' association. Some classes also send out their own newsletters. The home-school notebooks keep the parents informed on a daily basis and encourage them to reply to let the school know any pertinent facts straightaway. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents now fully comply with statutory requirements and are attractively formatted using clear accessible language.
41. Parents appreciate the Annual Reviews which are a comprehensive summary assessment of pupils' abilities and performance and include information about any health problems and behaviour issues. The forty-minute session involving parents, pupils and other professionals is well used to the benefit of the pupils. Annual reports are issued as part of the Annual Reviews, which take place each month of the school year. This means that parents of pupils who have taken the statutory tests or have been assessed do not always get their child's assessment results at the end of the school year. This is planned to be rectified by the end of this term.
42. The contribution of parents to pupils' learning at school and home is generally good. Parents help with reading, spellings and researching current school topics. However, their contribution is limited by the inconsistent provision of homework. Some parents consider that the length of the school day, especially when the pupil has considerable travelling time, is sufficient without the addition of formal school homework. The school's homework policy allows for flexibility in provision depending on the needs of individual pupils.
43. A few parents help in classrooms, but the wide geographical area that pupils come from, together with transport difficulties, restricts the active involvement of many parents. A Parent Partnership Group (POPY) is being re-formed for parents to discuss any issues informally over refreshments at the school. Volunteers from the local community help out in school. An example of this is a gentleman who assists with the weekly moped training, not only helping the students with their course, but also servicing the mopeds.
44. The school has worked hard to build a list of local employers who offer work experience to students. The site manager at the school also assists with work experience by accommodating students to help him on site. There is a particularly good link with other schools in the Sturminster Newton Pyramid of schools. Activities supplemented by a grant from the New Opportunities Fund have enabled students at Yewstock to be involved in choral evenings, willow sculpture, sporting and other events alongside their peers in local mainstream schools. Links with colleges of further education are good and many students transfer to them when they leave Yewstock at the end of Year 11. There are good transition links with the Social Services Stourcastle Centre to use the hydrotherapy pool and sensory room in preparation for adult care after the Post 16 provision.
45. Yewstock has a strong long-standing tradition of providing support to mainstream schools on an informal basis. Sometimes this has involved observation of pupils and advice on suitable strategies or programmes. At other times, mainstream teachers have visited Yewstock to observe how teachers manage their classrooms and how special programmes work in practice. Changes in LEA policy last year resulted in fewer formal requests for Outreach help. In addition, acute staffing / recruitment problems at the school meant the support for two

schools had to be postponed. As a result, the school has spent the funding devolved for Outreach by the LEA, but its staffing and recruitment difficulties have significantly compromised the level and amount of support that it has been able to offer to schools in the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The high aspirations and vision of the headteacher are strong features of his good leadership. The leadership and management by the school leadership team are also good; the support provided by the deputy headteacher is highly valued by the headteacher. Governance is sound and is an improving aspect of the school's work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good improvements in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection have ensured that the school no longer has serious weaknesses.
- Governors are very supportive of the work of the headteacher and staff and want the best for the school; they ensure that the school's finances are well monitored and tied to school priorities.
- The leadership provided by members of the school leadership team is good; management is also good but there is no representation on the team of staff with expertise in autism.
- Overall leadership of the curriculum is satisfactory; however, there are some variations in the quality of the leadership and management of the subjects.
- Monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are not consistently carried out across the school in all subject areas.
- The continuing professional development of the staff of the school is good and there are very effective systems in place for teachers' performance management.

Commentary

46. There has been significant improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. At that time, it was unsatisfactory and the educational direction of the school and roles and responsibilities of staff were not effective in bringing about improvement. The key issues from that inspection have been effectively addressed and the school has drawn up a detailed and comprehensive school improvement plan for 2003-2005. All of the staff have been involved in the process and the governors have been kept fully informed about the areas identified for improvement. Leadership and management of the school are now good.
47. Although most of the governors have only been on the governing body for less than a year, they are fully committed and want the best for the school. Governors are quickly becoming aware of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and of their role in ensuring the school meets its statutory requirements. They are beginning to challenge the school where they feel secure and know this is as important as providing support. The meetings of the full governing body and the two committees have well-focused agendas and there is evidence of good monitoring of the work of the school through the committee structure since September 2003. Governors are now beginning to take responsibility for monitoring some of the subjects and different age-groups and for various aspects of the school. These developments are positive, but governors know there is still much to do.
48. The school leadership team, made up of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and five senior teachers, has played a very important part in focusing the work of the school. The team meets regularly and four of the five senior teachers have their own teams representing different year groups and categories of special educational need. The fifth member of the team has responsibility for the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, pupils' additional needs and for supporting the work of the subject leaders across the school. However, there is no one on the team with a detailed knowledge of the needs of the growing population of autistic pupils and how they can be successfully included in lessons. The existing arrangements have

been very successful, but will need to be refocused to reflect the diverse and changing needs of the pupils. There is a very clear policy statement on school self-review; the monitoring of pupils' achievements is undertaken, particularly in English and mathematics, and information from this is used for setting statutory targets. Girls' and boys' attainments, however, are not tracked separately so the school is not aware of possible differences in performance of these groups of pupils.

49. The leadership and management of most subjects, including the core subjects of English and mathematics are good (very good in science) and almost all subject leaders have undertaken training in managing their subjects. However, leadership and management is unsatisfactory of information and communication technology (ICT) in the primary department and of physical education across the school (because of the absence of a co-ordinator). External monitoring of the school's provision has been carried out by the local education authority (LEA), Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and by an independent educational consultant. All have identified good improvement. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by subject leaders is inconsistently undertaken, however.
50. A very effective performance management system has been introduced and most staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The quality of the professional development and training of teaching and learning support staff is very good and there is a culture of continuing improvement. Staff with leadership and management responsibilities have a limited amount of time set aside to fulfil their duties and funding has been identified in the school improvement plan for this. Due to changes being introduced by the government in reforming the workforce of schools, this is an aspect of provision which will need to be looked at so that leaders and others have the necessary amount of time to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively.
51. Financial planning to support school priorities is good. The finance and environment committee of the governing body meets regularly and undertakes detailed and effective monitoring of the budget. The school has planned the present 2004 budget well to meet the priorities of the school improvement plan and has included appropriate spending plans for the relatively large budget surplus. This is to meet the possible cost of the threshold payments to teachers and some of the costs of alterations required by Disability Discrimination Act (estimated at around £200,000). The sub-committee feels that this is prudent planning and good housekeeping. The surplus has accumulated over the years but has now been significantly reduced. At the end of 2003 it was over £200,000, but a high percentage was spent on the school's new computer network, car park and alterations to the offices, parents' meeting room, staffroom and Post 16 teaching area. It should be further reduced to a five per cent level by 2005. Best value principles are soundly applied.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,237,624
Total expenditure	1,354,603
Expenditure per pupil	11,678

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	215,052
Balance carried forward to the next	98,073

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

There are relatively few children in the Foundation Stage and insufficient evidence was gathered to form judgements about provision in each area of learning. Provision is, therefore, reported in a shortened form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because of the high level of skill of the co-ordinator and staff who work with her.
- Teaching is very good and expert assessment ensures that children learn and do the right things.
- Accommodation is limited and outdoor facilities, although improved, still do not offer children a full range of opportunities to play with large equipment.

