

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BROOKFIELDS SCHOOL**

Tilehurst, Reading

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110186

Headteacher: Mr John Byrne

Lead inspector: Jacque Cook

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 May 2004

Inspection number: 259045

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: 187

School address: Sage Road  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
Berkshire  
Postcode: RG31 6SW

Telephone number: 0118 9421382  
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr M Male

Date of previous inspection: 14 September 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brookfields is a mixed, community, day special school for 191 pupils aged 2 to 19 catering for a range of special educational needs including moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently 187 pupils on roll, twice as many boys as girls, and since the last inspection the range of needs in the school has become more complex. There are now 59 pupils on the autistic spectrum, and the number with moderate learning difficulties has decreased significantly in the nursery and reception classes and in Years 1 to 6. Additional special educational needs include eight pupils with sensory impairment, eight with speech and language difficulties, five with social and emotional difficulties and three with physical difficulties. Overall, the attainment on entry is very low. There are eight pupils who are looked after by the local authority. Very few pupils move schools during the year: four joined and six left last year.

Most pupils in the school are of white British ethnicity. The largest other groups are Asian (eight pupils), and Caribbean (seven pupils). Ten pupils are from homes where English is not the first language, five of whom are at the first stages of English language acquisition.

The majority of pupils in the school are from West Berkshire and the Reading Unitary Authority. The socio-economic mix of the school population is, overall, slightly less favourable than average, reflected in the 18 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Brookfields has received a broad number of awards including Investor in People, School Achievement Award, Careers Award at enhanced level, Early Years Kite Mark, Sportsmark and the Healthy Schools Bronze and Silver Award. The school has also developed a role as an integral part of the West Berkshire special educational needs provision and provides a range of services to schools, staff and parents through the autism and behaviour support service and the consultancy service. There is a significant partnership with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB).

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2351	Jacque Cook	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage
14347	Joan Lindsay	Lay inspector	
20397	Rosa Blunt	Team inspector	Science Geography History Special educational needs
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music Religious education Post-16
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	Mathematics Modern foreign language
22948	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Physical education
4486	Mike Weller	Team inspector	English Personal, social and health education and citizenship English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Brookfields is a very good and very effective school.** Its huge success in meeting the increasingly complex needs of the pupils over the years is largely due to the inspirational and innovative leadership provided by the headteacher, senior managers and governing body. Management of the school is very good ensuring that, overall, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' progress and achievement are good. The quality of teaching and learning are very good; the curriculum is very appropriate and there are very good links with parents. As a result, **value for money is very good.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils make excellent progress overall in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship which contributes to their very good behaviour and attitudes to work.
- The excellent staff team ensures pupils' needs are met and that pupils make very good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- The enrichment of the curriculum and particularly the use of the community are excellent.
- The support and guidance provided for pupils are excellent. The sensory resource and the communication team are very effective.
- The autism and behaviour support service and the consultancy service provide excellent support for parents and other schools.

Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching, learning, leadership and management have improved well on previously high standards and, as a result, pupils' achievement and progress and their attitudes and behaviour have improved very well. All key issues have been systematically tackled. Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is now good, even though there are difficulties recruiting a co-ordinator. Pupils' needs for communication aids are very well assessed and met where appropriate. Assessment has been radically overhauled and the mobile classroom demolished.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 6	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 9	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Year 11	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
Year 13	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

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

**Achievement and progress are overall very good.** Children in the nursery and reception classes make very good progress and achieve very well. They make excellent progress and achievement in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. Pupils in Years 1 to 2 and 7 to 11 make very good progress and achieve very well. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is good, reflecting the overall quality of the teaching. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in English, mathematics, science and physical education and make excellent progress and achievement in personal, social and health education and citizenship. In ICT and religious education, pupils' progress and achievement are good. Pupils with additional special educational needs and those from homes where English is not the first language do as well as their peers. Students in Years 12 to 14 make very good progress, particularly towards developing the skills and knowledge they need for adulthood.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are very good because their personal qualities, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are promoted very well. Attendance is satisfactory.**

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall.** They are good for Years 3 to 6 where, even though there is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, there is also a high proportion of lessons where teaching and consequently learning are very good. The unsatisfactory teaching does not give pupils adequate opportunities to work to their full potential or to be sufficiently independent. Pupils put a great deal of effort into their work and learn effectively because of the teamwork of staff and their expertise in teaching pupils with a range of abilities and needs. **Assessment of pupils' work and progress is good** and very well focussed on the individual needs of pupils.

**The curriculum is very good** apart from in Years 10 and 11 where, although it is good, the range of examinations and awards is narrow but developing. **Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good** and their **support advice and guidance are excellent.** Provision for **the partnership with parents and links with other schools are very good and links with the community are excellent.**

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are very good. Leadership is excellent** by the headteacher and senior management team and very good by other senior managers. **The management of the school is very effective.** The support services that work from the school are led extremely well and their management is very good. Hindrances to learning, such as elements of the accommodation, are minimised as far as possible and plans established to improve the provision. **The work of the governing body is excellent.** Governors are very involved in the work of the school and have a strong monitoring role. Governance of the support services is similarly excellent. Statutory requirements apart from very minor issues are met well.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

On the whole, parents have a very positive view of the school which is confirmed by the inspection team. They particularly praise the quality of the teaching, the arrangements for settling their children in and the broad range of interesting activities. They feel their children like school but a few expressed concerns related to bullying and to work at home. The team found that incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively. Homework is set regularly for older pupils and if parents request homework, it is set for younger pupils too. Comments by a few about information from the school are partly supported by the findings of the inspection team that, at times, written information is not always of a high enough quality.

Pupils are very satisfied with their school and enjoy the friendships they have made. They feel staff listen to them, there is at least one adult they can talk to if they are worried and school is enjoyable. Older pupils particularly feel that they are trusted to do things on their own. The inspection team agree with these comments.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The minor improvements needed are already included in the school development plan and, to meet statutory requirements:

- The school should ensure that the minor items missing from the prospectus and governors' report to parents are included in the latest versions.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well overall. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress and achievement are good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children get a very good start to their education in the nursery and reception classes making excellent progress in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy.
- Overall, pupils make excellent progress in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. This is a particular strength for students in Years 12 to 14.
- Pupils achieve very well in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- There are not enough courses that lead to awards for pupils in Years 10 and 11 at present, although this is being developed.

#### **Commentary**

1. The overall, very good progress and achievement made by pupils is a good improvement since the last inspection. It clearly demonstrates the effect of the focus of the leadership and management of the school to raise standards. Effective monitoring is instrumental to ensuring that all pupils are fully included. As a result, there are no measurable differences between the achievement of boys or girls or pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils who are 'looked after' are monitored closely to ensure that they make the same amount of progress as other pupils in their classes. The in-school support, that has been so effectively established for pupils with additional special needs, is of a very high quality with very well trained and experienced staff. Special programmes are developed for pupils and support both in the classroom and in individual intensive focussed sessions ensures that pupils make very good progress throughout their school life. The very strong emphasis on teaching communication skills ensures that pupils from homes where English is not the first language achieve very well. The progress and achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good overall, because the quality of teaching and learning is good for these pupils.
2. It is difficult to compare pupils' achievements from one year to the next because year groups are not always similar. Last year, of the 12 pupils in Year 11, all but one gained at least one module from the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations (OCR) National Skills Profile (NSP) from a possible seven modules in information technology (IT), information and communication technology (ICT), practical work skills, numeracy and three levels of communication. Additionally, nine of these pupils gained at least one Entry Level Certificate from a possible four subjects – English, mathematics, science and French. This was an increase in the number of subjects as mathematics was added for the first time. In recognition of the need to develop opportunities for pupils to gain awards, this year the number is increasing further with an additional two Entry Level courses: art and design and physical education.
3. The more able pupils leave at the end of Year 11 to attend college. Students who move to the post-16 provision in Years 12 to 14 work towards modules in the NSP and last year gained modules in IT, practical work skills, and a range of modules on communication and catering. They also achieved awards in the Accreditation for Life and Living scheme (ALL).



4. Pupils are making very good progress towards meeting their targets on their individual education plans. A proportion of the targets prove too challenging to be met entirely. These are then broken down into smaller parts so success is achieved.
5. Children in the nursery and reception classes improve their personal, social and emotional and their communication, language and literacy skills extremely well. They learn the routines of the class, and those with autistic spectrum disorder gradually tolerate other children and join groups. Children's behaviour improves and they begin to learn to communicate. They learn the implications of objects of reference (objects that have special meaning, for example, a watering can for the splash pool) and begin to understand signing and symbols. The introduction of the Picture Exchange Communication system (PECs) helps them to make their wants and needs known very well indeed. They become able to make sentences effectively and many develop speech successfully. Children enjoy listening to stories and will often look at books. In all the other areas of learning, children's skills develop very well.
6. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 make very good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The use of modified national strategies is very effective in helping pupils improve their literacy and numeracy very successfully. Communication skills of speaking and listening are developed very well and the continuing use of augmentative systems to support pupils is very effective, particularly for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils' reading and writing develop very well. In mathematics, numeracy skills are improved and pupils make very good progress in understanding shape and measure and using data. Pupils develop a curiosity about the world they live in and particularly enjoy learning about plants and animals in science as well as areas such as the movement of light. Practical activities help pupils to understand effectively.
7. Overall, pupils make excellent progress and achievement in PSHE and citizenship. The younger pupils in Years 1 to 6 make very good progress and achieve very well and the older pupils, excellent progress and achievement. Pupils' progress and achievement in ICT, religious education and art and design are good. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in physical education in Years 7 to 11 and good progress and achievement in Years 1 to 6. This is because of the positive effect of the specialist teaching for older pupils. However, the overall good quality of the teaching and learning of pupils in Years 3 to 6 leads to good overall progress and achievement.
8. Students in Years 12 to 14 make very good progress and achieve very well. They continue to make excellent progress in PSHE and citizenship which is taught exceptionally well by the subject co-ordinator. They make very good progress in developing their communication and numeracy skills and in their work for their courses at college, with many choosing to move on to further education when they leave school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also very good. Attendance levels are satisfactory and punctuality to school is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are very enthusiastic and interested in school life.
- Behaviour in school is very good.
- Pupils have a very high level of respect for others and relationships are very good.
- Pupils' personal development is very good.
- Register sheets are not always completed fully.

