

INSPECTION REPORT

RAVENSBOURNE SCHOOL

Romford, Essex

LEA area: Havering

Unique reference number: 102364

Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Cameron

Lead inspector: Mrs Patricia Potheary

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 February 2004

Inspection number: 259039

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	98
School address:	Neave Crescent Faringdon Avenue Harold Hill Romford Essex
Postcode:	RM3 8HN
Telephone number:	01708 341800
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pamela Coles
Date of previous inspection:	14 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ravensbourne is a community day special school for 90 girls and boys aged 2 – 19 years. There are currently 98 pupils on roll. Most pupils are of white British origin and there are 9 pupils from 7 other ethnic groups. Only one pupil has English as a second language at an early stage of acquisition. Forty-one pupils have severe learning difficulties (SLD) and 57 have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). There is a small class of 5 primary pupils with autism who are taught separately. The school has very small numbers of pupils in some age groups, and large variations in ability between pupils of different ages. There is a balance of pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) aged 5 to 11 years, but pupils aged 11 to 16 years are mainly those with PMLD. In 2002, 15 pupils were eligible for free school meals, which is low compared to similar schools. There are 18 pupils in public care, which is high. The school has received the Activemark award 2002 and Investors in People 1999. The school is subject to re-organisation proposals to become part of an inclusive complex of new schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21765	Patricia Potheary	Lead inspector	Mathematics Geography History French
9619	Robert Miller	Lay inspector	
23411	John Baker	Team inspector	English Art Religious education Personal and social education English as an additional language Special educational needs
8056	Howard Probert	Team inspector	Science Music Physical education Foundation stage
19413	Frank Price	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship Design and technology Post sixteen provision

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ravensbourne is a smoothly run and popular school, which offers satisfactory overall provision with many strengths. Pupils make satisfactory and often good progress, because teaching is good overall. Levels of care are high and leadership, management and value for money are satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in English and communication, their personal and social development, art, drama, music and physical education.
- The Teaching of National Curriculum subjects is good overall and consistently good for pupils aged 7 to 11, in the foundation stage and the Further Education Centre.
- There are significant weaknesses in the way the curriculum is planned, organised, timetabled, led and managed, leading to underachievement in several subjects and classes, despite good overall teaching.
- Strategic planning for future school development is good and appropriate.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the quality of their relationships with staff and each other are good, helping them to learn and become more independent.
- The quality of care is good and the new system for setting and recording individual targets in each subject is very good.
- Links with parents and other schools are good and with the community, very good.
- The environment and accommodation for the special class for pupils with autism are unsatisfactory and pupils' learning is hindered as a result.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There have been a large number of improvements: in accommodation, the quality of teaching, pupils' attitudes, the curriculum and other aspects, such as improved provision for pupils' cultural development and assessment. All of the previous issues have been addressed, but some connected with the curriculum, particularly the time allocated to each subject, have not been addressed sufficiently well and still remain as issues.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 11	Satisfactory	Good

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

Pupils achieve to a satisfactory level from age 5 to 16 and well in the foundation stage and in the Further Education Centre. This is the same for all pupils regardless of ability, gender, their particular special educational need or ethnicity. In English pupils achieve well, particularly in communication and speaking and listening skills, which are fostered in all subjects. Pupils show satisfactory achievement in mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Achievements in personal, social and health education, drama, art, physical education and music are good. Several pupils, who achieve sufficiently well, successfully move on to other schools, including mainstream education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' attitudes are also good and this helps them to learn well in lessons. Behaviour is consistently good and pupils show consideration and respect for others. One or two pupils with autism from the special class successfully move into the main school each year as they are helped to become more sociable. Attendance is also good. Pupils are able to become independent through careful planning of extra responsibilities as well as good communication and mobility programmes.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are also good overall in the Foundation Stage, for pupils aged 7-11, in the performing arts and physical education and for pupils in the Further Education Centre. Teaching and learning in classes for pupils aged 11-16 are satisfactory rather than good. Teachers and teaching assistants understand the pupils' individual learning needs very well, which helps them to make work appropriate. Communication is fostered carefully to help pupils understand and make their wishes known. Relationships in the classroom are of a high quality so that pupils feel confident and want to work hard. The lack of detailed planning for clear lesson outcomes means that the quality of teaching is inconsistent and so learning is slowed in several lessons. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The Foundation Stage, the Further Education Centre and performing arts curricula are good. There are good links with parents and carers and good opportunities for extra-curricular activities. However, because planning lacks detail, there is a marked difference in the quality of teaching and learning between one class and another. In addition, the time allowed for each subject varies considerably between classes, so that, although teaching is usually good, pupils do not achieve as much as they could if more time were spent learning about subjects of the National Curriculum. The accommodation for pupils with autism is unsatisfactory and provides a difficult environment for teaching them. School staff provide good levels of care and guidance, especially considering the severe medical needs of many pupils. Links with other schools and colleges are good and developing well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by the curriculum team, are effective in identifying the key priorities for the school and communicating well with parents and the outside community. The school runs smoothly. However, the direction to improve the curriculum is weak and has led to big variations in quality, especially in the amount of time pupils spend actively learning. School management is satisfactory with well-established management of performance but insufficient involvement of key staff and no clear leadership team to drive improvement. Governance is satisfactory and improving and is well placed to help the school move forward.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents are satisfied with the school, especially the quality of teaching, the care shown to pupils and the fact that their children enjoy school. However a minority express concerns about the quality of provision in one or two classes. The majority feel that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. Parents' views are supported by the inspection findings. The majority of pupils enjoy school, feel that they are achieving well and think that school helps them to learn well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the curriculum to raise standards further by:
 - Improving subject planning, especially for pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
 - Developing a more consistent system for timetabling which increases and sets the time given to subjects of the National Curriculum for each class group.
 - Ensuring that the use of set lesson time is more efficient to increase the amount of purposeful activity and taught time throughout the day.
 - Improving leadership, direction and management of the curriculum throughout the school.
 - Upgrading the environment and accommodation for pupils with autism to better suit their additional special educational needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall achievement is satisfactory. Achievement is good in the foundation stage, for pupils in the Further Education Centre and in English, art, physical education, drama and music throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in relation to their individual education plan targets.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well in English and communication, which are fostered carefully in all activities and lessons.
- Pupils are helped to develop a good understanding of personal, social and health issues.
- Achievement in the performing arts and physical education is a strength of the school.
- There is considerable inconsistency in the quality of achievement in lessons. Pupils aged 7 to 11 years often achieve well, but lower attaining pupils aged 14 to 16 and those with autism rarely achieve better than a satisfactory level in National Curriculum subjects.
- Teaching time for all subjects but English is too limited and this reduces pupils' achievements in the long term.