Commentary

52. There has been good improvement in the provision since the inspection in 2002. Teaching and children's achievements have been strengthened and are now very good overall. This improvement has been a result of the commitment, knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of the co-ordinator. A very good programme of learning opportunities is provided with a considerable emphasis on promoting communication skills, personal, social and emotional development and learning through play. This is entirely appropriate and lays a very good foundation for the children's progress in other areas of development.
53. The school admits children with a very wide range of needs to its Nursery / Reception class. All have skills that are significantly delayed in one way or another. Some have severe or profound physical or learning disabilities, some find it difficult to communicate (for instance, those who are autistic) and a few are delayed in their general development. Although up to seven children were present during the inspection, some were part-time (usually the youngest) and classes generally consisted of five or six children. The co-ordinator strongly encourages learning and play opportunities in the children's local communities and a few have joint placements in other pre-school facilities, such as playgroups. The children's introduction to school is very good; home visits and very good communication with parents and others significant in the life of the child considerably aid staff's knowledge of how to plan an effective programme from the outset and support a smooth transition for families and children. Careful observation and recording of children's responses are very strongly developed features of the everyday work of staff. Similarly, when moving onto another class or placement, the preparation for this is very good.
54. The very good teaching stems from lessons which are very well planned, with activities pitched at the right level for the children. This is the result of very well-developed assessment systems and a very good knowledge of the children's needs in general. Support staff provide considerable assistance to children. Their help is well measured and they know how far to 'push' a child. All staff get the best from the children and the strides they make are often considerable. In a lesson where the teaching was excellent, all staff were highly involved in teaching the children, reinforcing learning and moving them onto the next step when ready. For example, a severely developmentally delayed child was encouraged to imitate the actions of an adult, thereby increasing communication skills and gaining a greater understanding of the world. The progress made here was remarkable. The teacher and support staff work extremely well as a team and have very positive relationships with the children and their

families. All have the highest expectations possible. Lessons are exciting and result in children who are highly motivated to learn.

55. Despite the limitations of the cramped internal accommodation, staff work hard to overcome these. However, activities which relate to the areas of learning cannot always be laid out fully because of lack of space. The design does not enable those who are physically disabled to have freedom of movement. A soft play surface has been provided for the outdoor play area. While this is a much needed improvement, adequate play equipment is lacking. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good and there is a very good vision for its future development. This is somewhat restricted through lack of funds and facilities, however.
56. The children achieve very well in their **personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, creative development** and in their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. This is because of very good teaching. All activities encourage children's development in these aspects. The teacher's story-telling skills and the role-play that is developed through this are excellent and help pupils' imagination significantly. Excellent use is made of symbols, signs and objects to help the children understand what is happening and what they are to do next. Listening, watching and responding are very well developed through the very good range of ways which staff have to encourage and develop these skills. Higher-attainers speak using single or two word comments and commands while some lower-attainers are beginning to understand simple gestures. Those who are visually impaired begin to move their heads to a source of light or to the voice of a speaker. Staff use Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) symbols very well, for example to present the day's activities. Some other pupils know that an object they touch denotes a certain activity ('objects of reference') that is to take place.
57. Much is done to establish routines and higher-attaining children take part regularly and enthusiastically in self-help activities, such as laying the table for drinks and passing biscuits around; the result is children who are able to 'share', are well mannered and who make polite responses from a very early age.
58. The staff use the computer well to support pupils' ICT skills, such as using a mouse, selecting objects and dragging and dropping (which the higher-attainers are beginning to do well). Lower-attaining children use single switches to access simple cause and effect programs. This work is having a positive effect, although the adults have to hold the switch, rather than it being attached to the children's seating equipment. Computers are also very well used to support learning, such as about shape and position and to match pictures of objects. The children increase their knowledge of the world through a range of practical activities which involve cutting, sticking and joining materials. They begin to know about themselves and how they and plants grow. They use finger paints, enjoying the sensation, and explore how things can be presented on paper.
59. The children also achieve very well in their **mathematical development**. Many opportunities are provided to aid children's understanding of number and well-designed activities for lower-attaining children help them gain ideas about objects, such as colours, where they are in space and about other simple concepts related to them. Mathematical language is very well focused upon (such 'one more', 'big', 'little', 'up', 'down') as well as children's listening and responding. Songs and rhymes are regularly used to support simple counting activities.
60. Children achieve well overall in their **physical development**. They undertake a variety of activities such as swimming and horse-riding. Physical opportunities on site are more restricted because of a lack of facilities, although small movement skills, such as handwriting, drawing and painting, are developed very well.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 4 AND IN POST 16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well from their starting points, particularly in communicating, speaking and listening and in their early reading.
- Staff are very skilled at supporting and developing further pupils' communications and these are consistently promoted in English and in other subjects.
- Symbols, signs and other resources such as photographs and objects to support pupils' understanding and their reading are now used very well in English and in almost all classes; there is scope for using them even more in other contexts.
- A good range of learning opportunities are now in place in English; some pupils with the most complex needs have a more restricted curriculum, however, although the range of accreditation for higher-attainers is rightly being extended.
- Although pupils make good progress in their handwriting skills, they could achieve more in other aspects of writing if there was more use of ICT, symbols and PECS to enable them to express their ideas through writing more independently.

