

INSPECTION REPORT

LEXDEN SPRINGS SCHOOL

Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115475

Headteacher: Mr S H Goldsmith

Lead inspector: Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 21 – 24 June 2004

Inspection number: 259047

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:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	61
School address:	Halstead Road Colchester Essex
Postcode:	CO3 9AB
Telephone number:	01206 563321
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Illingworth
Date of previous inspection:	5 October 1996

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lexden Springs is a special school catering for boys and girls in the age range of 3 to 19 who all have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Of the 61 pupils on roll, 34 have profound and multiple learning difficulties and 27 have severe learning difficulties. In addition, some pupils also have sensory impairments or autism. As a result of their learning difficulties, all pupils, when they are first admitted, attain at a very low level. The school's roll includes 15 students in its further education department, three of whom were admitted from other special schools and have moderate learning difficulties. They attain at a higher level than most of the students in the department. Nearly all of the pupils for whom there is information are of white British heritage and three are from different Asian ethnic minorities. However, there are four pupils for whom English is not their first language and who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. There is wide variation in pupils' backgrounds although for some this is less privileged.

The school gained an Achievement Award in 2001 and Investors in People status in 2003. Students in the further education department attend Colchester Institute of Education for some of their courses and the school is currently developing a Young Enterprise Scheme for these students. Lexden Springs is involved in its local authority's New Model Special School Development.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music
9874	Malcolm Milwain	Lay inspector	
14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Physical education Further education department
22391	Nicholas Smith	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship Design and technology Religious education English as an additional language
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is very ineffective. It is poorly led and managed to the extent that the quality of education and the standards achieved have deteriorated. Overall, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory and the breadth, balance and relevance of the learning opportunities made for pupils are poor. As a result, value for money is poor.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school seriously lacks strong leadership and management; it does not evaluate how well it is doing in order to help pupils achieve better.
- Pupils enjoy school and find much fulfilment in the good relationships they develop.
- Poor planning in too many lessons leads to a limited variety of activities, low expectations of pupils and unsatisfactory learning.
- The substantial number of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are often not included in learning opportunities.
- Where teaching is effective, this is the result of teachers' good understanding of pupils' needs and their good use of resources to promote learning.
- The whole curriculum lacks a clear and competent overview, which has led to poor planning of what pupils are taught.
- The poor assessment of what pupils learn seriously hampers refinements in planning what to teach them, which is exacerbated by teachers making effective use of the expert analysis of pupils' performance.

The quality of educational provision and the standards pupils achieve have declined significantly since its last inspection. Progress on the key issues for action from the last inspection and improvement, overall, have been poor.

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspection Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is unsatisfactory throughout the school except in the Foundation Stage where it is satisfactory.

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Year 6	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Year 9	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Year 11	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Year 13	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

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

All the children in the Foundation Stage have severe learning difficulties and are not expected to reach the early learning goals by the end of reception. They achieve satisfactorily in most areas of learning but because of better planning they achieve well in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development. While standards are low as a result of pupils' special educational needs, they all achieve unsatisfactorily in English, mathematics and science. The

planning of what is taught in these subjects is poor. The provision in physical education is good and it is planned well with the result that, for all pupils, achievement is good. Throughout the school, pupils achieve satisfactorily in information and communication technology and religious education. An unsatisfactory curriculum and ineffective teaching in the further education department lead to students underachieving. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve poorly because when they are taught with higher-attaining pupils they are often not included in learning. Their achievement is good when well-planned sensory approaches are used to teach them.

Pupils' personal qualities are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good relationships with adults and they behave well for them. Their attitudes to school are positive and their attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is poor. Teaching is unsatisfactory. While children in the Foundation Stage are taught satisfactorily, too much teaching and learning throughout the rest of the school are ineffective. Here, the quality of lesson plans in terms of what should be taught and meeting the learning needs of all pupils is poor, especially for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The approaches to teaching are too narrow and do not promote effective learning. Teachers do not make good use of their assistants to help pupils learn. The assessment of pupils' learning is poor and is not treated as an important means of influencing teaching. Therefore, knowledge of what pupils have already learnt and their learning needs is often lacking. Pupils have too many targets to achieve and these targets are not written in a way helpful to learning. When teaching is effective, teachers plan lessons well enough to challenge the whole group and meet their needs. When sensory approaches and the very good sensory resources are used, this leads to all pupils, and lower-attaining pupils in particular, being thoroughly engaged in learning.

There is very little that is innovative in the curriculum, which lacks coherence, the enrichment of learning and opportunities for pupils and students to gain accreditation from appropriate courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are poor. The headteacher does not give enough direction to the school or set high expectations to raise standards. Leadership in the rest of the school also lacks direction and purpose. Managers are not clear on what their responsibilities should entail so there is very little co-ordinated effort for improvement. Very little attention is paid to evaluating systematically the effectiveness of the school. Governance is poor in respect of governors not having sought, or being given, the quality of information about the school that would help them in shaping its direction or challenging its leadership. Otherwise, governors are painstaking in the management of their business and comply with all of their statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are well satisfied with the school. In so far as pupils comment, they are very satisfied with school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Strengthen the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and the whole leadership group in the school.
- Eliminate unsatisfactory and poor teaching by establishing a strong culture of self-evaluation of the work of the school.
- Give effective leadership to planning and achieving a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- Give effective leadership to creating and using assessment procedures to raise standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

As a result of pupils' severe learning difficulties, standards compared with age-related expectations are very low. However, pupils' achievement could be better in relation to their capabilities and is unsatisfactory, overall. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve poorly. Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage but is unsatisfactory in the further education department and in English, mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are often not included in lessons except when sensory activities are well planned and used in teaching.
- The great majority of pupils are not achieving as well as they should because of serious weaknesses in the school's educational provision.
- Poor use is made of the analysis of pupils' performance data which the school collects each year.
- The five children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve well in physical education.

Commentary

1. The poor achievement of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is the result of being taught alongside higher-attaining pupils using approaches that are not refined sufficiently to include them effectively in learning. In these frequent instances, the whole group was taught together, sometimes for the whole lesson, without there being specific resources or questioning targeted at these pupils. They played little part in activities and had no opportunity to make progress. In one mathematics lesson almost the entire dialogue was directed towards two higher-attaining pupils. It was often the case that the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were not given communication aids such as electronic switches despite the fact the school has been increasing such resources. However, achievement is better and sometimes very good when teaching takes place in a sensory room or when a sensory approach is planned well for classroom activities. The pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Year 11 responded very well to the light and sound effects supporting a story being read to them in the sensory room. Others had similar success with a story from the Bible in a religious education lesson.
2. The broad picture of achievement is unsatisfactory because of the very ineffective leadership and management of the school's educational provision. This is a serious deterioration in standards to those reported at the time of the last inspection and it affects all pupils' achievement. There is not a well-worked out strategy of what pupils should be taught. This affects achievement in English, mathematics and science and, in the same way, students in the further education department achieve unsatisfactorily. What pupils and students are taught in English, mathematics and science as well as other subjects is not influenced, as it should be, by continuous assessment of what they have learnt in each of their lessons. The consequence is that many of the intended learning opportunities for pupils are not being carefully enough planned and approached. The result is that, in too many lessons, pupils are not able to make sufficient progress. This occurs in English where, too often, pupils are given unchallenging work because teachers are not sure enough of pupils' capabilities. The time for teaching subjects is not always clearly established on the timetable. Many of the learning opportunities for English and mathematics, for example, are integrated with each other as well as with personal, social and health education. This is not planned with enough detail to give