Commentary

1. Differences in the balance of pupils' abilities and the fact that the most able pupils successfully and regularly move on to other schools make comparisons between age groups unreliable. The school sets whole school targets based on the performance of individual pupils. These data show that pupils achieve between 60% and 80% of their individual targets, which is good. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups, such as girls and boys or pupils who are looked after in public care.
2. Children in the foundation stage achieve well in all the areas of learning and very well in their mathematical and physical development. This reflects high quality organisation and teaching.
3. Achievement is satisfactory for all pupils aged 5 to 16 years. The main findings show that, in most lessons, pupils achieve well but achievement over time is satisfactory. In English and personal and social education, pupils are helped to achieve well for several reasons; teaching in lessons is of a consistently high quality, management has focused on communication and personal development and staff ensure that pupils' personal and communication targets are paramount in all activities throughout the day.
4. There is exciting work in art, drama, physical education and music, which means that pupils achieve well overall in these subjects. The decision to bring in high quality specialists for music therapy, art and drama has contributed to the good achievement in these areas.
5. The reason that achievement is satisfactory rather than good over time is due to weak curriculum organisation and management, so that pupils do not have enough time spent in learning within the subject areas. This finding includes satisfactory progress in the core subjects of mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
6. Although achievement in lessons is good overall, it is satisfactory for two special groups. Pupils with autism achieve to a satisfactory level, but the unsatisfactory quality of their accommodation and environment and the weaknesses in curriculum planning, mean that achievement in lessons is rarely better than satisfactory. However, achievement in their personal and social development is good and reflects the careful and specialised work

undertaken by the well-qualified staff. This has enabled several pupils to improve sufficiently to move into the main part of the school. The other group are pupils with PMLD aged 14-16 years. Their achievement is usually satisfactory rather than good in lessons due to a lack of sharply focused teaching, limitations in the role of subject leaders in developing teaching and an inconsistent whole school approach to setting of the timetable.

7. Pupils in the Further Education Centre achieve well overall. They achieve well in a range of subjects and activities, which are suited to their age, largely due to good planning and teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Pupils' moral, social, cultural and spiritual development is also good. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and the values they hold enable them and others to learn well in class and to enjoy school.
- Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are good. This is reflected in the good behaviour in lessons.
- Lessons are not always able to start on time because of the late arrival of the transport with some pupils.
- The school plans effectively to ensure that pupils gain wide experience in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Commentary

8. The rate of attendance is above that of similar schools nationally. This is an improvement on the previous inspection and the school, with good support from parents, works effectively to achieve this result. The authorised levels of absence are well below that of similar schools nationally. Exclusions are very low.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.9
National data	8.5

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.8
National data	0.5

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

No of pupils on roll
32

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1	0

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

9. As in the last inspection, transport provided for pupils sometimes arrives late. Thus the school day does not always get off to a prompt start, resulting in less time for learning.
10. Pupils enjoy coming to school and develop strong relationships with their peers in classes. They react positively to the many opportunities for working in classrooms and also to the social experiences in the swimming pool and electronic sensory-music room. There they gain good opportunities to communicate in a multi-sensory way. Pupils are generally well behaved and co-operative in lessons, listening to adults and following instructions because staff set high expectations for their conduct. Where pupils have behaviour plans these are carefully implemented so that the working of classes is rarely interrupted. Pupils are encouraged to take different responsibilities as they progress through the school. For example, younger pupils take class registers to the school office. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are involved in recycling paper and shredding waste paper. Relationships within the school are constructive and adults provide good role models for the pupils. The strong focus on inclusion means that all pupils within the school feel valued and work well in harmony with one another.
11. Any incidents of bullying or harassment are rare and dealt with appropriately. The behaviour management policy is effective in providing a calm environment in which pupils can work and play. There is a minority of pupils whose behaviour gives cause for concern. These are dealt with very well through individual behaviour plans. Also, the reward system and certificates are linked well to pupils' individual targets for social and academic achievement. This provides good incentives for the majority of pupils to co-operate and helps to build their self-esteem. There are pupils in a few classes who are not fully motivated because teachers do not make the goal of the lesson clear and they are not sure what they are aiming for.
12. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and it is promoted well in a variety of ways, including time for reflection and excitement about the world around them in lessons. Good moral development is fostered well through clear rules and reminders of why they need to consider the needs of others. There is plenty of opportunity within and outside school for pupils to develop good social skills, visiting local amenities and helping support the community. Cultural appreciation and understanding of different ethnic groups is developed well through many subjects, especially religious education, geography, art and music.
13. Children in the Foundation Stage are provided with good opportunities to work towards the achievement of personal, social and emotional goals. They learn in a secure and well-structured environment, with very good links with the parents who regularly come into school to work with the teachers and their children in both small and large groups.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning in most lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory with several strengths but significant weaknesses.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching for children in the foundation stage, for pupils aged 7 to 11 years and in the Further Education Centre is consistently good or very good and learning in lessons is always good.
- Teaching quality is inconsistent for pupils aged 5-7 with autism and for those aged 11-16 years with the most complex needs and this results in satisfactory rather than good overall achievement.
- Teaching assistants contribute substantially to the good quality of pupils' learning in lessons.

- Use of symbols, signing and communication aids is particularly good in many subjects and supports pupils' understanding very well.
- Teachers know and understand the pupils very well, which helps them to match work well to a range of different individual needs.
- A lack of systematic detailed planning makes lesson objectives and learning outcomes unclear in several lessons and learning is slower as a result.
- Assessment is inconsistent. It is good for pupils' individual targets but is not well linked to what pupils are expected to learn in many lessons. This leaves teachers unclear as to what needs to be taught when they plan the next lesson.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 53 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	10 (19%)	26 (49%)	13 (24%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	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.

14. The good quality of teaching in most of the school and in the majority of subjects leads directly to a good quality of achievement and learning in lessons. This is because teachers in these lessons link the work well to individual targets, making sure that all pupils, whatever their ability or special educational need are able to learn. For these age groups lessons have clear objectives and purposeful tasks. The use of signing, symbols and communication aids is well established in lessons and helps all pupils to make their needs known, make meaningful choices and work well with others or independently where appropriate.
15. For pupils with autism, aged 5-7 in the special class, teaching and their learning in subjects of the National Curriculum are satisfactory rather than good, mainly because the environment and classroom are not suited to their needs. For example there are no individual working bays reserved for particular children, making it more difficult to manage them. The teachers and teaching assistants are highly trained and knowledgeable in working with pupils with autism, but there is a lack of effective short-term subject planning. This means that several of their lessons have a limited focus and finish too soon and that the predictable structure of set lessons is not well established. As a result the pupils, who have very severe behavioural difficulties, respond with more limited attention as the lesson progresses. When the pupils with autism are being taught in a less structured environment, where play and imagination are fostered, it is highly skilled and successful and these pupils make good and sometimes very good progress with their personal and social development. They also progress well in physical education and swimming. In one lesson the very good social skills being fostered meant that pupils related to each other and staff with long, friendly gazes, laughter and requests for help. For pupils aged 14 to 16 years with PMLD teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good for similar reasons; particularly, that lesson planning is not detailed enough, lacking individual targets and lasting too long without variation.
16. In most lessons teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to the good learning taking place, showing skill and patience in getting the best from each individual. Where the teaching assistants are not so effective it is usually the result of weak planning to deploy them effectively.
17. Assessment has improved well since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall. The use of 'P' scales to measure achievement is well established. Individual pupil targets have been set in every subject for most pupils and progress in these are assessed clearly using a new and effective system, ('B' squared). This helps pupils and their parents well to understand what they need to do to make progress. However, not all teachers assess what is achieved in