Commentary

61. Pupils' achievements are good in English because of the good teaching and the strong learning opportunities provided. Since the last inspection the provision has improved soundly, as learning opportunities have been further developed and there is more consistent practice in relation to communication, in particular. Symbols, signs and other supports for communication are now used well. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is used particularly well and, along with the use of symbols, supports achievement in reading and pupils' understanding and self-expression. However, the school recognises that there are a few missed opportunities for these to be more visible in assemblies, at break and lunchtimes, in display work/ notices and when pupils move between activities in individual classes.
62. The learning opportunities provided have also been strengthened; each class's programme is very carefully thought through to balance English experiences with the pupils' special educational needs, although the wide range of ages and disabilities makes this difficult in some classes. Generally this balance works well, but some pupils with more complex needs sometimes have a narrower curriculum, particularly those pupils over the age of 11 who have to be retained with younger children because of accommodation restrictions. These pupils have a strong sensory English curriculum, but there needs to be more creative ways of exploring an increasingly progressive and broader range of English topics with them, for example through drama and more age-appropriate stories/ literature. Higher-attaining pupils are being well challenged by the curriculum now in place in the secondary classes. The strong teaching is enabling these pupils to make good strides in their reading and writing so that next year a number of pupils will take entry level qualifications in GCSE English as well as the current range of certificate courses available. One autistic pupil currently attends a partner secondary school for English and is well supported by her teachers in this.
63. On entry to the school pupils' attainment in English is very low because of their learning difficulties and many are at the very earliest stages of communication. Some with the most complex difficulties may be very unresponsive to the world. Consistently good, and often very good, teaching in Years 1 and 2 means that pupils' achievements in these classes are good overall and sometimes very good. Those pupils with the most complex needs hold eye

contact for longer and are much more aware of others around them by Year 2, communicating through a range of means – eye contact, facial expression, vocalisation and/or gesture. Pupils with less complex needs move forward steadily in their use of signs, symbols and spoken language and those with specific difficulties in communicating or with autism are more co-operative and responsive to others. Strong foundations are laid in the primary classes for early reading skills and signs and symbols are used well to help the most able towards a small vocabulary of words and phrases that they read confidently. The highest-attainers read simple texts with interest and enthusiasm by Year 7 and others have very strong attitudes and interests in books and other signs and symbols around them. Writing skills are less well developed than self-expression and reading; however, pupils' progress is satisfactory. The school is making good use of writing frames in some classes and promotes handwriting well, although more could be done, and particularly in relation to the use of ICT, to help pupils be more independent in their writing.

64. In the secondary classes the pupils continue to make good and often very good progress in their self-expression and in their responsiveness to others' ideas. Those pupils with less learning difficulties express themselves well by Year 11. They listen carefully to their teachers and other pupils' explanations and confidently respond to them. They are keen to learn and share their work and generally they take care with its presentation. They read simple texts fluently and a few write with confidence about the books they have read. The strong learning experiences that they have are well thought out and often very well taught by their teachers. Their special educational needs are also well met. For example, the older pupils with autism studied the text '*The Curious Incident of the Dog...*' and compared their own and other experiences with this. This helped them to consider their own and others' behaviour. Similarly, older pupils with severe learning difficulties, including those in the Post 16 department have very systematic support for their reading and writing skills and are achieving well and sometimes very well. They are very proud of their skills and keen to try them out and the certificate courses that they follow are suited well to promote these. However, as in the primary department, more varied use of ICT and more opportunities for writing in other subjects would support this aspect of their English further
65. Teaching and learning are strong in English and teachers work well with the limited amount of speech and language therapy support that is available. Not all pupils who need them, however, have communication targets in their Individual Education Plans and this means that sometimes opportunities are lost for extending pupils' specific understanding and expressive language further. Similarly, there is no planned and progressive drama curriculum, although in some classes role-play is used well to extend pupils' understanding and participation in lessons and there are regular school productions. This is a missed opportunity for extending pupils' self and other awareness and their confidence in understanding and exploring more complex ideas and subjects.
66. However, the leadership and management of English are good. The co-ordinator has worked well with other staff to develop and secure the curriculum in individual classes and monitors and supports medium-term planning well. Some staff then have detailed and evaluative plans to support their teaching and involve teaching assistants well; some, however, keep very limited other plans and occasionally, for example in one class for younger autistic pupils, this means that they do not have the right balance of learning opportunities, having too few writing experiences and broader English opportunities.
67. There has been a strong response to the national strategies, which have been well supported by advice from the LEA and collaboration with other schools. Although books and general resources for English have been improved, and there are more resources appropriate to the age and stage of the pupils available, the library itself is unsatisfactory. There is restricted access for pupils with complex needs and the range of books and study facilities are generally too limited. This is particularly the case for the higher-attainers, but also for those with more complex needs. Similarly, the accommodation in some classrooms limits the range of activities that can be carried out, particularly for autistic pupils, those with complex needs and

for older pupils in general. Classrooms are small or have access difficulties or some pupils with severe and complex needs are located outside the main building in small classrooms with limited room for more varied teaching approaches and class organisations to be tried.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. The school's strong emphasis on communication is carried over into other subjects and there is good and often very good support for this in almost all subjects. Similarly, early literacy skills are well promoted, particularly reading and writing. In the lower part of the school, themes and topics in history, geography and other subjects support pupils' reading and interest in books well. However, there could be more varied ways of helping pupils to record what they have learned. Symbols are used very well to promote pupils' understanding of what they are thinking about, but also to lay the foundations for literacy in other subjects. In the secondary department, teachers systematically help pupils to apply their reading skills in subjects either to text or in simple research exercises as they try to find out more about a topic or subject or place. The certificate courses that they study promote literacy well and in the visits and outings they make pupils are encouraged to make simple shopping lists, write notes, according to their ability, and plan for how they will write up what they are learning, for example through the use of writing frames. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is good overall, although there is more scope to monitor this and to ensure that writing in particular is extended through the curriculum in all classes.
69. Only a limited number of **French** lessons were seen. These were taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9. Evidence from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinator and examination of pupils' records, work and teacher files support a judgement that provision is at least sound in French and has some good and very good features. Strengths lie in the enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator and the good teaching observed. Pupils are strongly motivated to learn French and almost all concentrate and listen very well. They try hard to pronounce and spell words correctly and to remember what their teacher has said. Some who listen less well in other lessons, listen and co-operate very well indeed, including some autistic pupils who are included in French sessions. However, a few pupils who should be are not taught French (often because they are in classes with pupils in Years 3 to 6 and French is not taught there); these pupils have not been disapplied from the subject. The school recognises this and is exploring ways of enabling all pupils to have access to French.
70. A carefully planned programme builds on a commercially available scheme and systematically develops pupils' confidence in using and understanding French. A short amount of time is available for learning the subject, however, and despite the good teaching, pupils make only satisfactory progress. In Years 7 and 8, pupils learn a range of simple French constructions and vocabulary in their spoken and written forms. In Year 9, pupils exchange simple information about school, likes and dislikes, and food and drink in French. The highest-attainers can read and write simple sentences and answer questions quickly and without prompting in relation to these. Other pupils use adult help and other children's models well. All pupils enjoy the challenge of the simple games that their teacher has devised, although more use of ICT would motivate the groups even more and some opportunities for reinforcing language and vocabulary are lost. French is taught as part of the school's vocational programme in Years 10 and 11 and pupils extend their skills soundly through this work.
71. Teaching is good because of the strong relationships with pupils, the good management of behaviour and the teacher's persistence in exemplifying what pupils are to learn. There is good team work with support staff and good use of available resources and time. However, only limited resources are available and more software and other media support such as video would enhance learning programmes further. Pupils' progress is monitored and assessed soundly and the information gained is used to adapt programmes. French makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social growth and interest in others. Most pupils celebrate each other's successes and enjoy finding out about French culture as well as exploring new French words. Pupils are proud of the French they have learned and say that they enjoy the