### **Commentary**

9. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved even further from the good levels seen at the last inspection. The great majority of parents say that their children like school. In lessons

pupils often listen very well to the teacher and to each other. For example, in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were making wooden planters, they listened to instructions and worked sensibly, carefully trying to align the wood and nails. Pupils involved in rehearsing for an end-of-term production listened avidly as the teacher outlined the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* and were very enthusiastic about being involved. Pupils are also very positive about other aspects of school life including the very wide range of activities available to them such as the lunchtime football club. They are willing to take on responsible roles including house captain and school council representatives.

10. Pupils behave very well overall despite there being some who have very challenging behaviour. Staff generally manage pupils very well and use a high level of praise and encouragement to successfully build pupils' self-esteem. Pupils respond very well to rewards and they are very aware of the need to behave well in and out of the classroom. Very good behaviour was seen during lunchtimes and in assemblies. Pupils who go off-site to other schools or into the local community behave very well and are very good ambassadors for their school.
11. Although there were no exclusions for the latest reporting period, an improvement since the last inspection, the school has recently needed to permanently exclude a pupil. However, taking into account the diverse needs of the pupils, this is a very good record and demonstrates the success of the strategies to improve behaviour.
12. Relationships have also improved since the previous inspection and many pupils of all ages show a high level of concern for others. They greet each other, as well as adults, in a very polite and friendly manner and they show a very high level of concern for others. One pupil stated "school wouldn't be fun if we didn't get on". All members of staff are very good role models in the way they address pupils and each other and this is reflected in how pupils treat each other. For example in a Year 6 circle time lesson, they listened to what concerns others had and sensibly tried to think up solutions. As a result of the very good relationships and the very high standards of behaviour, the school has successfully tackled intimidation or harassment and pupils are very aware of the need to tell an adult if they have any concerns.
13. Pupils' spiritual development is now very good, rather than satisfactory, the judgement at the last inspection. All pupils are given opportunities to reflect on wider issues during collective worship and in PSHE and citizenship lessons. They think about how they can be kind and helpful to each other and what makes them feel happy and sad. They also have many opportunities to understand the beliefs of other religions, such as Judaism, through music and stories in assembly.
14. The provision for pupils' moral and social development has also improved. Pupils are very aware of right and wrong and could be heard reminding others of the need to avoid bad language or to say sorry, please and thank you. They know the consequences of poor behaviour and are very aware of the effect on others. Social development is given a very high priority by the school through clubs and activities that encourage pupils to work together. Groups of pupils organise their own games, such as very complex card games at lunchtime, and they play in school teams. The residential visits and many off-site excursions give pupils very good opportunities to socialise in different environments. Pupils understand the need to work together for the benefit of the community through, for example, the work of the school council. They also have the opportunity to understand the needs of the wider community through collecting for various charities. This very high emphasis on social and moral development has been very effective in ensuring that pupils empathise and understand the needs of others.
15. Pupils' cultural development has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Pupils have a very wide range of opportunities to develop a cultural awareness through art, music and drama with, for example, a lesson based on a traditional Indian tale. Each year, pupils in Years 7 to 9 perform a Shakespeare play for the rest of the school and their parents. Pupils' multicultural development comes through celebrating different festivals such as Chinese New

Year and Divali and having a day trying different foods and costumes as well as through the wide range of books, including dual language books, in the excellent curriculum centre.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.4%	School data	2.1%
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.*

16. Pupils' attendance has declined slightly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The unauthorised absence level has been affected by some very long-term absences that are largely out of the school's control, although staff continue to monitor and work with other agencies in relation to them. Some long-term authorised absences have been due to the medical conditions of some pupils. The attendance in Years 12 to 14 is good. Generally punctuality to school is good as most pupils are transported by bus or taxi. The school works well with the education welfare officer and the use of a computerised registration system enables staff to monitor attendance, for example, by ethnicity and gender.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Links with the community, the provision of specialist services and the advice and guidance offered to pupils are outstanding. Teaching and learning, the curriculum and links with parents are very good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, although for pupils in Years 3 to 6, it is good. Assessment is good and developing further.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The expertise and teamwork of the staff ensure that all pupils learn effectively.
- Lessons are planned so that pupils' interest is gained and praise and encouragement ensure their attention is sustained.
- In many lessons staff have extremely high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils are successfully helped to behave well.
- Planned specialist support programmes support pupils' learning very effectively indeed.
- The results of assessment are used very well to meet the needs of all pupils and to give pupils an understanding of how they can improve their work.
- Although on the whole, very high standards of work are expected from pupils, very occasionally, work is too easy or pupils are given too much support.

### Commentary

17. The proportion of lessons where teaching and learning are very good, and at times excellent, has more than quadrupled since the last inspection, demonstrating overall very good improvement.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
9 (9 %)	56 (56 %)	24 (24 %)	9 (9 %)	2 (2 %)	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.*

18. This is largely the result of comprehensive monitoring of a broad range of the elements of teaching and learning. It is also due to the development of the staff's very high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding of how to teach successfully pupils with a broad range of needs and ability levels. An additional and very important factor is the team work between the teachers, support staff and the professionals that work with them. This provides a consistency for pupils, so they know exactly what is expected of them and can learn effectively. Of the small number of lessons where the quality of teaching and learning is less than good, there are a few that are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but most occur in Years 3 to 6 including a very small number of lessons where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. This occurs where activities are not sufficiently challenging for pupils or adequately explained so they know what they will be learning. Specific work by senior managers with staff in these year groups has successfully raised the overall standards, leading to a substantial number of lessons where the quality is very good.
19. Teachers' planning is of a very high standard and seeks to ensure all pupils are actively included in lessons. Clear long and medium-term plans provide a very firm basis for lessons that are very well structured. In almost all instances there is a well defined beginning session that tells pupils what they will be learning and helps them make links with previous work. Then, towards the end of lessons, pupils' achievements are discussed. Work is tailored extremely well to the needs of the pupils in each class, with great care taken to ensure that all pupils learn effectively, often using a range of tasks. For example, in a mathematics lesson there were three activities: the more able measured pictures of items with a ruler, others measured objects using small interlocking blocks and one pupil worked on a one-to-one basis with a support assistant learning to make lines of blocks of different lengths. Pupils from homes where English is not the first language benefit from the close attention paid to developing communication skills throughout the school. They all have communication plans which are followed and monitored to ensure their vocabulary and skill grows effectively. Skilled use of methods that include stimulating pupils' senses to respond to activities are very effective with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They learn to anticipate what will happen next in a sensory story, particularly if it involves a light water spray! Very good use of a highly structured day works very well in giving security to pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Keeping to a clear routine and giving sufficient warning and information about changes of activities helps these pupils to make sense of their learning.
20. Pupils' attention is captured and kept as the pace of lessons is maintained with changes of activity. Lessons are made interesting and exciting and, where appropriate, relate to everyday situations. Pupils in Year 11 make very good progress improving their mathematical skills through activities based round 'the café'. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 thoroughly enjoy the story of *Chicken, Chips and Peas*, and look hard at the pictures to help them with the words. They use their experiences to decide whether words they have made with the 'ch' sound are real such as "chip", "chop" and "chup". Pupils' interest is sustained through the positive things that staff say, praising what is being done well. With encouragement, pupils persist and rise to challenges such as working out how to measure a wavy line.
21. Pupils work hard in response to the extremely high expectations set by staff. Even in the rare instances when activities are too easy, pupils put a great deal of effort into their work. Effective strategies are used to ensure pupils' behaviour is appropriate. Pupils are reminded that they need to listen or to sit on their chair and are instantly praised when they do. Support from the specialist teams in the school is very helpful indeed. Staff from the sensory resource provide excellent advice and guidance for staff teaching pupils with visual or hearing impairments; for example, to identify whether to enlarge or darken texts and where to place the work to optimise

what sight the pupil has. Similarly, the autism and behaviour support service is invaluable in ensuring pupils on the autistic spectrum and those with behaviour difficulties have the right provision to help them learn well. The communication team plays a very important role in improving the quality of teaching. As well as training, they provide in-class support for several weeks to develop teachers' expertise, for example, if they join from mainstream schools. They ensure the classroom is set out to help pupils to use systems and show staff how to use communication skills effectively. Staff make very good use of the curriculum resource centre to ensure they have sufficient and appropriate resources which they use very well.