English and mathematics each sufficient scope with the result that pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' language and literacy skills and their competence in numeracy lag behind where they should be. The same can be said of pupils' achievement in personal, social and health education. While there are many opportunities throughout the day for personal development they lack the focus that clear targets give to activities. The lack of assessment of pupils' progress towards their personal targets contributes equally to them achieving less than they should. Achievement in the use of information and communication technology is satisfactory, overall. The priority given to developing new resources and providing training has increased the opportunities for pupils to work on computers. Higher-attaining pupils do this with growing independence. When using an interactive whiteboard, pupils know they can change what is on the screen by touching the right area or symbol.

3. The school obtains an expert analysis of its pupils' performance over a year based on its measurement of their attainments using P Scales. These are designed specifically to assess pupils working below the level of the National Curriculum and are suited to pupils with severe learning difficulties. When used well they give an accurate picture of pupils' progress in a year, although in this instance, the use of P Scales is not as refined as it could be. The latest data, while perhaps not wholly reliable, reveals that a significant proportion of pupils in the sample are underachieving and that not enough value has been added to their performance in a year. Altogether, the data shows that this school is below the average of similar schools in the progress made by pupils. However, this analysis, bought by the school, is not shared effectively between the senior staff or with teachers and governors. The result is that there is insufficient action to tackle underachievement.
4. While children in the Foundation Stage will not reach the early learning goals because of their severe learning difficulties they are achieving well in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development. This is because both these areas of learning are well provided for and better than in the remaining four areas in which achievement is satisfactory. In the range of assessments children undergo when they are first admitted to the school, they are measured most effectively in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development. This gives teaching a sharper focus than found in the other areas of learning. Learning opportunities are more effectively identified and are better, which leads to children making good progress.
5. Pupils' progress in physical development and skills continues to be good throughout the rest of the school as a result of a well-planned physical education curriculum. Achievement is good because teaching is lively and develops the good relationships that encourage pupils to co-operate, work hard and match the challenges set for them. Learning opportunities are carefully adapted to pupils' needs; for example, those with a physical disability are supported with specialist equipment and well-briefed adults. This leads them to extending and refining as much physical movement as possible. Ambulant pupils play games in teams. They do the proper warm-up exercises and learn to move and balance confidently. Effective use is made of good resources, which ensures all pupils are included in the range of physical activities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. Pupils' attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good relationships throughout the school between staff and pupils.
- Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes in lessons.
- Pupils attend school regularly and arrive in good time.
- There is much that takes place to promote pupils' spiritual development.

Commentary

6. Pupils have a good attitude to school and they enjoy taking part in lessons. Because of this the majority attends school regularly and arrives on time. However, the high standards seen at the time of the last inspection have not been maintained. Then, pupils' attitudes were very good and considered a major strength. Pupils are now not as consistently challenged in lessons and do not give as much as they could. The relationship between staff and pupils is good and, as a result, pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, in the playground and when moving around school. No bullying or oppressive behaviour was seen. On those occasions when behaviour becomes unsatisfactory it is usually the result of teaching which fails to engage the pupils' interest. Teachers have a limited range of effective strategies to deal with such unsatisfactory behaviour. However, there is very little necessity to exclude pupils temporarily and a permanent exclusion arose from the admission of a pupil whose severe behavioural needs the school was not equipped to meet.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	42	2	1
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

7. When given the opportunity, pupils are willing to take responsibility for tasks around school; for instance selected pupils collect the class registers from the office at the start of the afternoon session. Pupils are asked to choose the correct register, and this gives pupils a further opportunity to learn to recognise objects and to make choices. Pupils work well together; they recognise and support each other's successes.
8. Children's achievement in their personal social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is good. In the other stages, pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is well provided for and contributes to pupils' personal development.
9. Provision for spiritual development is good. Class assemblies contain a religious element and a reflective atmosphere is often created through music. In one lesson the lights were turned off and a lighted candle was used as a focus for reflection. The sensory room makes a notable contribution to pupils' spiritual development through story telling. During the inspection the room was used effectively by teachers when telling a story about the sea. Pupils are told about other world faiths such as Buddhism and Islam. The school has strong links with the local parish church and pupils take part in services at major Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter.
10. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are encouraged to understand the differences between right and wrong behaviour. Through games they learn to understand the need for rules and how they are applied. Pupils learn to help each other and to make choices.

11. Pupils' social development is good. Pupils take part in public performances of an annual school musical production. They attend the local parish church on important Christian festivals, when they are able to meet members of the local community and, for example, share in a simple meal.
12. Cultural development remains good as at the previous inspection. Music makes an important contribution to pupils' appreciation of their and others' cultures. The use of music in the sensory curriculum ensures that pupils begin to recognise how music can convey meaning. They have a growing awareness of the visual elements of other cultures such as Islam. During the period of the inspection students in the further education department were studying aspects of Japanese culture. Visiting groups to school also make a significant contribution to this aspect, for example, pupils recently spent a day taking part in a study of Indian dance.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.5

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

13. The level of attendance is good. Pupils arrive punctually each day as well as to lessons. This gives the school the opportunity to make an effective start to the day's learning. The uncoordinated curriculum timetable however means that teachers cannot always take advantage of this opportunity.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is poor. The curriculum is poor and teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are unsatisfactory and they are given poor support and guidance.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in all parts of the school except the Foundation Stage where it is satisfactory. The assessment of pupils' progress is poor and little has been done to make teaching and learning more effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In too many lessons not enough care is taken to plan activities through which all pupils learn effectively.
- In the lessons that were good or better, teaching was sharply focused on the activities and resources that promote learning for all pupils.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are too often not included in lessons.
- Classroom assistants are frequently not deployed to best effect to support learning.
- Assessment lacks the quality to give enough accurate information to help pupils achieve more.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2 (6%)	16 (44%)	9 (25%)	7 (19%)	2 (6%)	0