lessons and want to try out their French with others. The school does not yet have a programme of visits to support French or a way of enhancing the subject, for example through a French club, but is exploring the possibility of French 'days' in order to involve pupils in French culture and in the language even more.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall the quality of teaching is good and good use is made of the National Numeracy Strategy in planning and classroom organisation.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics; the assessment arrangements are good and enable pupils' progress and attainment to be tracked effectively.
- Information and communication technology is not consistently included in teachers' planning and the breadth of the curriculum is limited in a few classes.
- The subject co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well, but further improvements are needed in monitoring teaching and learning.

Commentary

72. The quality of teaching was very good in over a third of lessons observed during the inspection. Teachers and support staff challenge and support the pupils well and ensure that pupils know and understand what they need to do. Effective use is made of signs and symbols to augment communication in numeracy lessons, where appropriate. Most teachers throughout the school use the three-part lesson structure of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) well to plan their lessons. In most lessons, the pace of the teaching and learning are good; pupils stay on task and learn well as a result. In lessons where the teaching was very good, information and communication technology (ICT) was identified in planning and used to augment communication or reinforce learning. In some classes (usually those with the younger autistic pupils) there is an over-reliance on teaching to targets and this narrows the range of opportunities provided for the pupils. The management of pupils' behaviour is always good and teachers understand the special educational needs of the pupils very well.
73. Pupils achieve well in using and applying their knowledge and understanding of number in practical situations. Good use is made of 'real' money in some of the classes for pupils to practise money sums; in one lesson in the secondary part of the school, pupils recognised coins up to £2.00 and calculated how much change they needed when purchasing items from the class 'café'. Pupils also visited the local shops and market to use their knowledge and understanding in real-life situations. These practical sessions and activities strongly support pupils' understanding. All pupils have number targets. Targets for the least able pupils are drawn from elements of the P-scales and more able pupils have targets linked to the NNS programmes and National Curriculum levels although some targets are unclear. Assessment overall, however, is good. Pupils are formally assessed twice a year using the P-scales data and other tests. This information is used appropriately for statutory target-setting and for monitoring purposes.
74. Although there are very good examples of the use of ICT in mathematics and numeracy lessons, this is not always identified in teachers' planning and many of the lessons observed did not plan for or use ICT. In the subject co-ordinator's recent audit of ICT usage, most teachers listed a very limited range of programs for their pupils and some classes have no suitable software. This aspect of provision requires urgent action. Opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in handling data are generally restricted. Pictograms and block graphs, however, are used in some classes. There is good evidence of pupils being

able to use space and shape, for example in work on two and three dimensional shapes. Standard and non-standard measurement is identified in teachers' medium-term planning, and older pupils measure length, capacity and mass using metric scales.

75. There is a detailed policy and scheme of work in place and the subject leader provides very good support to colleagues across the school. All the issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed and monitoring of termly planning now takes place. Scrutiny of pupils' work has been undertaken by the headteacher and deputy, but not all classes have been seen. There is no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in mathematics by the co-ordinator and no overview of the quality of this aspect of provision for evaluation purposes. The co-ordinator is aware that this is an aspect of provision requiring improvement. Resources and staffing to support teaching and learning are good and all older pupils now follow appropriate accredited courses, which include ASDAN Youth Award and AQA Entry Level. The school's involvement in the Key Stage 3 Strategy and Mathematics Challenge is good and support has been identified in order to enhance pupils' learning in mathematics. Improvements since the last inspection are sound and the subject is well led and managed by a fully-committed senior teacher.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. The use of mathematics across other school subjects is overall satisfactory. It is good in science and food technology and in the Post 16 department. Students in this class for example, as part of their mini-enterprise, made lavender bags to sell, involving metric measuring and weighing. Pupils' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding would be enhanced further if links to numeracy were identified consistently in the planning of other school subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good** and remains a strength of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching and support by teaching assistants results in pupils being highly motivated and wanting to learn.
- Programmes of work and individual lessons are well planned and promote very good achievements, especially in Years 7 to 11.
- The subject is very well led and co-ordinated.

Commentary

77. Pupils' achievement in the junior part of the school (Years 1 to 6) is good and in the secondary part of the school (Years 7 to 11) is very good. This is due mainly to the very high standard of teaching and planning of lessons in this part of the school. Teachers plan their work well. The long-term planning ensures full coverage of the National Curriculum attainment targets. However, the significant emphasis on scientific investigation in the secondary department results in pupils being excited and enthusiastic about their work and achieving highly. Although the standards that most pupils attain are below the nationally expected level, their work shows that some pupils in some of the secondary classes are approaching the levels of attainment reached by their peers in mainstream schools.
78. Overall teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching is reflected by pupils' achievements. In the junior department, teaching is good overall; it is never less than satisfactory and often good or sometimes very good. In the secondary department it is very good overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and provide pupils with a range of 'hands-on' scientific experiences that allow them to make choices and draw conclusions from their observations and the data they collect. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of science

and how to help pupils learn. The quality of questioning, the use of scientific vocabulary and the considerable attention to scientific methods results in a very good pace of learning. The deployment of, and support given by, teaching assistants is very good. They support and help pupils with complex needs enabling them to access the full curriculum. Some lessons are taught in classrooms where science resources are less readily available than in the dedicated science room. In the most successful lessons teachers match the work very well to the pupils' needs. In the less successful lessons there is little planning for different needs and it is often the amount of support that different pupils are to receive that is considered, rather than the intended learning outcomes for different individuals.