each lesson systematically, simply because there are no clear individual lesson goals. The school recognises the need to make assessment of lessons more consistent so that individual pupils' learning can be taken forward more effectively.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Staffing levels are good and resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The extra-curricular opportunities provided are very good.
- Physical education and the performing arts are a strength especially drama and music therapy.
- The Foundation Stage and the Further Education Centre curricula are good, providing a wide range of suitable experiences.
- Timetables are imprecise and lack consistency. In several classes they are poorly constructed and result in too little time spent on certain subjects or on learning during the day.
- External accreditation for pupils aged 14-19 is not developed.
- Planning is different for every class, which leads inconsistent quality and satisfactory rather than good overall progress.
- The environment and accommodation in the special class for pupils with autism are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

18. The satisfactory curriculum offers a wide range of suitable courses, meets all statutory requirements and is soundly matched to all the different special educational needs of the pupils. Personal, social and health education is well developed and meets pupils' needs in an individual way. There is a strong and successful emphasis on meeting the needs of all pupils and to be fully inclusive. The curriculum offered at the Foundation Stage and in the Further Education Centre is good. It is carefully matched to pupils' particular needs and stages of school life. There is good liaison between home and school to enable consistent approaches to be used for individual pupils in the areas of personal and social development and communication strategies.
19. The school has achieved the Activemark award. This reflects the importance the school has attached to physical education, which has included activities such as bowling, cricket and rugby. This has served to enrich the curriculum.
20. The very good extra-curricular opportunities include visits to the local community such as the library, swimming pool, shops and college, which are used well to support pupils' learning. There is an impressive array of after school opportunities, such as eating out, attending the cinema, and visits to places of interest. The performing arts are a strength of the school and the Chicken Shed Drama Company has provided very good experiences for pupils from Ravensbourne and mainstream schools to work together. The school has used an outward-bound centre to provide activities such as canoeing, climbing and archery. The school has also provided holiday activities for pupils with PMLD.
21. Timetables lack sufficient detail, with a different style for each class. This makes it difficult for teachers and school managers to monitor what is being taught over time. In some classes timetables are poorly constructed. For example, English, although usually well timetabled, takes place in one class mainly on a single day and is not spread across the week. Pupils have access to a wide range of experiences but these are not well balanced, so, in a few classes, important subjects such as mathematics, science and information and communication technology are not allocated enough time. This adversely affects pupils'

progress in these subjects. Far too much time is allocated to some lessons and, because of weak planning, these either last too long or finish too early with much time wasted. Time towards the end of the school day and during lunchtimes is not always used profitably. This all means that the good overall quality of teaching does not result in good overall learning and achievement. Instead pupils miss opportunities each day to build more systematically on earlier learning.

22. There is no external accreditation of courses for pupils aged 14 to 19 years. This means that pupils miss out on the opportunities afforded to their peers in other schools. This is recognised as an area for development. The school provides its own certificates for courses at post 16, which are of good quality.
23. The school plans well for the subject topics to be covered by each class. However, detailed plans to support lessons vary in quality across the school and are inconsistent. Many do not include assessment opportunities, or clear targets for pupils to reach. This inconsistency in planning slows pupils' rate of learning over time.
24. The environment and accommodation for the pupils in the class for pupils with autism are unsatisfactory. The room is unwelcoming and untidy due to lack of storage space and does not have a carpet on the floor, which leads to the escalation of noise. The lack of separate bays allocated to individuals, joint play spaces and a purpose-built safe area means that running a lesson is very difficult. This has an adverse impact upon the quality of pupils' learning. The picture exchange for communication (PECs) and a specialised teaching structured approach (TEACCH) are very appropriate and have resulted in pupils' making good progress in communication and co-operation and several have been able to move into the main school and other local schools.
25. Staffing is good overall, with particularly good levels of support staff in most lessons. There are adequate resources to meet the needs of pupils in all subject areas. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The new family room, swimming pool and music therapy room are valuable aids to pupils' development and achievements. There are, however, considerable shortcomings in accommodation, including no library or specialist subject rooms. These limit the way subjects can be taught and also contribute to the satisfactory rather than good overall progress of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good levels of care, guidance and support for pupils. Pupils feel they are well involved in school life and can express their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are able to develop trusting, supportive relationships with individual members of staff.
- Pupils have good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance.
- The quality of care and attention to medical needs during the day is very good.
- Induction procedures are good.
- Pupils have good advice on further study and career opportunities.

Commentary

26. This is a caring school where staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. This ensures that pupils are comfortable about approaching individual teachers or support staff for help or guidance. The PSHE programme, together with good but inconsistent systems for monitoring students' achievement, enables staff to provide targeted support for individuals. This is effective and is a main factor of the overall good progress that pupils make. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families well, are sensitive to their needs and therefore are able to provide

good support and guidance. The individual education plans, targets and annual review systems complement these arrangements.

27. The high quality of care in lessons and attention to pupils' numerous medical needs, ensure that the pupils are comfortable enough to focus well and enjoy their work. Almost all personal support is carried out with good humour and preserves pupils' dignity.
28. Induction arrangements, including home visits, ensure that children settle happily into the Foundation Stage of education. Similarly, pupils are well prepared for transfer to the main school and later on to the Further Education Centre and for opportunities for further study.
29. The arrangements for seeking pupils' views and involving them in the work of the school are good. All pupils have a 'Communication Passport', which is a well-used booklet indicating their likes and dislikes in and out of school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good partnerships with parents and other schools and colleges. It has very good links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are kept well informed about the school and their children's progress.
- The very good links with the community help pupils' personal development and achievement.
- The school supports parents of children with autism through a special group.
- The good links with other schools and colleges ensure that pupils transfer happily on to their next stage of education and also help to enhance the curriculum.
- A new and spacious family room, with a kitchen and lavatory for the disabled is a significant and positive addition to the school's service for parents.

Commentary

30. Parents are highly satisfied with the work of the school and what it provides. They say their child likes school and that they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. Most strongly agree that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem or a complaint. These views are supported by the inspection findings.
31. Parents are well informed about the school through the prospectus, newsletters and frequent telephone calls from individual members of the staff. A Home-School link book is much appreciated by parents. The vast majority of parents believe that the school encourages their child to become mature and independent. A parents' working party monitors a "Life's Needs" programme for pupils over 14 years of age, where planning is centred on an individual pupil's personal needs.
32. The Family Room is a welcome addition, which the headteacher successfully bid for from a special fund. This enables groups of parents to get together with staff, receive information and undertake Makaton training. The Ravensbourne Autism Support Group (RAGS) meets fortnightly to provide support for parents and the school provides a crèche for pupils and their siblings. This is highly valued by parents.
33. The very good links with the community include a close liaison with a local supermarket that sponsors equipment in the school as well as providing facilities for school visits. The Sports Partnership provides contact with other schools. Pupils aged 14 to 19 years go shopping at Tesco, where they practice social, numeracy, literacy and life-skills in a realistic setting. The Cross Roads Club after school on Tuesday and Thursday also enables pupils to meet pupils from other schools.