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

14. While in half the lessons observed, teaching and learning are good or very good, a high proportion of teaching, affecting pupils at every stage except those in the Foundation Stage, is less than satisfactory. The improvement is poor, as at the time of the last inspection teaching was good, overall. Teaching is now unsatisfactory because the amount of planning going into too many lessons is poor. In large part, this is conditioned by the inadequacies in setting out clearly what is to be taught in each subject of the curriculum and this often leaves teachers without a secure enough foundation of what precisely to teach. This is exacerbated by them not having or using good quality assessments of what pupils have already learnt to show what they need to learn next. As a result of the combination of these factors, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics and science as well as in the further education department. Although the amount of good and very good teaching has increased so has that which is less than satisfactory.
15. Pupils have too many targets and this is cumbersome for teachers in planning what to teach. Too often in lessons, targets play a vague role in defining learning objectives and in directing what is taught. As a result, there is not a close match between pupils' work and their targets. Pupils do not learn effectively or achieve in these conditions. Some are repeating what they have already learnt for no useful purpose while others are tackling tasks well beyond their capabilities. In a mathematics lesson dealing with placing objects in order, pupils were asked to sequence three sentences so that they made up a story. What was not understood by the teacher was that the pupils needed to comprehend the meaning of each sentence to put them in the right order, which was well beyond what they could achieve. What they should have been doing was placing numbers in order or sorting objects by their size. This and similar instances indicate that some teachers' knowledge of pupils' learning difficulties and what is required to help them learn is not understood sufficiently.
16. In the lessons in which teaching and learning are good, careful thought is given to the type of activity and resources best suited to promote the learning of all pupils. Lesson time is broken down so there is a variety of activities such as a little whole-class teaching and more time spent on small group or individual work. These activities are planned well. In particular, the choice of a sensory approach leads to teachers choosing a good range of material resources and approaches that ensure all pupils learn effectively. Signing, symbols and electronic switches are used to achieve good communication and classroom assistants are active in maintaining pupils' involvement. The use of the sensory room for teaching is linked to good learning as its wealth of resources help give direction and purpose to lessons. Its sound and lighting effects provided a very good background for a very well-told story about the sea.
17. Planning is not effective in making the best use of time. Ineffective teaching and learning result from too much lesson time spent on teaching pupils as a whole group. The approach is quite prevalent and reflects the limited extent to which national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy have influenced teachers' classroom practice. The reliance on pupils sitting in one position and listening to the teacher is unsuccessful in promoting good learning. In addition, given the wide range of pupils' capabilities, planning is not refined sufficiently to ensure that questioning and other means of eliciting pupils' responses include the whole group. In the instances of prolonged whole-class teaching, the teacher's dialogue and attention were too often aimed at one or two of the highest-attaining pupils and, by default, ignored the rest.
18. This has the frequent effect of excluding pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties from appropriate learning opportunities. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, they were unable to match the high level of expectation contained in the teachers' dialogue with the group. Too little consideration was given to the use of electronic switches and other suitable resources that enable these pupils to take part and learn.

19. Purposeful roles for the large team of classroom assistants have not been thought out enough. Their effectiveness in supporting teaching is greatly reduced when whole-class teaching is the preferred approach. Largely, they plan their separate ways of helping pupils. This amounts mainly to offering them encouragement. There is insufficient briefing by teachers on ways for their classroom assistants to be more actively involved in pupils' learning. They do not, for example, contribute to recording pupils' progress during lessons and, within lessons, they seldom lead activities with individuals or small groups of pupils.
20. While there has been work undertaken to improve assessment practice, this has not produced sufficiently positive results and the improvement since the last inspection is poor. The school introduced assessment procedures from the commercial curriculum scheme it bought. The data it obtains at one point in the year is sent away for expert analysis. The results show each pupil's progress over a year and how progress in the school overall compares with that in many similar schools. Although this analysis does provide very useful information it is not used well enough by the school to gauge its effectiveness and for planning improvement.
21. In fact, this analysis of pupils' performance raises major concerns for the school. One of these is that it does not undertake enough regular assessments of what pupils have learnt in subjects and the assessment and recording that takes place lacks the rigour measure to accurately what progress pupils have made. This means teachers do not find it easy to see what pupils know, understand and can do. The targets for each pupil identified and agreed at their annual reviews are, in essence, based upon very little objective information about their progress. There are far too many targets for each pupil and they are not precisely focused on the areas of learning in which pupils should progress. The scrutiny of pupils' records over time shows up inconsistencies between what some are currently targeted to achieve and what is recorded they achieved recently or even some time ago. While teachers write optimistically of their pupils' achievements, the expert analysis contradicts their assessments. Teachers cannot tell if it is their descriptions of pupils' progress or the data sent off for analysis that is inaccurate, because there is too little rigour in measuring pupils' performance.

The curriculum

The curriculum provided to suit all pupils and meet their needs is poor. The opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum are poor. The accommodation is unsatisfactory but resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum as a whole lacks breadth, balance, relevance and coherence.
- The provision for pupils' special educational needs is poor.
- There is little enrichment for pupils to their timetabled activities.
- Some inadequate teaching areas limit pupils' access to some aspects of the curriculum.

Commentary

22. The lack of a whole-school vision and direction for the curriculum results in fragmented and inconsistent approaches across the school, except in the Foundation Stage, where learning opportunities are satisfactory. It does not provide coherence in what pupils are taught and learn. This is exacerbated by teachers writing their own timetables according to their own criteria. Poor progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing the key issue to ensure a whole-school curriculum framework that informs teachers' planning and enables its impact to be monitored and evaluated. The commercially-produced curriculum bought by the school was introduced two years ago in response to this key issue. However, teachers were not trained or supported in its implementation and, therefore, it was merged with the existing curriculum in whatever way teachers felt to be appropriate. This has resulted in a patchy curriculum and, overall, a lack of broad, balanced and relevant learning opportunities matched to pupils' needs and interests. There is a lack of accredited courses as well as work-related

activities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in the further education department resulting in an inadequate preparation for the next stages of learning and adult life.

23. There is insufficient planning to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils. Too little account is taken of the significant proportion of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Inconsistent approaches to meeting these pupils' needs results in the curriculum not being inclusive or ensuring equality of opportunity. To a lesser extent the weakness in planning for specific groups also applies to the small number of autistic pupils. While some teachers have received training in dealing with the needs of autistic pupils, the approaches to providing for them are rudimentary. There is not enough emphasis on effective communication and formalising their routines.
24. There is very little developed that enriches the learning opportunities offered to pupils and this aspect of the curriculum is poor. Pupils have very limited access to participation in sport but some take part in swimming and horse-riding. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take part in concerts and plays and they benefit from visiting groups including African and Indian dancers and musicians. In all years, pupils participate regularly in a programme of visits to places of interest locally and beyond. But the benefit of these visits in enriching pupils' learning is lessened by a lack of focus on clear learning objectives and systematic follow-up in lessons.
25. The demand for more space in the school has increased with the number of pupils who have more complex needs. The site also presents a number of security, health and safety issues for pupils, which have been brought to the attention of the school. There has been some development of accommodation for food technology and to cater for the sensory curriculum. The sensory rooms and gardens provide very good facilities, which impact positively on the standards pupils achieve. The library, and its much-improved resources, shows the good results of some effective co-ordination. The library is used well to enable pupils to work on basic skills in small groups with support staff. However, in information and communication technology there is no dedicated computer room and storage space. The lack of space for equipment means teachers have to move computers and interactive whiteboards around the school, which is difficult to do and is not good for the equipment. In design and technology, the practical workshop is largely redundant leaving pupils without the opportunity to work with the full range of materials.
26. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to match the demands of the curriculum and the fact they do not match these demands is solely to do with the lack of direction they are given by the school's senior management. By the same token, while there are a good number of classroom assistants, they are not deployed efficiently.