22. Assessment is an area that is being developed further to use commercially-produced schemes. There are good systems which are being used to track the progress of individual pupils very well. Targets on individual education plans are regularly updated. All children have a communication assessment when they join the school which is used to form part of their plans and pupils with specific communication needs continue to have regular re-assessments. Assessment is very good in the nursery and reception classes and for pupils and students working towards examinations and awards in Years 10 to 14. Teachers use this information very well when planning what they will teach. They are also skilled in ensuring that pupils have a very good understanding of what they are doing to improve through working on their targets.
23. Homework was an area of concern raised by a few parents. It is set regularly for pupils in Years 7 and above and is used very well to support or extend what they have learnt in class. Homework is also available for younger pupils, when parents ask for it. Parents are also advised of routines such as toileting arrangements to enable them to be continued at home.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided by the school is very good overall for pupils of all ages except those in Years 10 and 11 where the curriculum is good. It is relevant and carefully designed to meet individual needs and contains many outstanding features. There are excellent opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, resources are good and staffing is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The staff's knowledge and use of a wide range of communication systems contributes to equality of access for all pupils.
- Pupils have an excellent preparation for the next stage of education either within Brookfields or for life beyond school.
- The opportunities for pupils to take examinations or gain awards at the end of Year 11 are limited but developing.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in sport and PSHE and citizenship.
- Residential visits and links with other schools motivate, and are very effective in enthusing, pupils.

## **Commentary**

24. There has been a significant all-round improvement in the curriculum since the previous inspection which has contributed to pupils' overall very high standards. The governing body monitors the curriculum closely. Pupils have better access to ICT than at the time of the previous inspection. Provision for communication, which was also identified as a weakness, is now outstanding. A broad range of communication aids is integral to every lesson. This includes the use of signing, symbols, PECs, switches and synthesised speech aids. The school ensures that all requirements for teaching the National Curriculum and religious education are met. Action is being successfully taken to deal with a weakness in the design and technology curriculum.

25. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is very good and firmly based on the areas of learning of the Foundation Stage. A rolling programme of topics provides new learning very effectively even when different age groups are taught together. There is appropriate and extremely successful emphasis on children gaining communication skills and improving their personal, social and emotional development.
26. Each group of years (key stage) is led by a highly effective head (head of key stage). Long and medium-term plans deal with the potential problem of mixed-age classes very well. These make very good use of relevant commercial schemes, especially for pupils with more complex needs. As a result, the curriculum is very inclusive as it caters for the needs of all the pupils in the school. Teachers plan lessons based on these schemes but ensure that they are relevant to each pupil, in line with individual education plans. There is breadth and depth to the curriculum because staff have increasing subject knowledge. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 at present have too few opportunities to gain national accreditation; however, this is being tackled as, now that specialist staff have been appointed, the range of subjects is being extended at Entry Level. The new art and design co-ordinator is developing the provision for more able pupils to work towards a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination as well as Entry Level.
27. For students in Years 12 to 14, the curriculum is broad and relevant. It enables them to continue to make progress in their learning and meets their individual needs very well. For example, students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught through using their senses (sensory curriculum), that includes massage and hydrotherapy, physiotherapy and individual programmes. The curriculum provides very effectively for work-related vocational courses and careers education. As part of their accreditation for the National Skills Profile (NSP), students attend Reading College weekly for vocational learning through 'Skills for Living' and opportunities for socialising. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties attend Henley College to continue their education through a Pathways course as part of the Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL). Most students go on to attend the colleges on leaving school and very few to day centres.
28. A wide range of activities within and beyond the school significantly enriches the curriculum. These not only support learning across a range of subjects but also contribute very positively to pupils' social development and communication skills. A number of opportunities for pupils to attend other schools have been established which include a class of pupils in Years 1 and 2 spending half a day each week at a local infant school. Every morning a small group of Year 6 pupils join a class in a local primary school for literacy and numeracy lessons. A small number of pupils in Year 7 join their local mainstream school once a week and the school's pupils help run sports clubs and entertain pupils with music at Brookfields. Very good provision for the arts is evident in the annual Shakespeare production involving all pupils in Years 7 to 9. There is maypole dancing and visits of authors and a ceramicist who enabled pupils to design and complete large-scale mosaic panels. Pupils explore areas beyond Reading during challenging residential trips, for example to a farm in Wales or to Atlantic College. Different areas of the curriculum are enriched in turn through activity days or weeks such as those concentrating on Pakistan or the Olympics.
29. The school's provision for PSHE and citizenship is excellent. This is recognised beyond the school through its Healthy Schools award and Certificate of Teaching of PSHE for the co-ordinator, who is beginning to develop a consultancy role with other schools. This area of the curriculum permeates all aspects of school life, with almost every pupil working towards individual targets for personal development. Provision for sex education and for teaching about drugs and alcohol misuse is excellent and is based on pupils' maturity and individual needs. Particularly good use is made of specialists such as the school nurse and police officers and also drama workshops. Pupils have opportunities from a young age to learn about making choices and the responsibility of living in a community. A range of speakers explain their roles, including representatives of the emergency services and the local Member of Parliament. There is provision for pupils to demonstrate their increasing sense of

responsibility when, for example, representatives of the school council run the disco and organise fund raising.

30. The school is justifiably proud of its Sportsmark award that recognises its commitment to a wide range of physical activities and its broad physical education curriculum. This includes daily lunchtime activities for pupils of all ages, use of the local sports centre and opportunities further afield that contribute very positively to personal development. Many teams compete against other schools, and outdoor and adventurous activities are encountered during residential trips and through experiences such as rafting with the Army Cadet Force.
31. Excellent planning between heads of key stage ensures a very smooth transition of pupils between year groups or beyond school to work or college. Staff provide detailed information about pupils who spend a day in their new environment before moving on permanently. Very good careers education and guidance starts for pupils in Year 9 and excellent links with the Connexions advisor helps prepare all pupils very well for work experience and life beyond school. Pupils with complex needs gain experience working within school. More able pupils benefit considerably from business partnership links that ensure they go through the same process of applying for jobs, being prepared for interview and completing two weeks' work as their mainstream peers. College 'taster' courses such as horticulture, motor vehicle maintenance, electronics or textiles give pupils ideas for future study. The school has understandably received a careers guidance quality award at enhanced level for its work.
32. There is a very good number and match of teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum and of individuals. The school's policy of increasingly appointing staff with subject expertise and training specialist support staff has helped raise expectations and broadened the curriculum. Staff expertise in communication and in specific areas such as autism, behaviour management and sensory impairment has increased the confidence and skill of all staff and improved pupils' opportunities to learn. Excellent links with specialist services such as the RNIB and the work of the occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech and language therapists leads to the extremely successful inclusion of all pupils very effectively. The very well managed resource centre provides a wide range of resources including books and artefacts that are supplemented by the library and museum service. Resources are good overall with no significant weaknesses in any area of the curriculum. Resources are particularly good in English, PSHE and citizenship, ICT and for children in the nursery and reception classes.
33. The well-maintained accommodation is gradually being upgraded. Its strengths lie in provision for students in Years 12 to 14 and for children in the nursery and reception classes. There is also a very good ICT suite and excellent sensory room that is used to very good effect. However, there is no specialist music room and provision for art and design and technology is restricted by the size of the rooms. Storage space is insufficient and currently changing rooms are cluttered with physical education resources. There are plans to upgrade the currently unsatisfactory toilet provision for pupils in Years 7 to 11 with mobility difficulties and to provide better access for wheelchairs to all rooms. The display of pupils' work is restricted in classrooms as hanging or mobile displays are not able to be used due to the operation of the security systems.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The steps taken to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good overall. The school provides excellent support, advice and guidance for pupils. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Child protection procedures are very good.
- Pupils have access to excellent and varied support, advice and guidance.

- Careers education is very good.
- New pupils settle in to the school very well.
- Pupils are canvassed for their views and listened to very well.
- There are some minor health and safety concerns.



## Commentary

34. The school has improved the child protection procedures since the last inspection. The designated co-ordinator is well trained and very knowledgeable about the area's local services. All staff are made aware of the school's procedures for child protection through including them regularly during in-service training days. The school's policy is clear and comprehensive and based on the local area guidelines. The welfare of pupils who are 'looked after' is also very well monitored. There is a rolling programme of staff training in the use of appropriate physical intervention with pupils and any such incidents that do occur are properly recorded.
35. Health and safety procedures are good due to the involvement of the school health and safety group and the risk assessments carried out by a governor as well as the local authority. There were, however, some minor matters pointed out to the school during the inspection such as a hole in the floor of one of the halls, the open-plan nature of a kitchen area and some register sheets not being completed fully.
36. There is a wealth of support and guidance for pupils to ensure they are all getting the best from their education based on their specific needs, which are ascertained through close monitoring of their academic and personal development. The autism and behaviour support team is very highly effective in ensuring that pupils can be included in school as much as possible and in working with pupils on a one-to-one basis to establish how they can be helped. Similarly the work of the communication team, which includes a speech and language therapist, ensures that all pupils have appropriate means of communicating. The sensory resource has a very useful link with the RNIB. The well-qualified teaching staff who have additional qualifications in visual and hearing impairment support pupils very well, offering both individual work and working with pupils and colleagues in classrooms. There is a very good emphasis upon ensuring pupils' access and opportunities to achieve alongside their peers. Staff training is available to the support assistants through an accredited course linked with the RNIB. Other support and advice for pupils is available through the very good liaison with the physiotherapists, and the nurse based in the school. The school is now working towards the gold award for the Healthy Schools' initiative and has a task group currently looking at what pupils eat at lunchtime.
37. Pupils also receive careers advice and guidance that is very effective overall and excellent for older pupils and students. Older pupils benefit from work placements. As a result of all this support and the very caring and dedicated staff, pupils gain greatly and have built up trusting relationships with adults.
38. Pupils who join the school, either at the start of their school life or later, settle in very well. Induction arrangements are excellent in the nursery and reception classes. Staff carry out home visits before the children start school and the children attend for short periods, gradually building up their days until, eventually they can manage full time. All pupils are invited to visit before they join the school on several occasions and, if possible, staff visit them in their previous schools.
39. Pupils are very well involved in the life of the school. There is an active school council whose members are proud of the improvements and changes they have managed to bring about, such as being allowed to use a certain part of the playground after they drew up a new set of rules. Pupils are also given many opportunities to voice their opinions through regular circle time discussions and they know that their views are listened to.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has very good links with parents. Links with the community are excellent and those with other schools and colleges are very good. There are excellent educational and support programmes in place for parents and other schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have very positive views of the school and are very supportive.
- Links with the community are exceptionally wide and effective.
- There is a very good and effective range of links with local schools and colleges.
- The programmes to support parents and other schools are extremely beneficial to those involved.
- The written information for parents is not always clear or user-friendly.