79. The leadership and management of science are very good. The subject is led by a skilled and dedicated teacher. She monitors the subject well and has a good understanding of both what pupils have learned and how successfully teaching and learning have been across the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection; although the subject was taught very well at that time, monitoring of the subject was limited. The subject leader now undertakes this task thus enabling learning to be supported by developments such as the use of the poly-tunnel and wildlife garden, started at the time of the last inspection. The work in science emphasises scientific method (Attainment Target 1) very well, although the co-ordinator ensures a broad coverage of the full curriculum. Towards the end of their life in school, students follow courses that lead to Entry Level accreditation. More able pupils, however, have been so well taught and attained so much in the subject that a higher level accredited course such as GCSE could be more appropriate for them.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good** in the secondary and Post 16 departments but is **unsatisfactory** overall in the primary department.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the secondary department and those lessons taught by the co-ordinator in the primary department.
- Others pupils in the primary department who are taught by their class teachers do not achieve as much as they could; this is because the opportunities for pupils with complex needs and those with PMLD to learn a wide range of skills in ICT are limited.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils are well motivated to learn.
- Software to support learning in other subjects is inadequate overall and does not fully meet pupils' needs.
- Staff compensate well for the inadequacies of the accommodation.
- Too little has been done to develop the provision for ICT over the whole school and some of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report remain.

Commentary

80. The provision for ICT is not consistent throughout the school and some groups of pupils are not achieving as much as they could. Pupils in the secondary and Post 16 departments are taught ICT systematically. The good teaching (mostly by the subject co-ordinator), together with the demands of the new more challenging courses developed, result in pupils making good progress and achieving well. Some pupils are clearly on track to do well in their Entry Level courses (to be first completed in 2005) and some younger pupils should be capable of higher level GCSE courses if they continue to make the progress throughout Years 7 to 11. Some Year 11 pupils have achieved well in the work undertaken (and some very well) but the low level course they currently follow does not stretch the higher-attaining pupils sufficiently. This has now been appropriately addressed for subsequent year groups.

81. Some classes in the primary department are taught by the co-ordinator and, in these, the pupils also make good progress. A few classes are taught by their class teachers (largely those pupils with autism or PMLD); in these classes the opportunities the pupils have are narrow and they do not learn as much as they could. In the Nursery / Reception class, the opportunities provided meet the needs of the children very well indeed; however, their skills are not always sufficiently built on as they move through the primary department. A few teachers have limited understanding of what pupils with more complex needs can achieve and feel that the most they can do is to use the computer to play simple educational games. Some fear that the use of the computer to support learning generally will disrupt pupils' learning and behaviour. In these classes the lack of appropriate ways to teach the full National Curriculum programme of study (and no plans in place to do this) limits these pupils' achievements.
82. The teaching seen during the inspection was good. Very good subject knowledge by the teacher, coupled with interesting activities and careful, well-considered support, results in pupils learning well. Introductions are swift and the challenge set by the teacher spurs pupils to try their best. Although there is no interactive whiteboard in the ICT suite (which could help pupils to be more involved at this time), the multi-media projector is used to good effect. Despite the awkward layout of the room, demonstrations are helpful, although more emphasis on key vocabulary at this time could help pupils grasp ideas more quickly. During the main part of the lesson, pupils work very hard, often engrossed in their work. Although both boys and girls generally respond equally overall, in some lessons (often in Years 9 to 11), it is clearly the girls who work at a topic to a greater depth and are more willing to try out ideas. Occasionally, pupils could be given 'tools' to help them be more independent and avoid waiting for adult support; this includes dictionary and text-to-speech software for those pupils with literacy difficulties. Teaching assistants usually provide good support, although at times they have to ask the teacher for help because they are unclear how a particular application works. Plenary sessions, at the end of the lesson, are often too brief and are more about what pupils have done rather than assessing what they have learned.
83. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator offers good support to colleagues and has taken a lead role in assessing and providing pupils with the most complex needs with ways of accessing a computer. He has worked hard at improving provision and planning for the year groups he teaches. Planning for these is now satisfactory. This has been a positive move and many pupils' attainment has been raised because of this. However, there is no whole-school overview (through systematic monitoring of planning and teaching) of the subject and how it is being taught in those year groups where ICT is led by class teachers. The computer suite is used well for ICT teaching but is used little by other groups. Its unsatisfactory layout and lack of adequate ventilation does not make it an ideal setting for some pupils with complex needs or PMLD.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. Overall, computers are used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning in other subjects. This is stronger in some classes than others, particularly where staff see the benefit and have appropriate software to do this. For instance, it is used really well by Year 9 pupils with moderate learning difficulties and by Year 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties. The provision of software to support learning is too patchy and limited overall. Although higher-attaining pupils write using a word processor or create text and graphics using desktop publishing, not all pupils are provided with ways of 'typing' their own text / graphics. Although the school has software where text and graphics can be inserted easily by pupils to help them write, it is not used widely. Pupils' writing is mainly supported by staff recording for lower-attaining pupils and those with complex needs, rather than them doing this for themselves.

HUMANITIES

85. **History** and **geography** were both sampled. Insufficient teaching was seen during the inspection to make a judgement on provision as a whole. Both these subjects are taught as part of the humanities syllabus and are taught each half term in rotation. Evidence regarding provision is based on discussion with the subject co-ordinators, scrutiny of pupils' work and the observation of four lessons.
86. Pupils' achievements are generally good in these subjects. Pupils build on their previous experience and knowledge. Each subject has a separate co-ordinator and is well led and managed. Effective policies have been developed with a comprehensive scheme of work in place and the programmes fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum.
87. Pupils build a secure knowledge and understanding of the main features of the geography of the area. They have a developing awareness of the influence of economic activities on natural resources. Most understand and accurately use geographical terminology, correctly identifying the different areas of the United Kingdom. In the geography lesson observed in Year 9, the pupils identified the unique elements of a tropical forest environment. They sensibly discussed the vegetation and carefully considered the effect of deforestation in both the vegetation and the animal life.
88. In a history lesson, pupils discussed and analysed the background to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Role-play was well used and pupils explored the options facing Queen Elizabeth I arriving at the final decision. Another lesson combined history and geography and considered the Aztec way of life in Mexico. This lesson involved research on the computer and from reference books as well as moving into design technology through weaving and bead-making; this all enabled the pupils to get an insight into past civilisations and their way of life. In Years 1 and 2 in history, pupils' work demonstrated that they explored the passage of time with the changes in peoples' clothes and domestic equipment.
89. In Years 10 and 11, both subjects are taught. At Year 11 the subject forms part of the 'independence programme' organised for the pupils, for example travelling to the shops or leisure centres on their own or recalling events that have happened.
90. The teaching observed was at least good and in two lessons was very good. It is imaginative and makes effective use of local resources. Lessons are clearly planned and organised with interesting activities that help pupils to develop their skills and understanding. The work is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, with tasks to extend the learning of the higher-attaining pupils. The teaching is also linked to other areas of the curriculum. All the lessons are relaxed yet purposeful with very good relationships between teachers and pupils. At all stages literacy is reinforced with key words and accompanying symbols introduced to enable the pupils to understand the theme of the lessons.
91. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The new policy and schemes of work, and the planning of the subject across the school, have resulted in an improvement that is reflected in pupils' good progress. However, the school has not adopted an award-bearing course for Year 10 and 11 pupils to give them an opportunity to study for a recognised qualification. Resources are good and the very good displays around the school contain some well-presented pieces of written work. The co-ordinators monitor lesson plans but not the teaching. Good liaison between the primary and secondary departments ensures smooth progression and continuity in providing information on pupils' progress, needs and abilities.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although teaching and learning are good, and there is a broad range of learning experiences provided, there are only limited records showing pupils' attainment or progress.
- Resources for religious education are good; they are accessible and well organised.
- Good contact with the local vicar enhances pupils' experience of the different aspects of religious worship; this is supported by visits to different places of worship.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