Care, guidance and support

The overall provision for the care and welfare of pupils in the school is unsatisfactory. The support and guidance given to pupils to help their academic and personal development that is based on assessment information are poor. The measures taken to seek and act upon pupils' views are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a good relationship with teachers and support staff who demonstrate care and concern for their pupils.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are not used consistently to provide them with adequate support and guidance.
- The school does not make adequate provision to ensure that pupils' overall health and safety are ensured.

Commentary

27. Pupils and staff have a good relationship with one another. It is clear that pupils feel secure and trust their teachers and the other staff who care for their day-to-day needs. The school has a policy and guidelines for the safe handling of pupils as they move about in lessons and around school; however, these guidelines are not followed consistently by all the staff. On several occasions staff were seen to hold pupils by the wrist when providing them with physical support.
28. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of each pupil's personal development needs. Information is provided to parents on their child's progress as a part of the review documents presented at each pupil's annual review meeting. There is however no frequent or regular formal assessment recording or monitoring system to support these views and to underpin this aspect of pupils' development.
29. There are suitable procedures for child protection in place and the headteacher ensures that all the staff are kept up to date with current legislation. There is a health and safety policy in place with a nominated governor and a member of staff is responsible for health and safety procedures in school. In practice there are weaknesses in the application of the health and safety policy. The layout of the building with narrow corridors containing wheelchairs and other equipment presents a hazard to people moving about the building. Pupils moving about the site between buildings are not always adequately supervised. At the start and finish of the school day there is no organised system for the arrival and departure of motor vehicles; the car park is a chaotic mix of motor vehicles, pedestrians and wheelchairs. This creates an unacceptable risk to pupils, their parents and carers.
30. The lack of full-time nursing provision is unsatisfactory in view of the complex medical conditions of an increasing number of pupils. The support of other medical professions for the pupils, for instance speech and physiotherapists, is also limited to part of the week; this clearly reduces the effectiveness of such support.
31. There are satisfactory induction procedures for pupils entering the reception class; a programme of visits allows parents and children to become familiar with their new surroundings. As a result pupils entering the reception class are well prepared for learning.
32. Overall provision for this aspect of the school is worse than at the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good relationship with parents. Links with the community are also good. There are inadequate links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works well in partnership with the parents of its pupils, and deals well with parental concerns and complaints.
- Links with the local community and in particular the church help to expand pupils' learning experiences.
- The school does not seek out sufficient opportunities to work with other schools.

Commentary

33. The results of the pre-inspection questionnaire and the comments made at the parents' meeting indicate that the majority of parents are pleased with the school. Although there are no regular formal consultation procedures by which the school can obtain parents' views, the school's open door policy ensures parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns or suggestions. The voluntary help of parents and other members of the local community effectively extend pupils' learning experiences. For instance one regular parent

volunteer helps students from the further education department to care for their vegetable garden.

34. The school provides a satisfactory amount of information for parents. Through the school prospectus, the governors' annual report and a school newsletter each term, parents are kept informed of events in school. There are two parent/teacher consultation evenings each year, which give parents a formal opportunity to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. In addition there is an annual review of each pupil's progress at which parents are given a written report on their child's academic and personal progress. At the review parents are able to discuss any concerns they may have with the headteacher, class teacher and other advisers such as social workers and the physiotherapist. An end-of-key-stage report provides parents with basic information on their child's academic progress. There are satisfactory arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the further education department.
35. Through the vicar, who visits school, there are links with the local parish church. Pupils take part in services in the church at the main Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Pupils are taken on visits to the local supermarket to help them to experience, and develop an understanding of, the world outside school.
36. The school is proposing to join with the local specialist science college to undertake a scheme through which pupils from the college can assist pupils from Lexden Springs on a science project. Other than this planned project, links with other schools are undeveloped, although there is a sound partnership with the local further education college where students attend some courses.
37. Overall provision for this aspect of the school remains the same as at the previous inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are poor. The leadership of the headteacher and that of other key staff is poor. The management of the school is very ineffective. Governance is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership gives insufficient direction and fails to set high enough expectations for the quality of education and the standards achieved.
- The leadership and management roles of other staff are not defined in clear enough terms.
- Governors have done too little to know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

38. The headteacher is not equipped, nor is the school, with a clear set of aims that usefully inform his leadership and the school's work. A generalised vision shapes the headteacher's leadership and this relates to the school being a nurturing environment that takes care of pupils' well-being. This is achieved to the extent that relationships with parents are good and trusting relationships exist in school between adults and pupils, and which help pupils form positive attitudes to school. However, there are unsatisfactory aspects to their care and they are given poor support and guidance. The headteacher's leadership is not conditioned nearly enough by striving for, and insisting on, high standards, both of himself and his staff even on the limited aims that exist. Beyond participating in the local authority's initiative for New Model Special Schools, there is very little that is recognisably strategic in the thinking about the work of the school. The wide inclusive remit for the new Model Special Schools has had little or no impact on how the school is presently operating and developing.

39. The headteacher is not sufficiently active in directing the school and carries no immediate responsibilities for any major aspect of educational provision. The leadership of the curriculum and teaching by the headteacher has been very poor and the result is that these provisions are less than satisfactory. Far too many direct responsibilities fall on the shoulders of the assistant headteacher, who is the only other member of the senior management team. A small senior management team and the weight of responsibility on the assistant headteacher mean that the scope for urgently addressing weaknesses is too limited. There is a range of posts of responsibility throughout the school including key stage co-ordinators and subject co-ordinators. However, their leadership roles are ill-defined and ineffective in giving an overall direction to the school. Nevertheless, co-ordination is sound in the Foundation Stage, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education.
40. The lack of rationale behind the delegation of responsibilities has hindered effective leadership throughout the school. The consequence of very ineffective management is that best value is not being achieved. The school manages not by the concerted efforts of teams but through the poorly co-ordinated work of individuals. The introduction, two years ago, of a commercially-published curriculum designed for pupils with severe learning difficulties was followed by each teacher separately, drawing on this for their own plans of what to teach. This has produced a piecemeal and incomplete curriculum that does not tie curricular opportunities together into a coherent structure for learning. The attempts to monitor and evaluate the breadth and balance of what pupils are taught have been cursory. The curriculum was made a key issue for action by the previous inspection because of weaknesses in its planning and this has not been addressed effectively and remedied. Monitoring and evaluation do not play a crucial part in school improvement. The small number of lesson observations undertaken has lacked focus on eliciting strengths and weaknesses. When some subject co-ordinators were recently introduced to observing literacy, numeracy and ICT lessons, they did this without enough guidance on how to proceed and the results were disappointing. The school monitors pupils' performance annually and has its statistics professionally analysed. The information on pupils' progress compared with similar schools and the value added for each pupil over a year provides an insight into the school's effectiveness but this analysis is not used purposefully.
41. Governors are, in certain respects, very closely involved with the school and highly committed to success for pupils. This leads them to conduct their business in the governing body and in its committees methodically and with expertise. The school's financial position is anticipated well and its budget is effectively overseen. The finance officer, shared between a network of schools, provides detailed analysis and reports for governors on the school's income and expenditure. However, as the headteacher and the school are ineffective in generating the range and quality of information needed by governors and they are not sufficiently in pursuit of such information, they are not as well placed, as they should be, to know its strengths and weaknesses. The yearly analysis of pupils' performance, for example, does not figure significantly in how governors enquire into the success of the school. As a result, governors' contribution to the leadership and management of the school is severely restricted.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	903531
Total expenditure	924312
Expenditure per pupil	15152