### **Commentary**

40. Parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, attended the parents' meeting or spoke to inspectors are generally very happy with all aspects of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the way their children settle into school, the progress they make, the range of activities for their children and the way the school is led and managed. The inspectors agree that these are very strong aspects of the school. A very small number of parents have some concerns about bullying and, although there was no evidence of any intimidation during the inspection, the school takes all matters seriously and is currently working with pupils to enhance their perception of what bullying is and how to deal with it. Some parents also feel the information they receive from the school could be improved. The school does involve parents fully in annual reviews and other consultation evenings, arranging for translators if necessary. The home/school books are used very well for children in the nursery and reception classes, pupils in Years 1 to 6, and for older pupils with communication difficulties. However, there is scope to improve the end-of-year progress reports so that there is a consistency in the quality and usefulness of information the parents receive. Some of the other information that parents receive, in particular the key stage handbooks, is too wordy and not written in a way that encourages reading. This was also the case at the last inspection. There are also a small number of statutory items missing from the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus that legally need to be included.
41. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and this is shown by the way they support their children at home, reinforcing communication skills or helping with tasks set to develop pupils' independence. In addition, the active Parents' Association raises substantial amounts of money each year that have been used to improve the playground and to purchase equipment such as portable magnifiers for pupils with specific needs.
42. The school has continued to develop links with the community to such an extent that they are now excellent. The many links that exist include making excellent use of local supermarkets for older pupils to learn how to shop independently and to interact with others. Regular visits are also made to a garden centre, farm, church and the leisure centre. These visits have a very strong effect on pupils' social skills. Several local companies and organisations support the school by providing teams to improve the school buildings and grounds or organising day trips for pupils. The school ensures that their efforts are appreciated by involving pupils in providing refreshments, which is another opportunity for pupils to boost their personal development. The RNIB has been very supportive, providing finance, training and evaluation to the school.
43. Links with other schools and colleges have also developed very well since the last inspection. Several pupils attend local primary and secondary schools and are integrated very well on the days they attend. These pupils enjoy the different experiences and aspects of both of their schools. The youngest pupils appreciate the Christmas party put on by students at a local

secondary school. Older pupils attend local colleges each week to learn a variety of skills such as agriculture and horticulture. There have been joint projects with schools such as producing a tactile trail. The schools that Brookfields School is connected to speak very highly of the partnership that exists and the benefits that they gain from them.

44. The extended services that are provided are also very highly valued by parents, staff and other professionals. These excellent services have referral systems and work very closely with parents and carers, with the school staff as a whole and with the wider multi-professional team including colleagues from health and social services. The school has run several courses for parents such as *Time to Talk* to help them communicate with their children. Also, the autism and behaviour support team, in addition to running courses for parents, is available to give advice and guidance to them on many issues. The team run regular clinics to help with problems children experience such as toileting and sleeping. They loan equipment and provide evening surgeries where support is given. The school's consultancy service is also very effective in assessing pupils with special educational needs who are taught in mainstream schools and advising the staff on the best ways to communicate with them and how to manage their behaviour, as well as giving guidance on suitable resources.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good overall. Leadership is very good. The management of the school is very good. Governance is excellent. Significant barriers to further improvement are the accommodation of the school, and the difficulty in recruiting subject-specific staff.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The qualities of leadership displayed by the headteacher are excellent.
- The headteacher has created an excellent senior management team and management structure.
- Day-to-day finances and administration are very good.
- The governors contribute excellently to supporting the school and shaping its direction.
- Planning for the development of the school is excellent.

### **Commentary**

45. The headteacher's leadership and management are excellent. He is totally committed to moving the school forward to achieve higher standards and inspires all staff. He has established an excellent senior management team, and very able middle management structure, that shares his determination that all pupils will make as much progress as they can both academically, and in broader areas of their personal achievement. The headteacher delegates responsibilities very effectively to the senior and middle managers. Staff appreciate this, take their responsibilities seriously and, as a result, are working extremely hard to implement initiatives and to raise standards. The school is far-sighted; for example, a small party visited a new school in the south of England to evaluate the benefits of Brookfields co-locating (moving to a site where there is one or more other schools) in the future. Staff and governors who made the visit came back with new ideas which confirmed their views on the merits of co-location in the future and the way forward for the school.
46. Leadership and management of key staff are very good. They are excellent by the senior management team. Subject co-ordinators and heads of key stage are very effective in promoting learning in their subjects and departments through formal and informal meetings and increasingly, through scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' progress. Lesson observations and other forms of monitoring are regularly carried out by the headteacher, senior staff, subject co-ordinators, heads of key stage and the local education authority school improvement advisers. Formal feedback is given, targets set and this improves the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement. The very high quality of monitoring ensures

that the school's policy on inclusion is effective, also, that requirements concerning racial discrimination are fully implemented.

47. The school is fortunate in the high quality and expertise of the governors, such as a business consultant and an accountant. The governors ensure there is compliance with all statutory requirements except minor omissions in the school prospectus and their report to parents. They make a very effective contribution to the direction of the school and have a very good understanding of its work, aims and developments. They are actively involved through being linked to subjects. They are very committed and have considerable empathy with the pupils and their special educational needs. The school is fortunate in that the chairperson spends a good amount of time in the school and he and other governors speak with very good knowledge of the school and its pupils. They challenge the management when necessary and will not give up until they are satisfied with the explanations they receive. They are very well organised and use their committees effectively to monitor and help manage the school.
48. Strategic planning for the future is excellent. There are comprehensive procedures in place for keeping track of progress in all areas of the school's work. The resulting information is used well to inform school development planning and staff development. Clear links are established between the school's priorities and its financial planning. The headteacher and governing body appropriately give careful consideration to the cost-effectiveness of their spending decisions.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,164,781
Total expenditure	2,130,516
Expenditure per pupil	11,393

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	59,880
Balance carried forward to the next	94,145

49. The school follows good practice in the purchase of resources and in the appointment of contractors for work on the school premises. Careful consideration is given to the outcomes of its spending decisions. Administrative staff keep all accounts well and provide good quality support and information for the headteacher and governing body. The last audit report, although some time ago in 2001, confirmed the high quality of practice and made only minor recommendations for improvement, which have long since been fully implemented indicating the school's commitment to improvement.
50. Staff performance management is effective and individual targets have been identified which support improvements in teaching very well through lesson observations and constructive feedback. Teachers and support staff form very effective teams across the school and this has a beneficial effect on the progress pupils make. They have excellent opportunities to take part in a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. Staff induction is excellent. It is extremely well structured and ensures that all new staff get to know about the school and pupils as quickly as possible. The induction programme is also open to all current staff to attend. Staff know in advance the topics available and ensure they attend for areas they wish to refresh or improve upon. This is excellent practice, works very well and improves the quality and expertise of all staff across the school.
51. The most significant aid to raising standards is the school's programme for helping pupils communicate effectively. A very effective multi-disciplinary school communication team has been set up. One result is that systems are used consistently and successfully across the school by teachers and support assistants. The work of the very well established autism and behaviour support service complements well the support offered by the communication team. The service is very successful within the school and also runs courses and consultancy to assist mainstream staff who teach these pupils. Barriers to school improvement are the difficulty the school encounters when trying to attract subject-specific qualified staff, for example in ICT, to permanent posts within the school. Despite the school's best efforts it has

been unsuccessful twice in attracting suitably qualified teachers for this post. Further barriers include the inadequacies of parts of the specialist accommodation at secondary level. Plans to resolve these difficulties have been made and financial provision established in the school development plan.

52. Overall, leadership and management have made very good improvements since the previous inspection. The shared commitment of staff ensures that pupils' needs are met. High morale and a very good ethos in school have been key factors in this improvement and raising of pupils' achievements. Taking into account the high levels of achievement, the school gives very good value for money.

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

## **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception age) are taught in two classes where, overall, they make very good progress and achieve very well. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection, and is primarily due to the excellent leadership, clear sense of purpose and high aspirations for the children, of the co-ordinator of the Foundation Stage. It is clear from the consistent way the staff in both classes work that they are a very effective team and are managed exceptionally well. This contributes to the very well-deserved award of the Berkshire Early Years Kite Mark. The quality of the planning throughout is very good. This includes the strategic planning for improving the provision as well as the curriculum and lesson planning. In all lessons, staff have very high expectations of how children will behave and very effective strategies to help children learn to conform. Assessment procedures are very effective and take place all the time. A relatively new system using sticky notes is extremely useful for noting important developments. Individual education plans have targets reviewed as soon as a child masters the activity, and records of progress are regularly updated.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children have very clear targets in this area of learning and the improvement they make is excellent.
- All lessons are planned to include personal, social and emotional development, so children's learning is constantly being reinforced.
- Support and advice from the autism and behaviour support service is used very effectively.