92. The good provision reported in the last inspection has been maintained. Religious education embodies the aims and values of the school particularly well. The pupils are given a wide range of suitable learning experiences, and increase their knowledge and understanding of the main world religions well. It was only possible to observe four lessons. However, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with the subject co-ordinator, observation of school assemblies and religious displays provide good evidence of the school's provision.
93. Pupils' achievements across the school are good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn the basic facts of friendship and caring for others. In Years 3 to 6, they visit various places of worship; for instance they have met a priest and have discussed his special attire. Lessons about Noah's Ark were also the theme of an art and design lesson in a Year 6 class. In Years 7 to 9, the pupils study three other World Religions: Islam, Hindu and Judaism. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work for accreditation through the 'Dorset Religious Education Achievement in Middle Schools' (DREAMS) and also the ASDAN module. In the Post16 department religious education is taught through work from the award-bearing course and themes in their daily tasks, like helping others and sharing. Pupils behave sensibly, respond well to questions and take a pride in their work. In these various ways, their personal, moral and social development is enhanced.
94. Assemblies support the subject well; pupils celebrate religious festivals, taking parts in acting out stories. In an excellent secondary assembly, the theme was appreciating the treasures we have, such as 'hearing and sight'. All the pupils joined in the hymn-singing and the prayer, when they were given time for reflection. The final hymn was one of thanksgiving. In a primary assembly Year 4 pupils demonstrated their task that day for the whole assembly to celebrate. This assembly also had time for reflection and prayer and closed with a hymn.
95. Teaching of religious education is the responsibility of the individual class teachers and the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is good overall with many very good features. For example a very good lesson in Years 4 and 5 demonstrated the concept of 'celebration' by organising a birthday party for the learning support assistant. In Year 9 pupils were taught about the festival of 'Janmashtani', the story of Krishna's birth and how the Hindus celebrate it each year. A Year 11 lesson followed the ASDAN module on euthanasia, abortion, capital punishment and marriage. Pupils were encouraged to express their views and discuss how to make a choice in these matters. Pupils' attainments are not, however, systematically recorded, and teachers rely largely on written evaluations of lessons. As a result, reports make little reference to attainment and progress, and often merely describe topics covered.

96. Teachers have access to a very good range of learning resources of high quality and use them well. There are artefacts, books, videos, posters and pictures. The co-ordinator has ensured that resources are well organised and accessible by storing them in boxes associated with the main religions. Visits to places of worship form part of the curriculum, thus providing pupils with good experiences of religious and cultural diversity.
97. The co-ordination of religious education is satisfactory. The religious education team leader is enthusiastic and has based her policy and scheme of work on the Dorset 'Agreed Policy' on religious education. It is sufficiently flexible to take account of topical events as they occur and to reflect the faith of individual pupils, if necessary. At present, there is monitoring and evaluation of the planning of lessons and their outcome, but not of teaching. The scheme of work actively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is reinforced by cross-curricular links in other subjects such as personal and social education. The school is in the process of revising the scheme of work to follow the recently revised locally agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator is also a member of the local LEA group responsible for the regular revision of their 'Agreed Policy'.

TECHNOLOGY, VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS and PHYSICAL EDUCATION

98. Only one lesson in **art** could be observed and the subject has, therefore, been sampled. A good quality of work in the subject was seen in two and three dimensional displays around the school. Pupils use different materials in their paintings and collage work and ideas often relate to themes in literature. In a very good Year 4 and 5 display of the 'tortoise dream', the story of the 'Omumbo – Rombongo' tree was represented with the various fruits that grow from it. This was a collaborative effort by a number of pupils. It not only developed the pupils' designing skills to explore how shape, form, space, colour and texture can be used to create different designs, but also enhanced their social skills, as they had to work as a team to complete the task. Another display that is in the process of being made is the biblical story of Noah's Ark in a Year 6 class. Pupils respect all works of art and support and help each other's work and effort. The range of work analysed indicates that pupils make good progress in art.
99. The one lesson observed was pottery taught by a teaching assistant and the quality of teaching was good. The lesson referred to the influence of African art and its influence on modern European art. Pupils then had to build a strong coil pot effectively. The planning was good, staff used a wide variety of well-organised and readily available resources to enable the pupils to develop their work independently, and the work produced was of a high standard.
100. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Lesson plans are monitored, but not the teaching. Pupils' progress is evaluated on lesson plans and through pieces of work, assessed against subject targets set. However, comments are not always specific enough to measure progress accurately and formulate new targets. The co-ordinator has a sound long-term vision of how to develop the subject and provides sound leadership. She has developed a satisfactory policy and programmes of study that encompass work across the whole curriculum. The very good displays around the school are a clear indication of the outcome of the very good planning, stimulating teaching and the commitment of the co-ordinator. Pupils enjoy the challenges presented to them and, as a result, respond with enthusiasm and interest.
101. The school and the new co-ordinator have responded positively to the comments of the previous inspection when the overall judgement was that the provision in art was unsatisfactory. The new policy, a programme which encompasses all aspects of art, and the good planning in the subject have resulted in an improvement that is positively reflected in pupils' progress. There is no accredited course, however, available to pupils in Years 10 and 11 to give them an opportunity to study for a recognised qualification. As a result of the new innovations and developments, the improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