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	21274
Balance carried forward to the next	493

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**.

- Children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development.
- The initial assessment of children when they first arrive is good.
- There is a lack of consistency in the wide range of curricular planning in the Foundation Stage.
- Day-to-day assessment does not guide teachers on what children need to learn next in the areas of learning.

Commentary

42. There are five children in the Foundation Stage. While improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, overall, the good progress made by children, reported in the school's previous inspection, has not been wholly maintained. This is the result of some ineffective planning of what children should learn. There is a lack of clarity in adapting the planning of what to teach children to the guidance in a commercial curriculum bought by the school as well as to the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. In general, children are soundly assessed on entry to the school and this provides staff with a clear indication of their attainments and what they need to learn. Targets of what children should learn are not always related to the areas of learning and in these instances do not guide the planning of challenging work in these areas. Three lessons were seen and in these the quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good. However, with the weaknesses in planning, teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. The leadership and management of the Foundation stage are satisfactory.
43. Children achieve well in **personal, social and emotional development** as teachers and other staff work effectively to help pupils develop the attitudes and skills they need to become confident learners. The personal, social and emotional needs of children are well assessed. As a result, the wide range of children's special educational needs is catered for well. Activities in lessons help children develop social skills such as working together, taking turns and developing friendships. Communication is taught soundly and this helps children to achieve satisfactorily in **communication, language and literacy**. Planning is satisfactory; targets are clearly established and worked towards. There is effective use made of stories and rhyming songs, signing and the Picture Exchange Communication System as well as other additional communication aids.
44. Teaching is satisfactory in **mathematical development**, helping children to achieve their targets satisfactorily. The planning has clear objectives and this leads to children gaining increased understanding and knowledge in number. Most targets for learning are delivered in the discrete sessions for individual education programmes. Children experience activities in a range of mathematical areas using motivating sensory toys, naming, labelling and exploring cause and effect. The curriculum promoting **knowledge and understanding of the world** is effective in allowing children to experience and participate in a range of activities and they achieve satisfactorily as a result. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience materials as they explore the range of stimuli linked to the topic themes. They use repetitive sound elements in stories, handle real animals and observe changes in state of various materials. Children use computers and other technology in a range of activities, for example, electronic switches and other devices for communication. Geographical and historical areas are covered by relating events to the children and to their recent past.

45. Children achieve satisfactorily in **creative development** as teachers plan adequately for them to experience different textures and to respond to colour and light in art activities. Children show different responses to music and sound and appreciate a sense of calm or the ability to control movements in drama. In **physical development**, children have good opportunities to explore their physical capabilities as they undertake a range of physical activities appropriate to their needs and they achieve well. As physical education lessons take place with all from the Foundation Stage up to the end of Year 6, children participate with a wide range of pupils.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in speaking and listening, reading and writing.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory because the planning of what is taught is not being securely based upon the assessment of pupils' attainment.
- The lack of a planned curriculum for the whole school results in inconsistencies in the breadth, balance and relevance of learning opportunities.
- The co-ordination of English is not effective because it is not systematically focused on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

46. Pupils in all years do not achieve well enough in improving their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. The external analysis of their performance in English shows that the great majority is not progressing as well as expected when compared with their earlier attainment. This is largely because teachers do not always know what pupils are capable of achieving, as their assessment procedures are insecure. Assessment is not used consistently throughout the school. There is no moderation of individual teachers' judgements of pupils' progress to ensure accuracy or system for linking the regular assessment of progress with the annual measurement of pupils' attainments using P Scales. Without a process of moderation, teachers' skill in judging pupils' P levels is too variable and they make insufficient use of performance data produced. As a consequence, levels of challenge and target setting are not secure and provision made for pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties is inconsistent. Teachers' records and pupils' records of achievement are not used systematically to track progress and to summarise and evaluate achievement. There is some good practice but this is not shared.
47. While there is some good and very good teaching, overall teaching is unsatisfactory because the weaknesses in assessment affect planning adversely. In many lessons this results in activities not being sufficiently well matched to the wide range of pupils' learning needs. In a number of lessons, the lack of specific planning for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties results in them not being fully involved and making unsatisfactory progress. In a Year 8 lesson an autistic pupil was left sitting at a computer unsupervised for 20 minutes and, as result, made very little progress. In other lessons, too much time being allowed for tasks results in autistic pupils losing their concentration and becoming disruptive. For all pupils, tasks can be mundane and repetitive with too little challenge.
48. In all lessons, behaviour and relationships are very good and in most there is a purposeful learning atmosphere. The strongest teaching sets high expectations and provides sustained challenge. In a Year 11 lesson, all pupils made very good progress because the very good

team work between the teacher and teaching assistants ensured that all were fully involved in group and individual activities that were very well matched to their learning needs. Planning for this lesson was very well guided by the targets on pupils' individual education plans and the teacher's good understanding of their attainments. In the best lessons, learning is also well supported by the imaginative use of sensory materials, the sensory room, and information and communication technology. Year 5 pupils, for example, responded with great enjoyment in the sensory room to the challenge of identifying and describing objects shown on an interactive whiteboard.

49. Teaching and learning are inconsistent across the school because there is no central vision or direction given for work in English. Teachers are responsible for planning their own schemes of what they will teach and their timetables. This leads to a great deal of inconsistency in what is provided across the school. There is little gained from the hard work done by the two co-ordinators. Their very strong focus on improving resources has resulted in a good range being available with the library being a particular strength. However, their efforts are not fully effective because they are not well supported with a firm direction from the senior management team to ensure that teaching and learning are systematically monitored and evaluated and that good practice is shared. There has been poor improvement in the provision for English since the last inspection. The necessity to monitor and evaluate the subject along with the need for a whole-school approach to teaching English and literacy were identified as key issues and these have not been addressed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. There is no planning for the development of pupils' language and literacy skills across the curriculum. As a result practice is patchy and dependent on the initiative of individual teachers. This results in some good practice such as in a physical education lesson where a team race involved pupils in identifying and collecting letters on cones. Literacy and numeracy skills are integrated in a number of lessons. Overall, provision is not sufficiently developed and is unsatisfactory.