### **Commentary**

53. This area of learning is taught very well indeed at every available opportunity and, as a result, children make extremely good progress and their achievement is excellent. This is excellent improvement since the last inspection. The staff are skilled in modelling appropriate behaviour and keeping a calm but purposeful atmosphere. Children's progress is very effectively monitored through targets set on their individual education plans. These are reviewed on a regular basis and revised earlier than planned if the child has achieved what is set. A very effective toileting programme leads to a good proportion of children being able to dispense with nappies. They learn teeth-cleaning and hand-washing routines very well. Throughout, staff ensure that children develop their independence. At snack time, in the class of the youngest children, they make choices and the more able children already spread toppings on their toast independently. Staff insist they wait for their turn, which many find initially very difficult. Older children know when they are hungry or thirsty and use symbols and PECs to make their needs known. Activities are specifically planned for individual children. For example, in a group of three, one child was learning to tolerate others being in control of an activity, the second was operating a bubble machine but waiting for the command from a third child, who found working with other children difficult, to say "go!" With the support of the teacher, all three achieved their goals.
54. Initially, when children are admitted to the school, many have difficulties with their behaviour. This is specifically and very successfully tackled. Support from the autism and behaviour support service is specifically sought where appropriate and the programmes devised work extremely well. Sessions of intensive interaction are very effective. One child with autism has learnt to tolerate others and is beginning to enjoy a one-to-one tactile programme, relating

directly to the support assistant. Staff are very skilled in diverting undesired behaviour by offering interesting activities. It is notable that during the sessions where the children are together as a group round the teacher, most have learnt to sit on their chairs. Of the few that find this difficult, most will now join the group for at least part of the time, which is a significant improvement.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Initial assessments and support from the communication team provide clear guidelines for planning each child's learning.
- Augmentative communication is used very well and children's understanding develops rapidly.
- Children enjoy listening to stories and a number look at books independently.
- Language is taught at every opportunity.

### **Commentary**

55. The comprehensive assessments from the communication team are used extremely well as the basis for the targets set for each child. Using the programmes devised, all children make extremely rapid progress and their achievement is excellent because staff are very skilled in using and teaching different means of communication. There has been good improvement on the very high standards reported at the last inspection. Children in the early stages of learning to communicate understand the significance of objects of reference. They know for example, that when they are given a ball in a net it means they are going to the sensory room and that a watering can represents the splash pool. Signs and symbols are used extremely well. Children select the symbol for 'toilet' or 'drink'. The PECs is helping children to make their needs and wants known. They develop from using the symbols to using the sentence line guided by staff who repeat what they are asking for. Children's vocabulary grows successfully in this way. Simple commands are used very effectively such as "Name of child..... sit" and "picture - wall". However, at times the physical prompt gets in the way of the signing to support the action.
56. New words are introduced through all the areas of the curriculum. Staff talk with the children and explore objects together using words such as 'rough' and 'smooth', and 'triangle' and 'circle'. More able children repeat the words and use them in a variety of situations. Children join in action songs showing they remember the sequence and sometimes the words. Several were heard singing independently *Old MacDonald had a Farm*. The more able recognise the letters of their name and put their names on their work. Many understand that print conveys meaning and enjoy it when staff read stories, often looking at the pictures in the book.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children make very good gains in understanding of number and shape.
- Very good use is made of practical activities to help children learn.
- The language of mathematics is taught very well.

## Commentary

57. Children make very good progress and achieve very well in their mathematical development which is very good improvement since the last inspection. They learn to count from initially listening to and then joining in with number songs such as *Three Little Monkeys*. Children with autistic spectrum disorder gradually join in these activities. Teaching and learning are very good and staff are very skilled at spotting opportunities to get children to supply the next number “one, two what comes next?” when counting the blocks they have used to make a tower. Children will often explore shapes in the early stages of establishing their properties. They concentrate hard when they are using the computer and particularly enjoy counting numbers of the ladybird’s spots on the screen and the loud ‘burping’ noise which that particular program makes on a regular basis! Children learn to match shape and colour and the more able recognise colours by name and group them. One child selected the lids for the giant painting pens. She corrected her mistake when the pink and purple were transposed. More able children identify shapes such as squares, circles and rectangles accurately.
58. During one-to-one sessions, a series of very well-chosen practical activities are selected to help children understand and to keep their interest effectively. In response to well-phrased requests from the teacher, they select shapes and count objects. Children begin to develop a mathematical vocabulary knowing what one more than a number is and follow instructions such as to put their mug on the table and go into the outside area.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given a wealth of experiences to explore using their senses.
- Activities are very well planned to ensure all children are able to participate.
- Children are taught to make the link between cause and effect.
- The use of topics is very effective.
- Care is taken to ensure children learn about different cultures.

## Commentary

59. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in developing children’s knowledge and understanding of the world and, as a result, they make very good progress and achieve very well. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. The topic of animals is very well developed. Children enjoy joining in the action song about Noah and exploring the contents of the model ark, naming the animals as they go or selecting one in response to a carefully worded request from the teacher. A very wide range of materials and textures are available for children to explore both inside and outside. There is a large sand pit, ideal for making sandcastles and moulding shapes, and hard materials such as lentils and pasta which children run through their fingers, shovel or put through a hopper system. Water is always popular to explore and watch falling from containers. Older children hunted for toy animals hidden in shaving foam and discovered they could make ‘snow’ if they clapped their hands. Staff ensure that all children are able to gain the experiences. Special seating arrangements are organised for those who need it and children that need support to move from one activity to another are helped to do so.
60. Children’s understanding of cause and effect improves as they operate battery toys, move the cursor on the screen of the computer and click the mouse or roller ball to make things happen on the interactive screen. One child, with strategic guidance from a support assistant, accidentally operated a fan while she was in the sensory room. By the end of the session, she had established how to deliberately turn it on and off with a switch pad. Children’s concept



of the passage of time is aided by going through the daily timetable when they learn what comes next and that it is 'swimming today'.

61. Children learn about a range of beliefs and cultures. The very effective *Five Little Fingers* assembly routine gives them an awareness of prayer and of God. Celebrations throughout the year are used very well to broaden their experiences. For example, children dressed up and celebrated Chinese New Year.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well designed and planned outside area is a great asset for developing physical skills.
- Children develop their co-ordination skills very well.
- Many opportunities are provided to help children use a broad range of tools effectively.

### Commentary

62. Children make very good progress and achieve very well in their physical development. This is very good improvement since the last inspection and the excellent refurbished outdoor play area makes a major contribution to their success. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Staff are supportive and encouraging and, as a result, children gain sufficient confidence to climb on the frames and learn to slide down the chute. A few are able to pedal trikes, and many propel themselves along with their feet on trikes or in toy cars. In physical education sessions, very good methods are used to help develop hand and eye co-ordination. To ensure all gain success, children have the opportunity to throw or place their bean bags in a box. They also begin to know they need to 'warm up' before physical activity. It was not possible to see children in the swimming pool as it was temporarily closed when they were due to use it.
63. Staff provide excellent models, for example of how to use equipment. They demonstrate and use physical and verbal prompts very well. As a result, children begin to gain control over their finer movements, such as cutting, sticking, mixing and using brushes and writing implements with increasing precision. They use their hands to shape dough and thread cotton reels.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources for creative development are very good.
- Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop skills in a range of media using different textures and colours in their work.
- Action songs are used throughout the day very effectively.

### Commentary

64. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and as a result of this, and the exciting materials and equipment they have to use, children make very good progress and achieve very well. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. Numerous opportunities are provided for children to explore colour, shape, texture and form. Many are able to recognise colours and select and use them in their work. They use a range of techniques including painting, drawing, texture work with combs, collage and play dough, and become proficient

with the tools to achieve the desired effect. Examples of drawings of a figure show increasing detail which staff encourage through careful questioning, such as, "How many eyes?"

65. Music plays a strong role. Staff sing and perform the actions to songs, which children gradually join in and learn. Songs are used to signal the beginning and end of sessions. For example *Moving, Moving...* means there will be a move. Children are able to select which song they would like to sing from several shown as symbols on a board. They enjoy using percussion instruments and keyboards to 'make music'. Children are encouraged to dress up using many interesting outfits from lions and tigers to dresses and a policeman's helmet which leads to interesting role play often instigated by staff.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching and learning lead to very good pupil achievement across the school.
- Excellent leadership and management of English and communication ensure that pupils' language and literacy development has a high profile.
- Very good enrichment opportunities are provided for pupils within and beyond lessons.

#### **Commentary**

66. Pupils' achievement in English is very good and their progress in speaking and listening is particularly good. There are no noticeable differences in achievement between boys and girls. This is a result of very good teaching and learning across the school characterised by very good planning for the individual needs of all pupils linked closely to individual targets for improvement. Teachers also have very high expectations that pupils can appreciate and enjoy well-written stories, poetry and non-fiction and to participate in drama and discussion.
67. In Year 2, because of skilful questioning by the teacher and the teaching assistant during the shared reading of a big book, pupils follow the story and respond very well to questions about it. Pupils are helped to choose books and the more able sequence pictures to tell a story without assistance and identify rhyming words. Pupils in Year 6 also show great enjoyment of lively texts. They recall and re-tell the main events in a story and, as a result of very good demonstrations by the teacher, can begin to plan and draft their own versions. They read, recognise and spell simple words encouraged by the fun element in a spelling game, and participate well in drama games and role-play.
68. Very effective teaching methods are used. For example, cut-out figures to express emotions and ready-prepared word cards as captions help less able Year 7 pupils participate in the discussion about characters and events in a fable. Visually impaired pupils benefit from the provision of enlarged texts. More able pupils are helped to develop their letter-writing skills by writing to a character in a fable. They write independently and use a computer well. During a Year 9 lesson, all pupils were helped to understand the main features of texts giving information very well because they first were asked to explain how or why something works to the rest of the class. Strategies were established and, during a shared reading session, pupils picked out the important features from descriptions of information writing in a book about volcanoes and earthquakes.
69. Audio aids are used effectively. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher had recorded automated telephone messages from local cinemas. This encouraged pupils to listen very carefully. The more able wrote notes independently based on the information while others used appropriately-

prepared worksheets with help from staff. A homework 'telephone challenge' extended the pupils' skills further effectively. Last year, nine pupils successfully achieved AQA Entry Level passes in English, six at level 2 and three at level 3.