102. The school has no designated art room and the lessons are normally taught in the pupils' own classrooms. There is a kiln, however, and pottery is taught in a section of the design and technology room. This limits the scope of the teaching and can cause difficulty when storing the art resources. Resources are satisfactory overall.
103. **Design and technology** was sampled during the inspection with a focus on provision for older pupils in the secondary department. Only two lessons in food technology were observed and three in the other aspects of design and technology.
104. The provision for design and technology covers food technology, textiles, and resistant materials (wood and plastic). Pupils attend a local college for experience in working with metal. Since the previous inspection a co-ordinator has been appointed who monitors the work of the pupils at the different stages, but has had only a limited opportunity to monitor teaching.
105. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards an appropriate award in food technology. Teachers plan their work carefully from national schemes of work. The planning is good and assessment is regularly undertaken and used by staff to help pupils and modify planning. An analysis of the work for the award-bearing course shows that pupils' progress is good and the pupils achieve well.
106. Lessons in food technology were well planned. Staff provided good support for pupils' literacy skills and the sequencing of events. Pupils also developed their knowledge of hygiene and safety aspects when cooking and of the properties of the different ingredients. In a Year 8 lesson where the teaching was good pupils had to prepare and serve a pasta salad, which they designed themselves.
107. Three other lessons were observed in other aspects of the subject. The quality of teaching was good overall. The teaching in one lesson in the Post 16 department was very good. The students follow the ASDAN programme of study in 'Living Skills'. The teachers know the students well and the lessons are carefully planned to take account of their individual difficulties. Teaching is brisk and lively in all the lessons observed. Due care is always taken concerning health and safety issues whether in the classroom, workshop or food technology room. Lesson planning is carefully linked to the National Curriculum requirements and pupils are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and to evaluate their products.
108. Pupils are eager to learn when they are given the opportunity. Their behaviour was good in the lessons observed and when they have the opportunity to work independently, they are happy to do so. They want to learn from adults working with them and watch attentively. There is a very high level of valuable adult support and interaction to support teaching. However, sometimes this reduces pupils' opportunities for independent learning.
109. The school's accommodation for design and technology is satisfactory, despite some limitations for metalwork and certain aspects of woodwork. Resources are satisfactory and improvement is part of the school's development plan.
110. Only two lessons could be seen in **music** and the subject has, therefore, been sampled. Overall the provision for music is satisfactory and has been maintained since the previous inspection. The variety of music opportunities offered to the pupils has widened and the co-ordinator (a part-time specialist teacher) now teaches all the classes up to and including Year 9.
111. The quality of teaching in the two lessons observed was very good. In a Year 5 lesson, the pupils were introduced to 'pulse, rhythm, beat and pitch'. They practised singing together and learned to control pulse whilst singing. They explored rhythmic patterns and learned to recognise changes in pitch. A lesson with Year 9 pupils reinforced these principles of rhythmic patterns. In the lessons seen, the teacher had high expectations and the pupils responded

very well to this. She is highly committed and enthusiastic and, as a result, pupils were keen to do their best. She enables them to do this by skilful teaching, supporting pupils and correcting them as they practise. Relationships are very good, so pupils are not afraid to try, and there is a team spirit in the class. This was very well demonstrated in the Year 9 lesson when pupils were playing together a simple tune.

112. Across the school, pupils make sound progress in singing. In assemblies, they are able to sing a range of songs with a good sense of melody, pitch and phrasing. Many of the classes sing simple songs to enable their class to settle down at the beginning of lessons. Some pupils' singing is enhanced during the practice sessions with the school choir. This meets weekly during the lunch period and nearly a quarter of the pupils are members. High expectations and effective teaching ensured that pupils were effectively challenged. They were encouraged to improve their performance and this enabled them to make good gains in their learning. The choir performs in school celebrations like Christmas and Easter and also in neighbouring schools in the local schools' group when they meet at the summer singing day.
113. The school has allocated a classroom for three days a week for music teaching. The room, however, is not acoustically treated and is also used for two days as a class base. Pupils are, therefore, not able to practise during the week on individual instruments. Resources have improved since the previous inspection with the purchase of an electronic *Soundbeam*, which pupils activate by movement, guitars and keyboards. Young musicians, who are sponsored by a local charity, visit the school annually to give a concert and organise a workshop for the pupils.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's links with other schools and colleges extend the opportunities provided in physical education very positively.
- Pupils achieve well in the areas that are fully taught as a result of good teaching; provision for swimming is good.
- The accommodation and curriculum are unsatisfactory and do not enable all pupils to have full access to all aspects of the physical education programme.
- The temporary leadership provided by the headteacher for physical education is very good; however, due to staffing difficulties, the overall management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

114. Although the overall provision for physical education is unsatisfactory, there are aspects which are exemplary. There are strong links with 'Sturminster Newton Pyramid' of local mainstream schools and pupils are given opportunities in 'inclusive' sporting events both in and outside of Dorset, for example, a recent six-a-side soccer tournament in Southampton, sponsored by Sony Playstation, where Yewstock were the only special school in attendance for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The school has recently set up an excellent partnership with Shaftesbury Sports College, with a group of pupils with severe learning difficulties from the secondary part of the school taking part in indoor athletics on a regular basis. The school's active participation in the Dorset Special Schools Sports Association (DSSSA) has also provided excellent opportunities for pupils to compete with other schools in a fair, yet challenging way. Activities include soccer, netball, rounders, uni-hoc, swimming, athletics and cross country. In 2003 pupils were winners in the athletics championships and runners-up in the swimming gala, and during last term won the DSSSA Netball Trophy and were champions of the Swimming Gala for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

115. The timetable ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to go swimming or, as appropriate, attend hydrotherapy sessions. Warm-up and cool-down routines are used at the beginning and end of all physical education lessons. Whether it is 'keep fit', practising throwing or catching skills, playing games, balancing and using the crash mats, or athletics and long jump on Sturminster High School's playing field, lessons are well planned, pupils' behaviour is very well managed and pupils achieve well as a result of this. In a few lessons achievement is very good.
116. The unsatisfactory accommodation, particularly the inadequate changing rooms, small multi-purpose hall and the uneven playing field, however, severely restrict the range of opportunities the school can provide. Moreover, the scheme of work is not fully in place and teachers plan their lessons without properly knowing which programmes to follow and what aspects of physical education have already been covered. Dance, for example, has a very limited amount of time devoted to it but outdoor education is well provided for older pupils.
117. The headteacher, who is very well respected in the local authority as a physical education specialist, has provided strong leadership of the subject since September 2003, but has not been able to monitor, evaluate or effectively manage the subject due to other school priorities. The substantive co-ordinator, who is a subject specialist, has been absent due to illness for some time. As a consequence, planned developments in the subject have not taken place. Improvement since the last inspection has, therefore, been limited. Although positive attempts have been made to maintain the provision during this time and it is identified for improvement in the school's improvement plan, its management is now unsatisfactory and urgent action is needed to bring the subject up to the standard of the best subjects of the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is **good** and has some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinators are developing very good policies and programmes to guide teachers in planning their lessons and they monitor the provision throughout the school.
- It is taught as a discrete subject as well as in all other subjects in an inclusive educational programme.
- Teaching and learning are good with many very good features, as are pupils' attitudes to the subject.
- Pupils make good progress in the subject and in relation to their individual targets

Commentary

118. This subject was not reported on in the previous inspection two years ago. The co-ordinators have demonstrated strong leadership by developing a very good policy and programme to meet the very wide needs of pupils. The policy covers the whole spectrum of the statutory requirements and includes topics such as the environment, healthy living, and sex and relationships education. Pupils' decision-making is particularly fostered through the programme, the school council and during preparation for leaving school. The subject is taught through discrete lessons as well as part of the whole curriculum. Pupils are expected to be polite, help others and to respect the needs of their own peers in school; these are part of the school's core values. An example of this is the orderly manner in which the pupils behave and help each other during the recreation and lunch periods. The inclusion of the PMLD pupils is another example of how the school has developed an ethos of living together and helping each other. This is particularly evident in the Post 16 group, where students are preparing for transition to life after school.