A modern foreign language is not taught as all pupils required to study one have been disapplied.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is poorly planned with the result that pupils do not learn systematically or achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are often not included effectively in lessons.
- The teaching of mathematics is poorly co-ordinated throughout the school.

Commentary

51. The time dedicated to teaching mathematics is often not clearly identified or well organised, which means the opportunities pupils have for periods of well-structured learning are too few. As a consequence, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, overall, and this results in pupils achieving unsatisfactorily.
52. In most classes, mathematics is taught within a variety of activities and frequently in a combination of personal, social and health education, literacy and numeracy work during start-of-the-day and in the following 'hello time' periods. In start-of-the-day activities, individual attention to pupils' numeracy targets is sometimes too slight. This happens because the

teacher and classroom assistants are dealing with administration or the care needs of pupils. As a result, pupils are left to engage themselves, which many are not good at. However, it is frequently the case that even when classroom assistants are free to help pupils with learning they are deployed poorly without sufficient guidance from teachers on the support they should give to pupils.

53. The detail of what pupils' numeracy targets specify is, in too many cases, not always being addressed effectively. In one class, pupils' targets indicated they were all at a stage of learning to count from 1 to 5 whereas the work involved counting from 1 to 8. The highest-attaining pupil could manage this challenge but, as the lesson was a whole-group activity and taught orally, most could not match the demands and spent too much time not purposefully engaged in learning to count or to recognise these numerals. In the same half-hour lesson, pupils were taken, far too swiftly, through reciting days of the week and reading the time from a clock face, which involved identifying numerals that they had not yet learned to recognise. In this and other lessons there were no adequate resources for pupils to link their recitation of numbers to printed numerals. Overall, there is a poor appreciation of pupils' learning difficulties and of ways to meet their needs. The large number of targets for each pupil and their complicated language are a hindrance to achieving this. The lack of close monitoring of what each pupil has learnt by the end of a lesson leaves teachers ill-informed about the success or otherwise of their planning and approaches.
54. Where discrete mathematics lessons are timetabled, some are poorly planned. This results from a lack of expertise in the subject, no strategy for teaching numeracy and poor assessment of what pupils have learnt. This gave rise to far more being taught in one lesson than pupils could realistically learn. In this case, too many topics led to the teacher using too great a variety of activities and resources but very limited approaches to teaching. The lesson, lasting an hour, contained only whole-class teaching ranging over several topics, an approach that, except for short periods, is unsuitable for meeting the needs of all the pupils in the class.
55. In the few instances of good teaching and learning, lesson activities were well related to the way pupils learn best. Work was planned effectively in terms of organising time efficiently, selecting appropriate activities, choosing the necessary resources and deploying classroom assistants to best effect. A group of Year 10 and 11 pupils were given individual tasks linked to their targets and very good team work between the teacher and classroom assistants ensured each pupil was helped and made good progress. Following on from counting, higher-attaining pupils accurately matched numerals to different numbers of items and learned to write numerals by tracing their shape. The good planning meant all pupils were included in learning.
56. It was often the case that, because of incomplete planning of lessons and particularly the over-reliance upon whole-class teaching, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were not included in lessons. When teachers spoke to their groups, their questions could only be understood by one or two higher-attaining pupils. Any explanations or demonstrations of what the teacher wanted pupils to learn were meaningful only to these few pupils. Lesson plans contained very little on ways of effectively involving the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in learning. However, numeracy teaching taking place in the sensory room did include pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in effective learning. This was because the sensory room resources in large part dictated an approach that ensured these pupils' needs would be addressed more directly.
57. Mathematics is co-ordinated jointly by two teachers who maintain close communication. However, co-ordination lacks direction. A revised policy for the subject has been developed and so have resources but these have had little effect on improving provision or raising standards. This is because the small amount of evaluation of mathematics teaching failed to penetrate its shortcomings or see the contributory weaknesses in assessment and curriculum. In relation to the curriculum, each teacher was directed to make separate plans of what to teach their groups and teachers did not confer to ensure all their plans worked

coherently together as the school's mathematics curriculum. There are, for example, no opportunities planned for pupils to pursue appropriately accredited courses by the end of Year 11. At the time of the last inspection, mathematics was in much better shape. Since then it has deteriorated because there has been no rigour applied to maintaining or improving on the good standards found at that time.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Mathematics is promoted unsatisfactorily across the curriculum. Teachers seek to integrate opportunities for pupils to learn mathematics in lessons throughout the school day. Counting takes place in the course of reading stories in English and in music. However, these opportunities are not planned effectively as they usually help only the few higher-attaining pupils and exclude pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory because teachers' curriculum planning does not provide them with sufficient guidance on what to teach.
- The hard work to improve provision in science has had little effect.

Commentary

59. The school's analysis of pupils' progress shows that in science this is below what is expected for pupils in this type of school. While teaching and learning in the two lessons seen were satisfactory, the analysis of the work pupils have done in science, and their teachers' records of their progress, show achievement to be unsatisfactory. When this is linked with the unsatisfactory curriculum it means that teaching and learning are also unsatisfactory.
60. It is difficult for teachers to plan for science as there is no clear guidance provided as to what pupils should learn or when they should learn it. The lack of a consistent approach to planning in the school means that not all classes have science on their timetable and where it does appear it features in different ways, sometimes as a discrete lesson and sometimes as part of a topic. Although the school has bought and is adapting a commercial curriculum for science and aims to increase the amount of science taught, there are insufficient links between pupils' targets and the curriculum content. This means that it is not possible to monitor pupils' progress effectively. The curriculum and its assessment are unsatisfactory.
61. The science co-ordinator has undertaken much work since the previous inspection. Most notably this has been by the provision, with other staff, of a very good sensory room and sensory and wildlife gardens. A number of visits by groups have helped pupils and staff to work with environmental materials, insects and small animals. Despite the hard work to develop the subject, insufficient guidance has been given to the co-ordinator to develop monitoring of the subject. This means that there are no processes to judge the continuity of pupils' learning or the extent of pupils' achievement in the subject. There has been little progress in the subject since the previous inspection when this was identified as a shortcoming.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The development of ICT resources especially in the sensory rooms is having a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- Teaching using the ICT equipment in the sensory rooms is good and leads to pupils learning well but the use of ICT in other lessons is not always as well planned.
- The co-ordination of ICT has produced some benefits but it is not giving a strong enough direction to the development of learning in and through ICT.