70. Leadership and management of English are excellent. The co-ordinator has a clear vision and understanding of the central role of language and literature that she shares with infectious enthusiasm. The school has an excellent Total Communication policy and liaison between English and the communication team is excellent. There is very good monitoring and observation of planning, teaching and learning and a very good improvement plan based on clearly identified needs. This rightly includes the continued sharing of standards across the school and the exemplification of levels of pupils' work; also the need to continue to widen the opportunities for pupils to use ICT in English. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.
71. A notable strength of English is the range of opportunities provided within and beyond lessons for enrichment. These include visits by poets and theatre workshops and opportunities to interview local personalities for the school newspaper. Pupils participate in drama and role-play, including an outstanding performance each year by pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 of a Shakespeare play.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

72. The development of pupils' language and literacy skills is very good across the school. All teachers plan opportunities for language and literacy development in every subject. Subject-specific vocabulary is taught particularly well and pupils are often asked to read or look at books or pictures. There is very good additional support beyond English lessons for improving pupils' spelling, vocabulary and reading in tutorial time and in communication lessons.

### **Modern foreign language**

73. It was only possible to observe two lessons of **French**; therefore, judgements cannot be made about the quality of teaching, learning or provision. However, teacher's planning, pupils' books, their records, displays in school and discussion with the co-ordinator show that staff follow a suitable range of work. Teacher's planning is very good. In the two lessons observed during the inspection, teaching and learning were very good and pupils were thoroughly involved in learning through enthusiastic teaching and the very effective use of resources and support from the teaching assistant. Because of the very good relationships in class, pupils responded well, behaved very well and rose to the challenge to speak French, improve their accents and increase their vocabulary. Pupils showed a very good understanding of greeting each other and staff; also of food and drink available in France and how much these would cost. They thoroughly enjoyed ordering and tasting 'Orangina'. Last year, five pupils gained level 3 passes in the AQA Entry Level examinations in Year 11.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those with additional special needs, are well met.
- Pupils of all ages and all abilities achieve very well.
- Mathematics is very well led and managed.
- The quality and range of activities available are very good and enable pupils to participate fully in lessons.
- Teachers tread a fine line very well between having high expectations and setting challenging work for pupils, yet allowing for and understanding their difficulties.
- Pupils work hard and enjoy their lessons.

- ICT is used well to reinforce learning across the mathematics curriculum.

## **Commentary**

74. Teaching and learning are consistently very good overall, and as a result, the achievement and progress of pupils of all ages and abilities are very good. The standard in mathematics has improved well since the last inspection and the subject co-ordinator has a clear picture of how the subject is developing across the curriculum. The curriculum, including the National Numeracy Strategy, is well established and the checking of pupils' work enables lessons to be planned to meet the individual needs of the pupils effectively.
75. The subject co-ordinator leads and manages the subject very well. She has detailed knowledge of all pupils across the school. Assessment and recording are good, consequently she is able to analyse achievement by individual pupil, by gender, age or ability and ensure they are all doing as well as their peers.
76. Teachers plan lessons in great detail ensuring there are well-timed changes of activities; this motivates pupils and enables them to work hard for long periods of time. Due to the very good relationships between staff and pupils, pupils respond positively and their enjoyment during lessons is obvious. They are keen to participate and this enhances the progress they make.
77. Teachers use ICT effectively in mathematics lessons, such as commercial ICT programs to extend and reinforce pupils' learning on number and measurement. Older pupils use calculators to check their estimates when solving problems associated with booking a foreign holiday. One pupil with visual impairment brings his laptop computer to lessons and a keyboard with extra large keys. Staff use ICT effectively to record their planning and create individual worksheets for pupils. They use signs, symbols and text well to communicate effectively with pupils.
78. By the end of Year 11, pupils pursue the AQA Entry Level Examination for mathematics. This is successful and last year eight pupils gained level 2 passes.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

79. Mathematics is used well in other subjects. Good examples of this are the use of measurement in physical education lessons where pupils measure their throws and distances in athletics. In music, they clap to the beat, tap a rhythm, count aloud and sing number songs. Pupils use their knowledge of angles well: when designing products in design and technology, making picture frames in art and understanding angles in their work on reflection in science. On shopping trips, pupils make purchases using money.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good. It is challenging, relevant and well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Very good lesson plans clearly state what pupils will learn.
- Pupils enjoy science.
- Specialist teaching and accommodation for secondary-aged pupils ensures they have very good opportunities to succeed.

## **Commentary**

80. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. As a result, pupils of all abilities achieve very well. Planning is very clear and sets out what pupils will learn and the activities that will support their learning. As a result, learning is focussed which allows the staff to work effectively with pupils.

81. Teachers of younger pupils know their needs well and provide many very good opportunities for learning based upon first-hand experience. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 find out about the differences between animals and know that dogs and cats need food and water to live. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 have grown seeds and carried out experiments to find out what happens if the seeds have no water, lots of water or some water. They describe their results and decide which seeds grow best. The most able pupils can describe why their test was fair. Teachers and support staff have very high expectations; they ensure that pupils are challenged at just the right level so that they make very good progress and experience a sense of achievement in their work. Pupils show great interest in their work. They are keen and confident. They enjoy finding things out and using their senses to explore the world around them.
82. Specialist teaching for Years 7 to 11 ensures that pupils have a very good opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and understanding. There is a particularly good focus upon the pupil as a scientist with well-targeted questions that both assess learning and help pupils to extend their knowledge. As a result, pupils are eager to experiment and share ideas. They offer explanations and link what they find to knowledge from other subjects that they study. Pupils in Year 9 carry out experiments to find and identify seeds. They follow instructions and are very careful to work safely. In Years 10 and 11, pupils prepare well for module tests. For example, they learn facts about the ways in which light travels, and offer suggestions and make judgements about questions based on their knowledge. Pupils persevere even when tasks are difficult because they are focussed upon the achievement of their unit awards. They are confident and work hard. Last year, seven pupils gained level 1 awards. Skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are regularly reinforced in science lessons.
83. The in-depth subject knowledge of the specialist science teacher ensures that explanations are clear and questions searching and designed to develop understanding. Lessons are very well planned and presented. The science laboratory is a very good resource and is well supplied with equipment including an interactive whiteboard. This is very well used by the teacher and pupils and makes a very positive impact on learning.
84. The subject leaders provide a very good leadership and management team for science and have ensured that there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Resources are very good and provide good teaching and learning opportunities in Years 7 to 11, but access to computers is limited for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- An appropriate curriculum, delivered through good teaching, ensures that all pupils achieve well.
- Staff work well together providing effective teams.
- Leadership is satisfactory but currently staff lack the support of a full-time subject specialist for the further development of the subject.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is very good, and is well planned in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

85. Pupils' progress and achievement in ICT are good in all year groups. Recent improvements in resources for the subject have resulted in a modern computer suite for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and computers in each teaching area all linked together, an intranet, with access to the Internet. Computer programs appropriate to the learning needs of the pupils are also being installed onto the intranet. These provide improved opportunities, since the previous inspection, for both whole-class learning of discrete ICT skills and the use of ICT to support

other subject learning. However, although pupils in Years 1 to 6 use interactive whiteboards which provide a very good resource for whole-class teaching, their opportunities to learn and practise new skills are limited by the lack of sufficient access to computers. This situation is preventing the pupils' good progress from improving further.

86. Through adapting the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) scheme of work with those of EQUALS, an appropriate curriculum for both pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties and those with more complex needs is provided. The quality of teaching and learning is good and teachers ensure that pupils' individual needs are met well. Most are confident and competent users of ICT and provide good role models for their pupils. Lessons are generally well prepared and planned with tasks set for pupils that are appropriate to their abilities. Pupils are fully involved through teachers' good use of direct questioning and are pleased with their good achievements. Occasionally unsatisfactory lesson timing does not allow for a time at the end to assess and consolidate pupils' new learning.
87. A notable feature of all lessons is the very good teamwork between teaching and support staff. This results in very good support for pupils' learning, particularly for the less able pupils. Last year, as part of the NSP, seven pupils gained modules in ICT and six in information technology (IT).
88. As a result of staff changes and recruitment difficulties, the subject is without a subject leader until the autumn term. Co-ordination is being temporarily undertaken by a deputy headteacher who is providing satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

#### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

89. The school has placed great emphasis, to very good effect, on the use of ICT to support subject teaching and learning by the planning of ICT into subject medium-term planning. Both the co-ordinators for English and for mathematics have tracked the use of ICT within their subjects to evaluate its effectiveness and the ICT co-ordinator has tracked the use of ICT across all subjects. Numerous instances of the use of ICT within other subject lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. Such use was particularly noted in English, mathematics and science teaching.