34. The good links with local schools and colleges include Year 3 and 4 pupils visiting a local junior school as well as other regular integration experiences in local schools. Together with pupils from here, they learn drama with staff from The 'Chicken Shed Theatre Company'. This supports growing independence and communication skills through interaction with their peers from the mainstream school. The satisfactory links for older pupils continue to be developed with secondary schools and colleges in the area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors have undertaken a thorough audit of their role and produced a clear action plan to improve and develop it further.
- The headteacher has a clear vision and sense of purpose, which includes upgrading the accommodation and raising achievement and is particularly effective in the school's work with parents and the community.
- There is insufficient leadership and direction for developing and managing the curriculum.
- Good strategic planning is appropriate to the future direction of the school but there is no coherent leadership team to undertake performance management and implement initiatives.
- There is a very good commitment to ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their individual special needs, take part in all the activities and programmes offered by the school

Commentary

35. The well-informed and committed governing body have taken many steps recently to improve their way of operating, which is currently satisfactory. They have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide good support for new initiatives. Governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions about pupils' achievements, as the data become available and visit more frequently to find out for themselves how things work. Their role in overseeing curriculum areas, however, is still underdeveloped, but this is clearly recognised and is part of their planning for their enhanced role. Governors have a good capacity to take the school forward. They fulfil all statutory duties.
36. The headteacher has been particularly concerned with upgrading the facilities for a changing cohort. Her focus on improving links with the community and helping parents to support pupils at home is beginning to raise achievement. Her inclusive approach to the needs of all the pupils is very apparent and creates a positive attitude towards providing for the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. This work is now part of the longer-term and ongoing school development. The more immediate concern relates to developing a higher quality of curriculum and specialist teaching which have, until now, lacked sufficient momentum. The school's strategic planning reflects well the areas the school needs to work on, such as upgrading the provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Teachers, teaching assistants and other staff find that the headteacher and deputy headteacher recognise and support their needs well and provide a clear sense of purpose. The deputy headteacher's role in management and staffing contributes well to the smooth running of the school. Parents think that management is good. The inspection findings support the view of good day to day running of the school, but find that lack of curriculum management makes this satisfactory overall.
37. The leadership of the curriculum and the drive to carry through crucial initiatives are not sufficiently effective and are unsatisfactory. Senior staff are not fully aware of the shortcomings, because it lacks an easily monitored structure. The forming of a curriculum development team is an improvement since the last inspection; however, the overlap between key stages for pupils and lead staff is confusing, resulting in inconsistent quality, with significant issues surrounding curriculum organisation still unresolved. The 'focus groups', for

specific purposes such as drama are successful and are leading to improved specialist provision. The lack of a clear leadership team means that there is insufficient momentum to carry through important development, despite the commitment and willingness of staff. The role of subject co-ordinators in drawing up the subject plans is an improvement, but their role in monitoring and developing subject-based teaching and learning is insufficient, resulting in inconsistent quality between classes and key stages. This term's report by the headteacher to the governing body recognises these difficulties.

38. Performance management, including performance reviews for all staff and lesson observations, is well established, but is mainly carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. This reduces the opportunities for other key staff to develop leadership skills and support school self-evaluation and improvement. However, very effective monitoring of the pupils' achievements with regard to their individual targets, and analysis of how well different significant groups of pupils progress, is clearly in evidence. Moreover, pupils' achievements using 'P' scales have been assessed in all subjects of the National Curriculum, which is good practice. Essential plans for workforce reform are approved to rationalise staffing, help reduce the workload of teachers and enhance the areas of responsibility for teaching assistants.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,455,137	Balance from previous year	93,366
Total expenditure	1,290,978	Balance carried forward to the next	164,159
Expenditure per pupil	14,344		

39. Financial management of the school is satisfactory and effective measures are in place to ensure money is used wisely and efficiently. Although staffing costs are very high, the governors are fully aware of this, seeing it as essential to address the increasingly high dependency needs of the pupils. The main impact of this is on the level and quality of curriculum resources, and accommodation maintenance, which are satisfactory rather than good. The high contingency fund some of which could not be predicted and planned for, is efficiently allocated for essential future accommodation and workforce reform projects. The school spends more per pupil than average for other similar schools, but also has a higher than average percentage of pupils with high dependency PMLD and serious medical needs. The school provides satisfactory value for money.
40. A particular aid to raising achievement in the school is the very strong commitment and dedication amongst the staff to provide the best level of care and education for all pupils in the school and their willingness to embrace change. Particular barriers to high achievement include the changing and increasingly complex special needs of pupils, and the regular placement of the highest achieving pupils back into other schools, including mainstream, whereby the school has had to reconsider its priorities. In addition the quality of some aspects of accommodation is acting as a barrier to school improvement, despite considerable improvement since the last inspection.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is always good and very good in a third of lessons and so children achieve well.
 - There is very good team work, including the work of the teaching assistants.
 - High quality planning to ensure that the curriculum meets the diversity of the children's needs.
 - There are effective and strong links with parents and outside agencies.
 - There is a shortage of communication aids to provide support for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
41. Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of visual resources, symbols and signing. The co-ordinator has a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of the children. They achieve well because the teaching is well planned and the curriculum provides a wide range of challenging and stimulating activities that are well matched to each child's different needs. The very good team-work is based upon a shared knowledge of each child's stage of development and shared planning of the work for each week. This means that every member of staff knows how to help each child well. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and, particularly, mathematical development. The parent support group and staff work jointly to help children progress, with parents often joining classes. There are also strong links with pre- school groups such as the Portage service for encouraging early development for children with special needs. This is particularly crucial to the good overall progress seen.
42. In all activities in **personal, social and emotional development** there are opportunities for sharing and turn taking, and each child works on their individual objectives that are linked to areas of toileting, teeth cleaning and putting on their shoes and socks. Topic work is linked to life in school and the home. For example, when looking at the theme of 'Birthdays', they talk freely about their homes and show care and concern for living things and pets. The understanding of other cultures is encouraged well and, in one topic, children took part in the festival of Saraswati Puja with authentic clothes, food, music and flowers. Social and personal skills are learned in a secure learning environment. The team is committed to taking every opportunity to ensure that each child makes good progress towards this pivotal early learning goal.
43. **Communication, language and literacy** provides a particularly good example of where the high quality and detail of planning is carefully linked to the different stages of children's language and communication development. Children learn to listen well and respond with enjoyment to stories; they explore and experiment with sounds and word texts. Many of their activities involve developing language well through exploration in the sand tray and playing with the garage. Very good use is made of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS); for example, children learning to listen to a story, 'All about our home', showed their curiosity and interest by their facial expression and movements. The shortage of communication aids for one or two pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties means that these pupils are not able to practise using them frequently enough. Their communication development is satisfactory rather than good as a result.