Commentary

62. The use of ICT in its various forms, by pupils and staff, to support teaching and learning is satisfactory. The equipment available is improving; this includes switches and other communication aids as well as sound recording and playback devices. Pupils reach levels that are appropriate in relation to their capabilities and in the records kept by the subject co-ordinators there is evidence of satisfactory progress.
63. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use basic ICT equipment such as electronic switches by which they activate a recorded voice that, for example, says 'hello' when they want to greet someone. Pupils in Year 2 use picture symbols to help them communicate and ICT to learn about numbers; they do this with electronic switches and touch-sensitive screens attached to computers. For example, a pupil touched the correct symbol on the computer screen and showed he understood a question about the weather. Pupils in Year 6 continue to use touch-sensitive screens to count and match numbers. They write simple sentences using a program of computer-generated symbols, which helps to extend the range of their vocabulary. Higher-attaining pupils develop the skills to use the keyboard and they type out familiar words. By Year 9, pupils use the computer to record a survey on conservation; they enter and sort the information they have collected into a spreadsheet application which produces a graph. Pupils in Year 11 use ICT on a regular basis, for example, to write their news reports.
64. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. In the few instances of teaching being more effective, pupils learnt to use electronic switches and were able to take a full part in multi-sensory activities. Teaching and learning succeeded through the use of good ICT resources in the sensory suites. This enabled pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, to develop independence and progress towards their individual targets. More widely, the use of ICT in lessons is planned satisfactorily, although the opportunities to make good use of ICT to promote learning are sometimes missed. While training in ICT has improved opportunities for pupils' access to computer-aided learning, sometimes the lack of expertise in addressing their needs and in assessing what they have learnt makes planning ICT into lessons less effective.
65. The subject is soundly managed by joint co-ordinators who have a reasonably clear vision of the subject and knowledge of pupils' achievement. The co-ordinators are developing a system in ICT of assessing and recording pupils' progress that is sensitive to the very small steps they are capable of making. This enables an accurate view on how well pupils achieve. However, the effectiveness of their co-ordination is reduced by the fact that teachers do not follow their direction in using this assessment procedure. The issues identified in the previous inspection report have been dealt with satisfactorily. The satisfactory state of provision in ICT and the sound standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. ICT is being used slightly more effectively across the curriculum than at the time of the previous inspection. Its use is satisfactory. The provision of training and ICT resources has improved the profile of ICT in pupils' learning opportunities, particularly in the sensory rooms. Pupils are beginning to use the Internet, usually with support but occasionally independently. Digital cameras are used by adults to make a photographic record of pupils' work, although their value is limited by teachers not always attaching their explanation and evaluation of how well pupils achieved. Computers are used reasonably well in mathematics and art lessons and in supporting pupils' communication. However, computers are not used frequently enough to encourage independent learning among higher-attaining pupils.

HUMANITIES

67. As no lessons were seen in **geography** and **history**, it is not possible to form overall judgements about achievement, teaching and learning in these subjects. However, a scrutiny of the records of achievement of a sample of pupils and a discussion with the subject co-ordinators took place. These reveal that curriculum provision in both subjects is unsatisfactory. The school's policies for geography and history state that pupils are entitled to access to both subjects, but there is no whole-school curriculum planning that ensures this expectation is met. There is also no monitoring and evaluation undertaken to check the quality of the curriculum. The curriculum taught depends largely on the interest of individual teachers and is provided for mainly through visits to places of interest and occasional theme days in geography. There is no systematic planning to ensure that visits focus clearly on the development of specific geographical and historical knowledge, understanding and skills, and that the learning gained from visits is followed up systematically at school. Records of achievement include photographs of pupils during visits but do not provide a description of the historical or geographical activities in which they are engaged or an assessment of their achievement.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sensory approaches in teaching have a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Music and drama are used effectively to make religious education accessible to pupils although not all lessons are planned well enough.
- The developing contact with the community is increasing the range of learning opportunities.
- The way in which what pupils have learnt is recorded is done inconsistently by teachers.

Commentary

68. The sensory garden and room are great assets to effective learning and enrich the religious education curriculum. Following the guidance given by the subject co-ordinator for the use of the sensory room, a lesson on Moses, for example, was tightly planned and effectively approached making good use of the room's electronic resources. These resources brought the lesson to life for the pupils, with visual effects showing the rivers of blood in the story of Moses. The pupils' experience was greatly enriched as a result; they were full of anticipation and followed closely the cues for the next phase of the story of Moses' journey through the desert. More generally in religious education lessons, teachers use effective strategies to promote a sense of calm and reflection through music and lighted candles. Pupils respond well and learn to listen and look carefully at objects brought to illustrate the topics.

69. Religious education lessons provide reasonably stimulating opportunities for pupils to learn about Christianity and other religions, including Islam and Hinduism. These are taught in ways that are meaningful to pupils with severe learning difficulties, such as through drama and music. As a result, achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 experience collective worship and know the signs for summer and the other seasons. They thank school for the music and God for the weather. Through role-play, pupils in Year 6 share the experience of Moses in the desert. Higher-attaining pupils discuss the differences between English and Egyptian weather. The sensory content in lessons succeeds in getting all pupils involved in learning; for example, pupils celebrate Christmas and a range of festivals through experiencing the sound of Jewish horns and the Chinese New Year. Pupils in Year 11 gain experience of faiths through a wide range of activities. For example, they draw pictures of religious objects and make cards for Easter. Teaching is less effective when some teachers' plans do not make it clear how they utilise lesson time or give attention to pupils' targets, which makes teaching satisfactory overall. However, when these are included in lesson plans, teaching and learning are good.
70. Visits, mainly to buildings of significance for Christians, help pupils understand that these are special places where important ceremonies, such as baptism, take place. Pupils' visits to the local church include experiencing the Easter gardens and visiting the community charity providing clothes for Africa. Visitors to the school demonstrate Hindu dances and music and pupils are given the chance to take part.
71. The means of assessing what pupils have learnt and the use of assessment information to help plan what to teach are unsatisfactory. In the co-ordination of religious education there has not yet been a sufficient development of skilled assessment of what pupils have learned. The use of individual targets for the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties across the curriculum are not well developed. There are too many targets for each pupil and the period for review is too long. Pupils' learning is not analysed to work out how well a lesson contributed to achieving their targets. The photographic evidence of pupils' work, which is the main record of their progress, is not annotated to show how well pupils have achieved.
72. The co-ordination of religious education is satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Co-ordination benefits from specialist knowledge of the subject, which has ensured that the planning of what is taught is based on the locally agreed syllabus and adapted to the needs of pupils. However, co-ordination has not reached the point of shared practice between all the teachers of religious education or of a system for monitoring this. The resources for religious education are extensive and very well matched to pupils needs. Nevertheless, co-ordination is not effective enough for full advantage to be taken of the subject's resources.