#### **HUMANITIES**

90. During the inspection it was only possible to observe three lessons in **geography**: two for pupils in Years 4 to 6 and one for older pupils in Year 11. Teaching and learning in the lessons for the younger pupils ranged from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. In the lesson where teaching and learning were satisfactory, there was a clear focus, so that the pupils knew what was expected of them. However, the content of the other lesson, largely water play, failed to develop suitably difficult activities. Because of this pupils did not maintain their interest or make sufficient progress in their learning. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Year 11 was satisfactory and pupils made satisfactory progress. They enjoyed the games aspect of the lesson, particularly imagining they are each a continent and standing in the right position in relation to other continents using the world map as a reference.
91. It is evident from the study of planning and the analysis of pupils' work that an appropriately wide geography curriculum is provided. Pupils are able to use the good range of resources and books in the curriculum centre and many local trips and visits are made within the locality.
92. During the inspection only one lesson of **history** was seen. This was with pupils in Year 6. The pupils learned well and the teacher provided good opportunities for them to take part in role-play and choose activities as well as increase their knowledge about travel. Pupils recalled holidays they had enjoyed in the past and could point out things that reminded them of holidays from photographs.

93. From an analysis of pupils' work it is evident that pupils are offered an appropriately wide-ranging curriculum in history. The levels of resources available in the curriculum centre are good and the school has links with the local museum service that provide artefacts for different topics that pupils study.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities to mark Christian celebrations and the festivals of other religions.
- An appropriate curriculum based upon the Local Agreed Syllabus meets pupils' individual needs well.
- Teaching is mainly good overall throughout the school; activities are matched well to pupils' abilities ensuring their good achievements and progress.
- The temporary lack of a subject leader reduces focus for the development of the subject.

### Commentary

94. Pupils have positive attitudes to their own faiths and show respect for the beliefs of others. Opportunities to celebrate the festivals of a range of faiths are used regularly. Additionally, references to holy books such as the Qu'ran and opportunities for pupils to pray to their God during prayers demonstrate the school's understanding of the need to include all pupils' faiths within their work. Good emphasis is given to Christianity, its festivals and beliefs. Good work was seen on the use of Bible stories to illustrate moral judgements of what is right and wrong which supports pupils' personal development effectively.
95. The Local Agreed Syllabus has been adapted well through the use of plans of work specifically designed for pupils with special educational needs. This provides an appropriate range of experiences that meets the needs of both pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties and those pupils with more complex needs.
96. The good use of story-telling and linking with the topic that is being studied helps pupils in Year 2 to have a good knowledge of the story of Noah and to know about the link between the palm cross and Easter. Good practical activities are effective; for example, a visit to a church by Year 6 pupils helped them to understand the purpose of places of worship. Lesson planning is good overall and teachers have good subject knowledge and use their generally good relationships and knowledge of their pupils well. This is evident in the appropriate use of questioning to guide pupils' learning and in the choice of tasks that are at the right level and suit individual pupils. In one excellent Year 7 lesson, the teacher's depth of knowledge of the events relating to the Passover and the presentation of it led to a lively discussion that kept the pupils enthralled. However, in another lesson with predominately Year 6 pupils, unsatisfactory planning led to missed opportunities to emphasise sufficiently what the pupils were expected to learn. Both teaching and non-teaching staff work very well together as teams which helps pupils achieve well. Pupils in Year 9 are helped to recall facts about religions, such as that Jews worship in a synagogue and they understand the basic beliefs of Islam. By Year 11, pupils develop a good understanding of moral and social issues when discussing human rights in Bosnia, making sensible comments during discussions.
97. As a result of staff changes, the subject is temporarily without a subject leader until the autumn term, which is restricting further development. However, the headteacher has now taken over co-ordination responsibilities in the short term and is providing satisfactory leadership and management. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.



## TECHNOLOGY

98. Five lessons were seen in **design and technology**, but not sufficient lessons for each age group to make an overall judgement on the quality of provision. However, the school has rightly identified the subject as an area for development and has appointed a specialist teacher as co-ordinator from September. There is evidence from the several lessons seen and from scrutiny of work and discussion with staff that the subject is currently at a very similar stage to that seen at the previous inspection. This showed sufficient emphasis on the 'making' component but too few opportunities for pupils to plan or to evaluate their work. New schemes of work have been selected to deal with this imbalance.
99. Teaching and learning range from very good to unsatisfactory. When taught by a specialist teacher, pupils responded well to challenge, for example to design and make an automaton. Pupils with complex needs achieve well because of the high level of support and encouragement they receive. Features of the unsatisfactory teaching were too few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate independence and too little emphasis on health and safety. Although resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall, some areas for food preparation are inadequate, especially for pupils in wheelchairs.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

100. It was only possible to observe three lessons of **music** so no judgements can be made about subject provision, pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. Analysis of subject documentation shows that a commercial scheme of work used in addition to the Qualification and Curriculum Authority scheme provides flexibility in teaching to the wide range of special educational needs that pupils have. In one observed Year 9 lesson, taken by the co-ordinator, very good preparation and teaching style combined with the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, resulted in a very lively lesson. All pupils showed evident enjoyment in their singing and learning of timing using percussion instruments. In a Year 6 lesson, very good lesson planning and spirited teaching enabled pupils of all abilities to take part in, and enjoy, their learning of words and actions while varying their timing of beating on percussion instruments. In a lesson where three classes came together all pupils benefited from the guitar-playing skills of the teacher. They all participated enthusiastically in playing loud and soft on the drum and tapping out their names. In all lessons seen, teaching, learning and pupils' achievements were very good.
101. Music is a subject evidently enjoyed by most. In the weekly assembly for Year 7 to Year 9 pupils, several volunteered to play percussion instruments as a backing to the narrated story of the *Tortoise and the Hare*. The lack of specialist accommodation limits the opportunities for pupils to participate effectively in their learning of timing, pace and rhythm. However, new provision is scheduled in the school improvement plan.
102. The co-ordinator has only been in post since September but has already shown to be a good role model for other staff and pupils by her enthusiasm and commitment to the subject.

### Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well because they work hard and are very well taught.
- Pupils respond well to good opportunities to experience a wide range of media.
- The subject contributes positively to the development of speaking and listening skills.
- Cramped accommodation restricts movement in the room and constrains large-scale projects.

## Commentary

103. The achievement of all pupils is at least good and for those in Years 7 to 11 it is very good because they are taught by a subject specialist. Pupils want to produce good work because lessons are interesting and they respond positively to the stimulus of studying the work of a wide range of artists. In Years 1 and 2 they use the interactive whiteboard with confidence as they select and name colours and shapes to build up their pictures of people or butterflies. Pupils in Year 6 explore textures, shapes and colours in the school grounds before collaborating to arrange and draw a still-life picture in the classroom. They show excitement as they recognise themselves in the video that records this unit of work. Older pupils recognise the work of many artists. 'So, if I do that I'll be a bit like William Morris' said a Year 9 pupil as she made a collection of images to be printed for a collage. One pupil discussed his work based on Matisse whilst another spoke of the very good display of work which the whole class compiled after studying Rousseau's work. These pupils had made regular use of sketchbooks to explore techniques and media. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are stimulated by new opportunities to work towards Entry Level awards in art and design although the work shows that more able pupils are capable of achieving higher levels than in the qualifications which they are currently entered. It is planned for these pupils to be entered for both examinations. Pupils overcome their shyness and show some poise as they evaluate their own work. "These are sediment rocks, ... this represents ammonites..... I used batik and I even sewed!" said one able pupil displaying his wall hanging.
104. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good but overall is good for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and very good in Years 7 to 11. This shows a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Where teaching and learning are at their best, for example in a Year 10 lesson, pupils are challenged to do harder work. They showed perseverance and co-operation as they worked towards a large sculpture made by applying mod roc to body parts. Very good discussion took place, for example as pupils debated with the teaching assistant how best to mould the face without causing discomfort to the model. A lesson where the teaching and learning were satisfactory for pupils in Years 3 to 5 demonstrated very good inclusion of pupils with a wide range of needs that is characteristic of all lessons. In spite of this, pupils experienced some frustration at having to wait for resources although their geometric sponge prints were striking.
105. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is new to the role but is already raising standards of achievement because of her subject expertise and the example she sets by her own teaching. She has broadened pupils' knowledge by introducing them to a wide range of artists from many cultures and by ensuring that there is breadth to the curriculum. This has resulted in the subject making a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Specialist accommodation is currently unsatisfactory, especially for pupils in wheelchairs. The restricted space makes collaboration and viewing the work of peers difficult. This is planned to be remedied as part of the school improvement plan. Resources are satisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities, including those with complex needs, have excellent access to a very good range of activities.
- Pupils achieve very well overall and display very positive attitudes.
- Very strong leadership and management have contributed positively to significant improvement in the subject.
- The Sportsmark award recognises that the school gives sufficient time to a broad range of sporting and physical activities.

- Lack of storage space is currently restricting changing facilities.