44. Children show some very good achievement in **mathematical development** by beginning to count simple objects and learn to make sense of the world around them. For instance, understanding whether an object is big or small, long or short, empty or full. The teaching is very well planned, lively and varied, so that each pupil is able to work at his own rate and enjoy his or her learning and make very good progress towards his or her early learning goal.
45. **Knowledge and understanding of the world** helps children to develop good understanding and knowledge by investigating objects and materials, using all their senses. During the inspection, the children were engaged on the topic 'Houses and Homes'; the particular focus was the bathroom and 'Bathing Dolly'. The children were showing an interest and curiosity in the process of washing and combing Dolly's hair and all the objects that float in the bath water. They also used a hand mirror appropriately when combing their own and dolly's hair. One child with complex learning difficulties was set clear targets and used switches well to communicate his ideas. Children are making good progress towards this early learning goal.
46. Children have access to a wide range of activities in the outdoor area in the playground, with good opportunities to run, jump and climb. Nevertheless this area is small and does not have the cover needed to allow children easy access to the outside in poor weather, especially those with serious medical conditions. In the school hall, they use a wide range of apparatus to develop their control and co-ordination. In one **physical development** lesson children were learning to move in an increasing number of ways and they were learning the meaning of over, under, around, moving sideways, forwards and backwards very well. A large number of parents were present and actively working with their children. This made it possible for one child who cannot see, to be fully included and another child with an oxygen tube to be an active participant in the lesson. Very good progress towards the early learning goal was made by all the children in this lesson.
47. No **creative development** lessons were observed during the inspection. However, the scrutiny of planning makes it clear that children have good opportunities to create and perform. They have good opportunities to play with a wide range of equipment, sing finger and action rhymes and dress up in the play areas. They also participate in drama games, for example 'In the garden' and 'Watch for the tiger', and enjoy listening to multi-sensory stories.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well in lessons and achieve well over time.
- Pupils' communication skills are very strongly supported through Makaton signing, the use of symbols and other aids.
- High quality drama enables all pupils to extend their communication skills and promote their personal, social and cultural development.
- There are too few planned opportunities for more able pupils to improve their reading.
- Lesson planning is inconsistent and learning targets and assessment opportunities are not always identified.
- The school does not have a suitable library base with facilities to meet the needs of all its pupils, but the books for story telling strongly support pupils developing confidence in reading.

Commentary

48. Pupils' achievements in English, including progress on their individual learning targets are good and at times very good. Their communication skills are enhanced significantly by work in drama and in the way teachers and support staff welcome the pupils to the class at the start of the day. In most classes, singing the 'hello' song, which each pupil is warmly encouraged to respond to, either with speech or through signs or both, is a key to their positive attitudes in English. End-of-day routines follow a similar pattern. These provide a positive experience for the pupils and very effectively support and promote pupils' speaking and listening, reading and communication skills.
49. Pupils aged 5 to 11 years show good achievement by tracing animal shapes, lines and circles to practise their pre-writing skills. The most advanced practised writing the initial letter of their name or their full name using dots as a guide or, for more able pupils, by using felt-tipped pens and a small white board. Most pupils, with support, used pictures, words and symbols to tell a story or used the computer to read stories. In a class literacy lesson, pupils listened to the story of 'Mrs Honey's Hat' following the story in the big book. Pupils eagerly answered the teacher's questions, those with communication difficulties using the 'Big Mack' communication aid. One pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties, after several attempts, touched the switch and answered: 'Mrs Honey didn't notice!' much to her satisfaction. Pupils with autism in the special primary class have satisfactory rather than good achievement in their English skills. They relate well to computer programmes, but the lack of individual bays means that the time they are able to concentrate for is too short. These pupils do progress well in communication however, gradually learning how to ask for things they want. The most able pupils aged 11 to 16 year practise the finger alphabet for the initial letter of their name and less able pupils touched a gate latch and a small roundabout to show they understood. 'A little bit of magic'. Pupils' understanding is considerably enhanced by the use of these objects, enabling them to understand the story at a concrete level.
50. There is an excellent scheme of work in place for drama, covering all age-groups across the school. There is clear evidence of high quality work in last year's Summer Show entitled 'The Owl and the Pussycat' and in the Christmas Show. On-going projects include 'Odysseus Now' and 'Romeo and Juliet', both of which are aimed at secondary pupils and those in the Further Education Centre.

Example of outstanding practice

Drama for 24 pupils aged 14 to 19 years who have severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare.

Pupils and staff appeared to become either Romeo or Juliet's family as they took on their roles in two groups on opposing sides of the hall. With the clever use of drapes, artwork and costume the dramatic interplay between these two ancient families of Verona was brought completely alive. Rapidly developing social communication, supported by staff through signing and regular prompts, went exceptionally well. The atmosphere was electric, due largely to the teacher's knowledge and love of her subject, but also to the excitement as pupils felt able to communicate and take part so effectively. Pupils' were totally absorbed when asked "Did Romeo's family like Juliet's family?" "No" came the excited response. Then "Did Juliet's family like Romeo's family?" "No" again they called or signed dramatically. Achievements, as a consequence, are of the highest level.

51. Teaching and learning are good overall and consistently good for pupils aged 7 to 11. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent in the secondary department due to weak planning and this has had an impact on standards of achievement. In particular, teachers do not identify what different pupils are expected to learn in each lesson. The use of appropriate language, signs, symbols and electronic aids to support communication is effective and successful in helping pupils achieve well. Other strengths are the way all pupils are included where appropriate in the full range of class activities and the support provided by the teaching assistants to meet the care needs of pupils and in working on individual learning targets.

52. The way the co-ordinator leads and manages English is good overall, and it is especially effective in the primary department. This is mainly due to her role as a member of the Curriculum Development Group, with particular responsibility for the primary department. Teaching and learning are monitored through the collection of termly updates from colleagues across the school and, more recently, in reviewing pupils' achievements on the 'P' scales. Insufficient time, however, is given to observing teaching and identifying areas which would improve learning further and lesson planning lacks consistency as a result. The range of books and other resources is satisfactory overall for English, but there are too few planned opportunities for emerging readers to practise their skills and so progress in reading is satisfactory rather than good for this group. The library has been reorganised, but lacks a suitable base and facilities and this is unsatisfactory. The school has introduced 'story sacks' however, which strongly support pupils' enjoyment and achievement of reading.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is good. Most teachers develop pupils' language and literacy skills well and use speech, signing, words and symbols and other aids to augment communication in other subjects. Extending the reading and writing skills of more able pupils are not consistently planned for and this reduces their opportunities to improve these key skills.
54. No **French** teaching was seen during the inspection because the one planned lesson for pupils aged 11-14 was unavoidably cancelled. Not enough evidence was seen to make a judgement about the quality of provision in French. All pupils regardless of their special educational needs have access to French. The school has held a French week to bring the subject alive in an appropriate way and records show that this was enjoyed by all involved. French is used as part of the greeting ritual for pupils in the Further Education Centre with profound and multiple learning difficulties, which is well received and they respond with understanding and enthusiasm. Labels around the school also show that teachers from several classes introduce French where appropriate. There is no co-ordinator because of staffing difficulties and this is a shortcoming which the school is seeking to rectify as soon as is practical. French was not taught during the last inspection and so this is an improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good, but there are wide variations between classes.
- Achievement is satisfactory rather than good overall because of weaknesses in the amount of time spent teaching mathematics.
- At least a third of pupils make good or very good progress in their individual mathematics targets.
- There is insufficient monitoring of timetables and lessons and insufficient progress since the last inspection.
- The school does not use the National Numeracy Strategy sufficiently to its advantage.
- The very recent appointment of a specialist co-ordinator and planning for subject development show good capacity for improvement in the future.