TECHNOLOGY

73. Provision in **design and technology** was sampled and only two lessons were seen. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement on the quality of provision. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Of the weaknesses highlighted in the previous inspection report, not all have been addressed successfully. In particular, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are not able to take part fully in food technology lessons because the room is too small to accommodate them.
74. The accommodation for design and technology is unsatisfactory, which makes it impossible to provide a full range of learning opportunities, particularly in learning to design and make using resistant materials. However, construction kits are used appropriately.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

75. In this area of the curriculum **art and design** and **music** were sampled. Two lessons in total were seen, one in each of art and design and music. The amount of evidence for art and design and music is insufficient to make judgements on provision in these two subjects.
76. In the art and design lesson, teaching and learning were good. There was a high level of individual attention for the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11 and they were included in good learning opportunities. The teacher worked expertly with one pupil using clear and appropriate objectives sharply focusing on participating in seeing, picking up and using tools and materials. This pupil achieved very well as a result. The two other pupils achieved well, but not quite so well because, while their classroom assistants supported them fairly effectively, it was not with the determination and focus achieved by the teacher. The teacher and assistants did not move between pupils and the teacher was not sufficiently direct in instructing and coaching her assistants.
77. The music lesson was for a very large group in the school hall including children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 to 6. Although not taught by a specialist, music teaching was good and all joined very enthusiastically in performing songs and music. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties were very engaged and well supported in their participation by classroom assistants. It could have been a very good lesson except for the teacher asking questions aimed only at the few higher-attaining pupils who had the language to answer. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties had no electronic switches whereby they could respond to questions had they been targeted to them. The teacher also held up flash cards containing short phrases, which could only be read by a few. There were good elements of literacy and numeracy built into performances but again these were of most benefit to the highest-attaining pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching of a suitable range of learning experiences results in good achievement.
- There is a good curriculum and teachers match activities to pupils' needs.

Commentary

78. Pupils make good progress. Teaching and learning are good because targets are well matched to pupils' needs and well planned, teachers know pupils and their abilities well, and plan suitable tasks so that all are included in activities at an appropriately challenging level. For example, pupils in wheelchairs are correctly hoisted onto mats and given suitable support to enable them to carry out movements of their upper bodies. There is a particularly good approach to less able senior pupils who undertake team games designed to explore and develop pupils' turn taking. Individual objectives are set for these pupils and suitable activities ensure that these are achieved. There are suitable warm-up sessions, sometimes to music, and pupils enter into these enthusiastically. Pupils experience a range of moving and balancing activities, during which they increase their control, skills and confidence. Communication skills are encouraged well during lessons and there are sometimes good links with literacy. For example, during a lesson for senior pupils, pupils had to race to find cones that had letters attached which they then had to form into a simple word. Pupils work hard and co-operatively with their teachers and support staff because relationships are good, and this helps to promote learning. Support staff reinforce teaching points well. At the end of each lesson there is a suitable cool-down session and music is used to create an atmosphere conducive to relaxation.

79. There is a suitable curriculum. The school has a hydrotherapy pool and also accesses a swimming pool, which increases the options available to pupils. The success of the subject has been maintained since the last inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory, although monitoring of the subject has not been developed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

80. Provision in **citizenship** was sampled and elements of teaching were seen integrated with personal, social and health education. The citizenship element of the curriculum is not sufficiently well developed as is the case for personal, social and health education and both are unsatisfactory. The planning for teaching citizenship does not identify how and where the prescribed areas of learning take place. However, pupils are being made satisfactorily aware of what it means to be part of a community. They experience being a member of a group and participate in assemblies. Pupils behave appropriately when on visits away from school. Visits out of school are planned regularly to enable pupils to learn how to manage in a variety of situations. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties go shopping in the locality and this enables them to learn about shops, purchasing and making choices.

Personal, social and health education

Provision for personal, social and health education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some opportunities throughout the day which promote pupils' personal, social and health education effectively but most opportunities are not as well planned.
- The co-ordination of personal, social and health education is not strong enough to manage its shortcomings urgently and effectively.

Commentary

81. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because there is a lack of consistent approaches in providing for personal, social and health education and in recording pupils' progress. This makes target setting difficult. However, where there is emphasis on pupils' personal and social development, the activities are planned to enable pupils to meet their personal targets. Pupils anticipate key times of the day and are familiar with daily routines in lessons and snack times. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make sound progress in the development of physical skills and the satisfactory opportunities to develop independence means pupils make progress in self-reliance. They do this by performing small tasks to help the school in its daily organisation as well as by going out from school on visits, particularly shopping trips.
82. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Lessons take place each day, which cover the personal, social and health education of pupils, but the quality of learning is uneven because not every opportunity across the curriculum is well-planned and timed. In these instances, insufficient note is taken of the individual targets for pupils. However, when teachers plan well they include every pupil and engage them in purposeful work that leads to good learning.
83. The co-ordination of personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. The current co-ordinator has not held this responsibility for long and, despite his strengths, is over-loaded with too many other responsibilities to be effective in this one. The shortcomings in provision are known although the scope to tackle these urgently is very limited. The improvement since the last inspection is poor and the standards achieved by pupils have deteriorated. Of the issues that were required to be addressed, the co-ordination of monitoring the curriculum and developing a more detailed scheme of work has seen much too little progress.

THE FURTHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Provision in the further education department is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum lacks breadth and relevance.
- Students achieve unsatisfactorily because teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The co-ordination of provision in the further education department is ineffective.

Commentary

84. Students are not provided with an adequate range of relevant learning opportunities to improve essential skills that would give them access to the world of work and competence for life after school. Apart from a Transition Team project, they do not have sufficient opportunities for their achievements to be externally recognised. The curriculum is imbalanced. The core skills of literacy and numeracy are taught alternately and mainly in the first half-hour of the day which means these skills are each taught for just over one hour each week. By contrast, there is over four hours of physical or leisure activities each week, which creates too great an imbalance in students' learning opportunities.
85. Students attend college provision for two days each week. It was not possible to observe their work at college as it had come to an end for the academic year. The co-ordinator of the further education department is aware that the curriculum followed at the college may not be relevant to many students and is planning to review this provision. Work opportunities are offered to students but these are restricted experiences confined mainly to the school site such as small gardening and maintenance tasks in the sensory and wildlife gardens.
86. Teaching is unsatisfactory because of teachers' ineffective use of assessment to inform what they teach students. Two lessons of mathematics were seen in the further education department. In both, the weaknesses of teaching outweighed the strengths. The undemanding tasks of completing worksheets did not challenge the students, most particularly the higher-attaining students with moderate learning difficulties, and they learnt little. However, a further lesson was seen when students joined with a wide range of pupils for physical education. Students, particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, had a good experience in this lesson.
87. Leadership and management of the further education department are unsatisfactory because the co-ordinator has responsibility for too wide and substantial a range of senior management tasks across the whole school. As a result staff are hindered from improving provision in the further education department, although they acknowledge the curriculum is inadequate and that assessment, including accreditation, is underdeveloped. This represents deterioration in the further education department's provision since the last inspection when students were offered an effective curriculum and made good progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	6
How inclusive the school is	6
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	6
Value for money provided by the school	6
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	6
The quality of teaching	5
How well pupils learn	5
The quality of assessment	6
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	6
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	6
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	5
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	6
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	6
The leadership and management of the school	6
The governance of the school	6
The leadership of the headteacher	6
The leadership of other key staff	6

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

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