### **Commentary**

106. Pupils' achievement and progress are good in Years 1 to 6 and very good for pupils in Years 7 to 11. This is because they experience a wide and relevant range of activities so they try hard and are successful. Attitudes to the subject have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 join in action songs as they move round the hall at varying speeds. They develop ball skills using balls of different sizes and textures with pupils in wheelchairs being included in all activities. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 swim, develop games skills and take part in an increasing number of activities during lesson time and the regular lunchtime clubs. By Year 7, pupils understand the simple rules of modified games such as cricket and enjoy team games because there has been an appropriate concentration on building up skills first. During athletics, pupils improve their techniques, for example in putting the shot, contributing sensibly to evaluation of their own work and that of their peers. Pupils with complex needs in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the high level of skilled support and the use of music as they work hard at aqua-aerobics aided by signing of instructions and modelling of what is expected.
107. Teaching and learning are much better than they were at the time of the previous inspection. They range from excellent to satisfactory but overall are good for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and very good for older pupils because of the expertise and influence of the subject specialist. All lessons are characterised by very positive relationships, adherence to health and safety and the skilful use of very good support staff who enable all pupils to participate without stifling their independence. This was evident in an excellent Year 7 games lesson where there was much laughter but also very high expectations that all pupils would achieve their learning objectives. The very good use of PECs and objects of reference helped pupils' understanding of cricket as they demonstrated their skills of striking, fielding and bowling. Where teaching was satisfactory, pupils in Years 3 to 6 were not expected to try as hard in activities such as parachute games. The lesson lacked sparkle, although pupils showed enjoyment, joining in activities cheerfully.
108. Leadership and management of the subject by a specialist teacher are very good and have given the subject added impetus. Her knowledge, drive and enthusiasm have resulted in daily sports clubs for pupils of all ages. A concentration on improving skills across all areas of a very good physical education curriculum is now leading to national accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11 for the first time. Reading football club, members of which not only coach pupils but also help assess their skills, has supported this initiative. Tournaments against other schools and residential visits that provide rich opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities contribute to pupils' very good personal and social development. Resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory with plenty of space for a range of outdoor games. Indoor accommodation is good for younger pupils and is planned to be adequate for older pupils when the hall floor is re-laid and space found for the storage of resources. Changing rooms are currently unsatisfactory, again because of storage problems. The splash pool is scheduled for modernisation shortly.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' PSHE and citizenship development is central to the curriculum and all adults in the school contribute to it.
- Teaching and learning are always very good; they are excellent in the secondary stage.
- Pupils' achievement is always very good; it is excellent in the secondary stage.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

## Commentary

109. Pupils' achievement and progress in Years 2 to 6 are very good. In Years 9 and 11 they are excellent. This reflects the quality of the teaching and learning in these year groups and is very good improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are very well planned to meet each pupil's individual needs and, as a result, all pupils achieve as well as their peers. They are encouraged to make choices and develop as much independence as possible. Pupils with communication difficulties use switches or PECs very well to select snacks. By the time they are in Year 2, pupils understand about personal hygiene and name parts of the body, many using a computer program to draw a face. Pupils are helped to recognise how their behaviour affects other people; for example, by establishing what will make the teacher and the rest of the class happy. Teachers and teaching assistants question very skilfully and sensitively to draw out and develop pupils' personal needs, feelings and opinions. As a result, pupils in Year 6, for example, discuss when they feel sad, happy or worried, help to solve each other's problems, and know who to go to for help.
110. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' participation and interaction between pupils and adults. The quality of relationships which is developed enables pupils to develop their own views. As a result, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 talk and write about their opinions, identifying positive things about themselves and their achievements and setting personal goals. This prepares them well to face new challenges, look for help when necessary and make responsible choices. They also develop their imagination to understand other people's experiences and show understanding of differences and similarities between people, for example in a lesson on visual impairment. In Years 7 to 11, a wide range of opportunities is provided for pupils to take responsibility, feel positive about themselves and to participate in public performances and presentations.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### Helping pupils to understand about the effects of visual impairment.

Three classes making a total of 22 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were combined for a PSHE and citizenship lesson forming part of a unit on race and disability. Pupils included those with autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties and visual impairment. The focus of this lesson, which was jointly taught by two teachers, was on forms of sensory impairment.

An excellent, good-humoured introduction set the scene, where pupils were invited to spot the similarities and differences between a teacher and a teaching assistant. This was followed by chosen pupils explaining why they wear glasses. The interest of all pupils was then gained as visually impaired pupils very clearly explained the use of a Zy-fuse machine, fuzzy glasses, closed-circuit television, a traveller for enlarging text and a Braille machine: all equipment used as aids by the visually impaired.

Pupils' curiosity was aroused and they circulated in smaller groups trying out the different aids. Every opportunity was taken by the teachers and teaching assistants to engage pupils in conversation, encouraging them to question, explain and try to imagine the experience of the visually impaired. Pupils reported back their experiences at the end of the lesson. It was clear that all had gained an insight into the difficulties the visually impaired face.

111. Pupils are encouraged to consider social and moral problems exploring news items or articles from newspapers. They find information and advice using the telephone, the Internet and other sources. By the time they are in Year 11, pupils present themselves with assurance and use the careers service effectively to choose the next steps in their education. They talk confidently and sensitively about relationships, feelings and exploitation in relationships, for example in sexual encounters. They also show a good understanding of the health risks of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse.

112. Classroom organisation is excellent, including the preparation of resources, the range of groupings and activities and the deployment of teaching assistants. Pupils have targets for PSHE as part of their individual education plans and they are regularly encouraged to contribute to evaluating their own progress. There are excellent opportunities to meet and work with other people through visits, workshops and residential trips.
113. Leadership and management of PSHE and citizenship, which underpins most daily life at school, are excellent. There are very comprehensive plans of work that ensure pupils make progress as they move from year to year through the school. Planning, with link teachers in each key stage, is very effective. The co-ordinator has an excellent overview of the subject. The dynamic focus on the Healthy Schools' initiative (the school is expecting endorsement of a gold award) and the school's involvement with other external groups, agencies and professionals means that continual professional development is provided for all staff. The curriculum area has a very high profile; its status is equal to National Curriculum core subjects. Regular links are planned with other subjects, for example for special events such as Fruity Friday, Healthy Lunchbox Campaign and Food Awareness Week.

## **POST-16**

Provision in Post-16 is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The support, advice and guidance pupils receive is outstanding.
- Teaching is very good, planning is age and ability appropriate leading to very good achievement by students.
- The arrangements for post-school provision are excellent.
- There is excellent commitment to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the individual by all staff.
- Both leadership and management are very good.

### **Commentary**

114. Students make very good progress and achieve very well. A noted feature of all lessons is how teaching and support staff work very effectively as a team, which adds to the quality of provision for the students. All staff have a total commitment to ensuring that the personal and learning needs of all students are provided for exceptionally well. Teachers know their students and their individual needs very well and employ methods and resources that enable all their students to learn effectively. For example, in a numeracy lesson on money, the teacher made the lesson very appropriate and practical using items of food and drink and gave very good encouragement to a hesitant learner. The very good relationships between staff and students enable them to tease and challenge them, although, on a very few occasions, age-appropriate language is not used and opportunities are missed for age-appropriate choices.
115. Both the head of key stage and the lead teacher have a very good vision for the further development of the provision to build on the very good progress made since the last inspection. Excellent links have been established with colleges, also with the Connexions service who help to organise an open evening for school leavers that involves all concerned such as colleges, parents and work experience providers. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of all the students that remain in school. Very good work related vocational courses and careers education help students to explore options and make appropriate decisions for their future. At present, most of the more able students leave at 16 to go to college. A few students complete a one year course and then transfer to college or employment. Accreditation through the NSP and ALL is very appropriate. Staff are currently seeking additional work experience providers to broaden what is available.

116. The teaching and learning of **communication** are very good and students achieve very well and make very good progress. They are given a very good range of opportunities to improve their reading and literacy skills through a daily one-to-one session with a member of staff. For these sessions, staff use material, some of which they make, that is age and ability appropriate very effectively. As a result, a number of students develop their basic literacy skills well. Opportunities for teaching communication skills are very well planned in other subjects and contexts as well as in communication lessons themselves. For example, students interviewed various members of staff and asked them about their roles. The students showed a very mature attitude and evidently enjoyed the task. In a PSHE lesson, students acted out roles in response to social situations. They clearly showed a grasp of the difference between formal and informal language. Objects of reference are well chosen and used effectively, such as a football shirt and the recording of a crowd to signify physical activities.
117. **Numeracy** is taught very well through a very practical approach that meets the needs of individual students very well. In particular, students with more complex needs are taught through a sensory curriculum that uses tactile materials and sound to good effect. As a result, all students are achieving very well. By Year 14, most students are able to recognise and match coins, to give money and change up to a pound and use numbers up to 20.
118. Most aspects of **PSHE and citizenship** are taught very well indeed through other subjects. Students develop coping and problem-solving skills in real-life situations such as cooking, clearing up, taking responsibility for tasks in school and preparing for post-school life by planned familiarisation with possible provision. Throughout all this, the teachers' and support staff's knowledge and experience of individual students are used very well to provide support and guidance as and when required. Specific teaching sessions use excellent methods, including role play of real-life situations, to ensure students understand. As a result, students make excellent progress and are achieving particularly well in these subjects.
119. Students use their **ICT** skills very well in accessing subject-specific programs. They drag and drop objects such as coins in a money program and produce simple pictograms in their numeracy work. Using word-processing, they type names and addresses and the program *Writing with Symbols* is very effective in developing their communication. In PSHE and citizenship a program called *Out and About* supports their learning about social and moral issues in real-life situations. Students with more complex needs use switches well to help them learn.
120. **Sport** is generally taught by a subject specialist and includes swimming and trampolining. There are also **leisure** pursuits such as visits to a local gym, local parks and bowling. Students learn new skills and have the opportunity to meet and work with other adults. **Art** is also taught by a subject specialist and like sport concentrates on the personal development of the students very well.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	3	4
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	1	1
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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

In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not against national standards.