119. In the discrete lessons a wide variety of topics are covered. In Years 1 and 2, the routine of settling the pupils before every session, as well as at drinks and snack time, plays a vital part of the daily procedure with pupils of this age. In a Year 6 lesson, the ideas of 'clean', 'dirty' and the importance of cleanliness and hygiene were emphasised before lunch. Lessons in the primary department stress the importance of developing pupils' interest, their attitude to the school environment and enhancing their social skills. For example, in a Year 5 class each pupil is allocated a daily duty so that they understand the need for collaborative effort in order to establish a well-organised class. The visit of a local constable to demonstrate and talk to pupils in Years 7 to 9 about personal safety is an example of the way the school involves itself with the local community. The constable explained the dangers of alcohol and solvent abuse. Pupils' responses demonstrated their keen interest and their understanding of the principles involved.
120. The school assemblies also make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal and social development. Assemblies have a moral theme which is explored and reinforced in many lessons. They are orderly occasions when various activities are performed including the presentation of awards and the occasional visit of local ministers of religion. Staff take every opportunity to remind pupils of inappropriate actions and their consequences. The school is fully involved in the local community by participating in various festivals held during the year. Earlier in the year the school organised a 'Whole Day Citizenship Workshop' when twelve local dignitaries spoke to the pupils in the form of workshops on various aspects of life. These included members of the Dorset Wildlife Trust, the local vicar, a demonstration by a beautician and the National Blood Service.
121. A strength of the teaching and learning is the detailed planning and preparation in the discrete lessons. Teachers have high expectations. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson where the teaching was very good. The topic of 'differences' between people, emphasised very well that people have different coloured skin and come from different races. The pupils were challenged to formulate an opinion about a series of photographs, for example about the colour of the face and hair as well as the people's ages. The teacher successfully used a variety of activities to show the pupils the differences and how these can influence opinion about people. In all the personal, social, health and citizenship lessons observed, pupils had an opportunity to explore the areas under discussion and formulate their own opinions. Suitable consolidation of these principles is discussed at other opportune times during the school day.
122. All staff take part in recording what the pupils have learned and this influences the review of targets well. Pupils are set precise individual targets that are closely linked to the objectives on their Statements of Special Educational Needs. These targets are often to do with life skills and are enhanced by the school's participation in visits and outdoor activities. For example, the school organises a week-long course at Atlantic College in South Wales for certain pupils. The Post 16 students develop life skills such as designing and making celebration cards, cooking and gardening. Records show that pupils make good progress towards their personal and social targets.
123. The school's provision for the pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship development is a strength of the school as it is inclusive and very closely linked to the very good relationships within the school community. Pupils respond extremely well to the positive atmosphere that allows them to develop in confidence and self-worth, becoming happy and assured young people. Pupils and students genuinely care for each other, showing real concern for other pupils. They delight in sharing the achievements of others. The school provides many opportunities for pupils and students to interact with the local community, when shopping or through work experience. This has had a significant impact, with pupils realising that they can relate very well to people outside the school and their known environment. Pupils and students are prepared well for the next stage of their lives.

POST 16

Provision in the Post 16 department is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programmes of study offered to students are good and reflect their individual strengths and needs.
- Teaching and learning are good and good use is made of the skilled and knowledgeable support staff.
- Accommodation for Post 16 students is unsatisfactory and inadequate to meet the complex and changing needs of students.

Commentary

124. Post 16 provision was not reported upon separately in the previous inspection so progress since that time cannot be judged. In addition, the criteria by which students are admitted to the unit results in a wide and changing range of special educational need that varies from year to year so comparison over time could have little meaning.
125. The achievements of students are good. The curriculum is broad and relevant to the needs of the students. The department ensures that programmes of work are geared well to meet the individual needs of students but, where appropriate, remain strongly linked to the National Curriculum or the programmes of study required of accredited courses such as ASDAN Toward Independence.. The award-bearing courses are appropriately chosen and student's portfolios are a credit to the work of the department.
126. The main feature of the good teaching is the way that staff in the department provide a good balance of support and challenge according to the individual needs of the students. This gives the students confidence in new situations and is highly effective in promoting the development of their independence skills. The effective team approach results in good quality collaborative planning between teachers and assistants. Staff are very knowledgeable about students' needs and students are approached in ways, and with a dignity, that show considerable regard for their age. Relationships within the classroom are very good, both within the peer group and with adults.
127. Students achieve well in communication and numeracy. Activities are very well planned to meet the diverse needs of the individual students. Sensory activities are used to good effect to promote students' understanding of how to communicate. Teachers show very good imagination and a very good use of resources. Practical mathematical situations help students improve their numeracy skills. There is a good range of activities devised for the purpose of introducing the students to the world of work and to further education opportunities. These links provide the students with very good opportunities to develop their social skills in a range of settings. Computers are used effectively to involve and engage students, as well as for higher-attaining students to develop their word-processing and desktop-publishing skills. Teachers are in the process of developing switch-operated software which has a more adult theme for students; the students' response to this software is very strong.
128. The department is also successful in promoting students' personal development. The students have good quality individual targets and these are an integral part of all their learning activities. They plan and cook meals and learn to cope with other daily routines such as washing and ironing.

129. The unit is housed within the main school area and is a rather cluttered, small room where all activities have to be undertaken such as cooking, teaching and physiotherapy. Disabled access is problematic, especially given the complex needs of some of the students. For example, there is not enough room for students to operate electric wheelchairs. The room in the main building does not allow students to feel 'adult' or separate from the school and younger children. Again, its size does not allow for the wide variety of differing needs or numbers of successive cohorts of students.

130. The teacher responsible for the Post 16 department provides good leadership and manages the work well. She is well supported by a team of efficient, skilled and knowledgeable support staff who ensure that students are cared for, respected and allowed to develop their skills and maturity. Provision in this unit is good because of this high level of commitment and skill by both teaching and teaching assistants.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	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 against individual targets and not national standards.*