Commentary

55. Although achievement is satisfactory overall there is good and very good achievement in the group for pupils aged 10 and 11 years taught by a mathematic specialist. In the Further Education Centre and in most classes for pupils aged 5 to 11 years, pupils are set very relevant targets in lessons, which they are helped to achieve and, as a result, they make good

or very good progress. There are big variations, though, in how well pupils achieve over time throughout the school. Records and pupils' work show that the majority of pupils' achievement is satisfactory because, although most lessons are good, there is not enough time spent systematically building learning from day to day in every class. For pupils aged 11 to 16 years the lack of clear targets and sufficiently varied activities leads to weaker progress.

56. Pupils aged 5 to 11 years show their good progress by matching the colour and texture of dice. The highest attaining pupils from these groups can easily pick out the numbers one to five. In these lessons a good variety of resources holds pupils interest well, many incorporating singing and computer programmes, which help keep lessons lively. Teaching assistants contribute well in these lessons. In lessons where these pupils make sound rather than good progress, they are able to point to correct numbers with help and also match blocks to flat shapes, but lack enough activities to take the learning forward at a faster pace. Pupils aged 14 to 16 years with profound and multiple learning difficulties show a good recognition of familiar objects, and make satisfactory progress in handling money when shopping. Pupils aged 11 to 14 years also show satisfactory achievement when they grasp the concept of full and empty, heavy or light and point to the right container when asked. However, for these pupils, the lack of a well-organised scheme of work, limited timetable and the slow pace of some lessons, mean that they do not build systematically upon earlier learning for enough time during the week. In these lessons, teaching assistants do not always have clear enough direction to help pupils learn effectively. The majority of pupils do make good and sometimes very good progress on their individual targets, which are linked well to their previous performance, well written and appropriate.
57. Leadership of the subject has very recently been taken over by a subject specialist who has the appropriate skills and knowledge to improve the subject well. She is a very good mathematics teacher, who understands what needs to be done and is ready to raise standards in the subject. However, management of planning, teaching, curriculum implementation and subject development is not yet satisfactory. Subject plans are very new and are not in place for all age groups. The lack of well-planned time in some classes where mathematics is clearly taught, even as part of a wider activity, is poor. In addition the school has not implemented the National Numeracy Strategy sufficiently and this is also unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Pupils are supported in using mathematics throughout the school day, but many opportunities to extend the individual skills of pupils are missed because they are not systematically planned for. Pupils are helped however in the practical uses of number, money and comparisons between things. For example, they count in singing, drama and French, make choices between different drinks and choose familiar objects in the supermarket. Many teaching assistants are aware of individual mathematics targets and do extend pupils' skills when they can.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils can access the subject because its presentation is practical and exploratory.
- There are good subject plans and all the staff were involved in their development.
- The resources for Years 7 to 11 are not sufficient to fully implement the scheme.
- The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning but not teaching, and the quality varies as a result.
- There is little evidence to indicate that information and communication technology (ICT) is used to support learning in science.

Commentary

59. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory overall, although, in the few lessons observed, their achievement was good. By the age of eleven, pupils explore using all the senses; they develop their ideas and experience sensory similarities and differences. They develop their skills in the use of each sense, including listening for the location of sounds, tracking objects and movements visually, discriminating smell, touch and taste. The more able pupils begin to develop their understanding of what contributes to a fair test, for example by rolling cars from the same place. These skills are built upon; for example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are learning about the use of cable, plugs and sockets and how to heat things electrically. At present, pupils have no opportunities to gain a recognised qualification related to science, which would demonstrate and challenge their achievements further.
60. Teaching is good and is strongly practical so that pupils can understand more easily. For example, pupils aged 6 to 9 years find out which materials would let water through. Good planning and use of symbols meant that they were all able to take part and eventually see which materials were waterproof. Many lessons have pace and a sense of fun, which keeps pupils involved throughout. The good use of communication aids and symbols by all staff supports understanding well in science. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good lessons lack pace and work is not well adapted to different pupils' needs. In particular the most able pupils aged 11 to 16 years are not sufficiently challenged. A strong feature of all the lessons is the good quality support provided by the teaching assistants and the way they work to ensure that all pupils, including those with complex needs, are fully included in the lesson.
61. The subject co-ordinator has a good grasp of the subject's shortcomings, such as the limited resources for pupils in years 7 to 11 and the need to increase the use of ICT in the teaching and learning. Because of the increasing complexity of pupils' learning needs and abilities, the quality and number of resources are still too limited to support the subject fully. Planning is carefully monitored against the subject's 'rolling plan' but she has no opportunities to monitor the teaching and develop more consistently the good practice taking place. Good efforts have been made to raise the profile of science, for example the focus on 'Grounds Week', which involved strong links with science. There have been a number of satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Appropriate subject plans, which were developed by all staff are now in place and topics are co-ordinated across the school. Pupils' attitudes across the school have improved and the 'B' squared system is improving the quality of assessment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory** across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of electronic devices to assist pupils with their communication.
- The use of a sensory stimulation programme using sound and light is good.
- The electrically guided 'SMART' chair is very effective in developing pupils' mobility.
- The co-ordinator does not observe teaching in ICT, which limits subject development.
- Classes currently do not have Internet access.
- Not all classes have a dedicated ICT lesson and this results in satisfactory rather than good progress overall.

Commentary

62. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the age of 7, pupils are using ICT to establish cause and effect responses. Good use of sound and light stimulates pupils' senses well. For example, pupils activate the Optimusic, a series of coloured beams which, when broken, gives a range of interesting sound, by small movements of their hands or head. By the age of 11,

pupils with a 'SMART' chair can use single or multiple switches to control the chair in the desired direction. By the age of 14, pupils can use multiple switches and the most able can use a mouse to control the cursor. By the age of 16 some pupils can use switches to obtain responses on the interactive whiteboard. Higher attaining pupils can programme a Roamer to move it in a variety of directions. In the Further Education Centre, lower attaining pupils use switches to communicate and some higher attaining pupils use the computer for word processing to record their work. Not all classes have a dedicated ICT lesson and this adversely affects pupils' achievement in these classes.

63. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, pupils are set problem-solving tasks such as estimating and programming the Roamer. The sound beam and Optimusic are used very appropriately to encourage good responses from lower attaining pupils. Teaching is weak where lessons are not planned in detail and the different needs of pupils are not taken into account. For example, in one lesson, where pupils were trying to touch a switch and turn the pages of a story, the screen was too far away for those in wheelchairs to see it clearly.
64. The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. There is ongoing staff training and the co-ordinator has a clear plan for the development of the subject. The co-ordinator does not observe the teaching of ICT across the school, which limits her ability to develop teaching and learning effectively in the subject. In addition, there are few dedicated ICT lessons or planned opportunities to teach ICT within the other subjects. The pupils each have an individual ICT target and these are addressed so that each pupil makes satisfactory progress. When these are to be taught, however, is not well planned and learning is satisfactory rather than good as a result. ICT resources have been improved and upgraded since the last inspection and nearly half of the classes use interactive whiteboards effectively. In one class photographs from the lesson were shown on the whiteboard as a follow up to successfully remind pupils what had happened. However none of the classes has Internet access, which is a significant shortcoming and particularly limits pupils' ability to find out information for themselves.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

65. ICT is used effectively to support learning, mobility and communication in all subjects and in the Further Education Centre. In English, for example, pupils are able to follow stories using talking books and in mathematics pupils with autism are motivated to work through a programme developing their number skills. This is an improvement from the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

66. Only two lessons were seen in **history** during the week and none in **geography**. Two lessons were observed in **religious education**. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects.
67. Both **history** and **geography** benefit from a good range of practical work, visits and extra-curricular activities, where pupils see for themselves first hand how things used to work and how other people live. For example, each morning most classes discuss the weather and at the end of the day they hold assemblies where they celebrate different festivals from other cultures. A recycling project has really captured the pupils' imaginations and has provided good links to geography. Visits to a farm have helped pupils understand the living conditions of animals compared to their own. In history, pupils aged 11 to 16 years enjoyed dressing as Victorians and are able to compare their photographs from their lesson with those taken in earlier lessons, pointing out differences.

68. Subject co-ordination has improved since the last inspection, with improved planning, regular staff subject meetings and monitoring of pupils' work. However it still lacks lesson monitoring to help improve the quality of teaching and learning further. Planning has also improved, with an appropriate range of topics, but the subject still lacks detail of how and when humanities should be taught. In addition the timetable does not ensure that each class receives enough history or geography over time.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy celebrating and learning about festivals from Christianity and all the major world religions.
- Planning for religious education is not consistent across the school. As a consequence, some pupils do not receive the same high quality of teaching in lessons as others.
- The progress and achievement of pupils is assessed effectively using the 'P' scales.

Commentary

69. Celebration of the different religious festivals from around the world is good. In the primary classes in lively lessons they celebrate the Hindu festival of Divali, make divas, listen to Indian music, dress up in saris and dance. There is an effective system now being used to track how well pupils are doing which is beginning to give a clearer picture of what needs to be improved. Draft subject planning is in place and some monitoring is being undertaken by the co-ordinator. Activities are included for all the six major world religions, and these provide a clear focus for teaching and learning. However, individual lesson plans do not always link in with the overall school plan for the subject, especially for pupils aged 11 to 19 years. For this reason subject coverage for this age group is weak. The school's policy for religious education is still in draft form and does not identify links with the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus for religious education, although it is clearly in line. Careful assessment in the majority of classes ensures that learning is built upon successfully from lesson to lesson. Progress since the last inspection, when religious education was not satisfactory, is satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because lessons are well adapted to their different learning needs.
- There are good resources and plenty of different experiences to meet the diversity of pupils' needs.
- The provision for music therapy and the use of the sound beam and 'Optimusic' are strengths.
- The subject is continuing to improve well.

Commentary

70. Pupils are achieving well and making good progress. Work is well adapted to their needs, varied and interesting. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good achievement as they experience fast and slow rhythms in singing. There are good resources to meet a variety of needs with a wide range of instruments. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils work regularly with the 'sound beam' and have singing lessons with the whole school accompanied by guitar

and tapes. The wide range of experiences provided includes listening to music performed by single instruments, cello, guitar and piano. In Years 7 to 11 they listen and respond to popular music, for example Reggae and Indian music, as well as enjoying visits from the Mozart Players. Good links are made with other subjects, for example one lesson involving Years 1 and 2 pupils used percussion instruments for their songs in mathematics. There is good evidence to show that pupils with complex needs are fully involved in the full range of musical experience and more able pupils are challenged.

71. Teaching is good and key strengths include the consistent use of symbol cards for communication, the teachers' good knowledge of the pupils so that they are able to match the work to the pupils' needs, and the good work of teaching assistants with individual pupils. The work of the music therapist with individual pupils in the therapy room is of high quality. For example, one pupil who cannot see was able to respond rhythmically to music with a sense of security and enjoyment.
72. The co-ordinator monitors the planning of work and has clear ideas for future development, including staff training and an increase in performing music to extend pupils' skills further. In addition a 'Sound About' course has been organised to further meet the needs of pupils with more complex learning difficulties at primary level. All of this shows good capacity to continue developing and improving a strong part of school provision.
73. The good progress made at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and subject planning is now in place alongside improved assessment.

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's involvement with the Courtauld Gallery and other community projects gives pupils a very wide range of opportunities to explore art in many forms.
- Teaching is good in art and, as a direct result of this, pupils' achievements and the progress they make are good.
- Planning for art is not consistent throughout the school and opportunities are missed to enhance pupils' creative skills and abilities.

Commentary

74. The good quality of teaching and learning is a result of effective planning, good subject knowledge by the teachers and the wide range of art resources used effectively supported pupils' learning. There are a wide range of experiences provided using different media such as exploring stripe patterns, making dots and tone pictures of animals and hand and leaf prints using a range of colours. The quality of work around the school is good, with lovely examples of 'splatter' paintings and fireworks in one upper primary class. Pupils aged 15 to 19 years show very good achievement, using prints of themselves to create a very good montage of photographic fragments. All pupils achieve well, and higher attaining pupils produced high-quality pictures in the style of Picasso. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with severe learning difficulties are able to take part in lessons because they are very effectively supported by the teaching support assistants.
75. Superb work in 3-dimensional form on the theme of 'The Dance' by Andre Derain decorates one of the corridors. This work was, and still is, supported by an artist from the Courtauld Gallery in London. All classes have received one day of the artist's time in connection with this project. Pupils in one secondary class explored the artist's use of three colours, red, green and yellow, in their classroom display and created a dramatic work of art. Other good examples of artwork include work undertaken as part of 'Grounds Week', when each pupil from

every class painted a stone to lay in cement outside the Further Education Centre classrooms in the shape of a caterpillar. Other community-linked projects include art sessions taken by a visiting artist from Heritage Arts and visits to the Colourscope Festival by two classes.

76. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of the subject. The range of art being covered in each class is being monitored, but no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is taking place. Although planning is good in the lessons observed, it is clear from scrutinising the monitoring files that art is not consistently planned for throughout the school, and opportunities at times are therefore missed to enhance pupils' creative skills and abilities. Opportunities, however, are provided for teachers and teaching assistants to attend training in art. For example, twenty-one members of staff attended a workshop on African art last year and the co-ordinator has attended a range of courses, including use of ICT in art and Aboriginal art. Progress since the last inspection is overall satisfactory.
77. Only two **design and technology** lessons were observed, one in food technology and one in design and technology. Pupils' work and teachers' planning were scrutinised, but no overall judgement was made. Pupils are gaining appropriate experiences using a range of material and a variety of techniques. Imaginative tasks result in some good work. For example, pupils aged 5 to 7 years have made models of their favourite playground equipment and pupils aged 7 to 11 years have designed and made boats before launching them on the sea. In food technology, pupils aged 11 to 14 years begin to learn how to look after themselves well by making simple snacks such as pancakes. Pupils aged 14 to 16 years focus their attention on cooking to become independent such as making sandwiches and using a variety of toppings for toast. In one lesson, weak planning resulted in unsatisfactory learning because the lesson was far too long and pupils were not able to maintain their concentration.
78. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the last inspection. There is now an appropriate scheme of work and there is a separate food technology room, although this is of limited quality for older pupils.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' enjoyment and participation in swimming is good and swimming is highly accessible to all.
- Planning is now firmly in place but there is no monitoring of teaching.
- The school hall is small and there are limitations to the use of large equipment.
- The provision for games is very good but gymnastics and dance are less well established.
- The school has won the Activemark award.

Commentary

79. Few lessons were observed and no overall teaching judgements are provided. The school provides good access to swimming for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, resulting in those with severely challenging behaviour working well. For example one boy was able to swim the length of the pool using floats and the whole class showed a strong sense of enjoyment and made good progress. The school uses outside agencies very effectively and a 'Sherborne' movement session for mixed age groups was very exciting. Pupils co-operated fully and worked hard on their tasks and through this are provided with good opportunities for social as well as physical development. However, the overall size of the group resulted in difficulties in ensuring that every pupil was fully challenged. In all three lessons the pupils' attitudes were good and all pupils were fully included in the activities.

80. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and a strong sense of enthusiasm for the subject. This is reflected in the school's achievement of the Activemark award given for the high quality of pupils' physical education experiences. A good curriculum audit has been undertaken to point towards future development. There are, however, few opportunities to monitor teaching of the subject across the school and so develop teaching skills further. 'P' levels are available and show good progress in the subject.
81. There are good improvements since the last inspection, particularly the assessment of progress, and the planning now in place.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and Citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The opportunities for pupils to make choices and be as independent as they can be are very good.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal and social development.
- Planning for PSHE is not consistent across the school and this is leaving classes without full coverage of the teaching material.
- Pupils' progress and achievements are being effectively tracked using 'P' scales.

Commentary

82. Both of the lessons observed were in the primary department and the quality of teaching and learning in these classes was very good. Citizenship, which is an integral part of PSHE, is planned for across all classes and age groups and has just been introduced into secondary classes. Pupils learn about personal, social and health education in a variety of ways throughout the school day. Pupils in the primary classes, for example, learn how to look after the pets and the differences between boys and girls. They learn about looking after themselves and personal safety. Older pupils have taken part in a re-cycling project and learn about their bodies and healthy living, including feelings and helping others. All pupils make choices whenever possible. They learn about right and wrong through everyday situations and following rules. Abundant opportunities are provided for learning about themselves and others when arriving at school in the morning, when playing together, having their snacks, eating their lunch and preparing for home time. Many lessons, for example PE, also provide opportunities for pupils to develop trusting relationships with others and to explore and learn about themselves. The school has introduced 'gender boxes' to help introduce sex education for older pupils.
83. The leadership and management of PSHE and Citizenship are good. Although Citizenship is at a very early stage in its development, a comprehensive policy is in place for this subject and planning has been updated. Drugs education is good. It has been a priority area for development and staff training put in place. As this subject was not reported on at the previous inspection, it is not possible to make judgements about progress since then.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM (FURTHER EDUCATION CENTRE)

In the inspection seven lessons were observed, four in English, one in PE, one in art and one in community skills. Pupils' records and examples of work were scrutinised.

The Further Education Centre post 16 provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provided for the pupils is distinctive and appropriate to the level of needs.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good with some very good lessons.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- The accommodation is well presented and enhances teaching and learning.
- The courses offered to pupils are not accredited externally.
- Assessment in key skills is well established but not thorough enough to support lesson planning effectively.

Commentary

84. The Further Education Centre caters for pupils aged 16-19 years and also for three pupils aged 14- 16 years, for whom it is entirely appropriate. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. More able pupils show their good achievement by recognising daily newspapers and others are able to use switches so that they can participate in greetings in different languages including 'Rap' style hellos. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to work and enjoy being given daily responsibilities such as making drinks or being responsible for keys.
85. The quality of teaching is consistently good and is sometimes very good or excellent. In the best teaching, there is a lively approach by teachers and teaching assistants, which inspires pupils and enables them to make good responses. The staff take considerable care to make lessons age appropriate and lively modern music, mature, inviting artwork and good material of interest to teenagers such as football and food are key features.

Example of outstanding practice

A poetry lesson for pupils aged 14-19 with severe and profound learning difficulties where the teacher read a selection of poems to the pupils.

One poem entitled 'Tiger Tiger' was read out rhythmically and all pupils held 'boom-whackers', (long tubes) making a hollow sound. The pupils responded well to the beat by smiling, vocalising and holding on to the beaters. A few pupils used aids with switches to give them a voice. The lesson was marked by excellent humour and team-work on the part of all staff. Pupils' thorough enjoyment was evident to see when they beat out time as the poem was read. The excellent teaching, with sensitive responses, was based upon very good individual knowledge of pupils' abilities, a lively motivating approach, which demanded pupils' attention and excellent use of signing, symbols and communication technology.

86. The assessment of pupils' work is well established and is satisfactory. Not enough detail is given, however, of what pupils know, understand and can do, particularly in key skills. Too often assessments record pupils' experiences rather than show how well they have achieved.
87. The post 16 department is effectively led and managed. The co-ordinator has sought to develop a wide range of experiences to help pupils develop and prepare for the next stage of their education. For example, pupils undertake work experience in the school, helping in classes and several attend a term's day release into a special work unit. Other work placements are in the community. In their last term pupils have one day a week at college, which is a good and developing provision. However, work is ongoing with the college to develop improved joint courses in literacy, numeracy, life skills and the world of work, which

are to begin after half term. The curriculum, whilst appropriate, varied and relevant, is not externally accredited and the school recognises that careful consideration is needed to develop qualifications in line with the college.

88. The improvement since the last inspection is good. Accommodation is much improved and the use of ICT is now satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form (FEC) grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form(FEC) and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form (FEC)/ value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
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	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
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	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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