

Addendum

The Acorn Nursery is located on the same site as Avalon School. It is led and managed by the headteacher of Avalon School and overseen by the governors. However, unlike pupils who attend Avalon School, those who attend the nursery do not have special educational needs. The section of the inspection report which judges the achievements of pupils in the Foundation Stage relates to these pupils only and not to those from Avalon School, who do have special educational needs.

INSPECTION REPORT

AVALON SCHOOL

Street, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123945

Headteacher: Jean King

Lead inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins

Dates of inspection: 28th June - 1st July 2004

Inspection number: 259056

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special; Severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties
School category: Community special
Age range of pupils: 3 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 68

School address: Brooks Road
Street
Somerset

Postcode: BA16 0PS

Telephone number: (01458) 443 081

Fax number: (01458) 447 380

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Sue Medlicott

Date of previous inspection: October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Avalon School is part of the provision of the Somerset Local Education Authority for pupils from three to 16 years with moderate and severe learning difficulties, although it is admitting an increasing number of pupils with complex special educational needs, including those with autistic spectrum disorders. It serves a large rural area of central Somerset. Some children travel for an hour to get to and from school. The agreed number of places is 68 and 68 pupils currently attend, 43 boys and 25 girls. All pupils except one are White-British. No pupil is learning English as an additional language. There are no traveller children. Five pupils attend mainstream schools to take a small number of lessons each week and 21 pupils visit a mainstream primary school each week for a singing assembly. Because of their learning difficulties, the attainment of pupils on entry is below that expected for their age. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The school takes part in the Inclusion Initiative and operates outreach provision to support pupils and staff in mainstream schools. The last inspection was in October 1998.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27424	Dr D Alan Dobbins	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology
13762	Norman Shelley	Lay inspector	
15590	Sue Slocombe	Team inspector	English Geography History
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	Science Art and design Personal, social and health education and citizenship
19413	Frank Price	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Music
13101	Mike Kell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Physical education Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	7 - 9
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14 - 16
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	
The Learning Support Centre	16 - 17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	18 - 32
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Avalon is a good school. In the lessons over all the years, good quality teaching helps pupils learn well. Well-planned learning experiences for children in the nursery and for pupils in Years 10 and 11 prepare them well for the next stage of their education and for life after school. The school provides good value for money. The vision of the headteacher to create new provision by joining Avalon with existing primary and secondary schools will result in a much better base from which pupils can develop. When this is achieved, the effect of the currently unsatisfactory accommodation will be removed.

THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- The strong leadership of the headteacher.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation.
- The caring and supportive nature of the school that is based on very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The very good attitude pupils have to their work and their commitment to doing their best.
- The leadership and management and the curriculum planning for many subjects for pupils in Years 1 to 9 does not enable them to make the same progress over time as they do in lessons.
- The very good links with parents, local schools and the community.
- Governors do not check the work of the school sufficiently well.

Good improvement has been made since the last inspection, although the accommodation continues to limit the effectiveness of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 6	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 9	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good

Children in the nursery make good progress in each of the areas of early learning.

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

Overall, the standards pupils achieve are satisfactory. All pupils, notwithstanding the cause or effect of their learning difficulties, make very good progress in developing self-confidence and self-esteem and in becoming mature and responsible. Children in the nursery make good progress toward the learning goals in each of the six areas of early learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being prepared well for life after school and are able to demonstrate the extent of their learning by taking relevant nationally accredited awards. **Progress in Years 1 - 9 in some subjects is not as good because of the quality of assessment and lesson planning to meet individual needs;** pupils make good progress in art and design and music. They make satisfactory progress in each aspect of English, in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education, although they make very good

progress in swimming. Too little work was seen for judgements to be made in a modern foreign language and religious education.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good, overall. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They behave very well in lessons, throughout the day and when they visit the local community and other schools. The excellent role models presented by all staff and the very good relationships they have with the pupils support the planned programme very well. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory, with most absence being caused by ill health.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Pupils are cared for very well and feel safe and secure at school. **The quality of teaching is good and learning in lessons is good.** Teachers and their assistants are very good at encouraging pupils to do their best and they enjoy celebrating pupils' successes with them. Rarely is there a need to remind pupils of their responsibilities as learners. Information and communication technology, including smartboards, modified keyboards and a wide range of specialist switches, is used very well to enable pupils to learn. The curriculum for children in the nursery is good. It is planned well and pays due regard to the early learning goals. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. It helps prepare pupils well for life after school by providing a wide range of relevant learning experiences. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 9 is not planned well enough, and many subjects are not led and managed well enough. In many lessons for these pupils, learning experiences are not sufficiently well sequenced and organised for new learning to be always based on prior learning.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The links with parents and carers, the local community and schools and colleges are very good. Each makes an important contribution to extending and enriching pupils' learning experiences. Many of the pupils who take part in the programme of visits to colleges in Years 10 and 11 enrol on courses after they leave school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. She has a clear and appropriate vision for the future of the school, which will not be hindered by accommodation that prevents teaching a relevant curriculum, including the National Curriculum, to pupils over a very wide age range with increasingly complex special educational needs. The management of the school is **satisfactory**. Day-to-day the work proceeds in an environment that emphasises support and encouragement, and is calm and ordered, but not enough attention is given to curriculum planning or the leadership and management and assessment of the subjects. **Governance is satisfactory.** Governors meet their statutory responsibilities, but gain too little formal information to know how effective the school is, and how they can help in its development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very appreciative of the work of the school. They know that their children are safe and secure at school and are pleased with the progress that they are making toward becoming as mature, independent and responsible as is possible. Pupils like school, especially their teachers and teaching assistants.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE IS TO:

- Ensure that curriculum planning is consistent across the whole school so that the wide range of pupils' learning needs can be met, especially by:
 - Reassessing the time allocation for core subjects.
 - Improving the leadership and management of the subjects.
 - Using assessment procedures that inform lesson planning and record the small steps pupils make in their learning.
 - Making timetables reflect the curriculum that is taught.
 - Ensuring equality of access for all pupils.
- Change the accommodation so that the curriculum can be taught in full.
- Operate procedures for checking the work of the school, especially the effectiveness of the curriculum and the consistency of teaching and learning.
- Further develop the procedures of the governing body for checking the effectiveness of the school, including the work of the headteacher.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

When pupils' special educational needs are taken into account, the standards they achieve in lessons are good and are better than at the last inspection, when they were judged as satisfactory for many of the subjects. However, pupils in Years 1 to 9 make satisfactory progress over time in most of the subjects because of inconsistencies in curriculum planning and in the assessment procedures, and because of the limitations imposed by the accommodation. Children in the nursery make good progress toward the learning goals in each of the early learning areas. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in their work and are being prepared well for life after school.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- All pupils, irrespective of the cause or complexity of their special needs, make equivalent progress.
- The way that pupils work hard to please their teachers and support assistants, which makes a considerable contribution to the progress they make in lessons and, especially, in their personal and social development.
- The good progress pupils make in becoming literate and numerate.
- The difference in the progress pupils in Years 1 to 9 make in lessons and the progress they make over time.
- The good way that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being prepared for life after school.
- A small number of pupils benefit from taking some of their lessons in mainstream schools.

COMMENTARY

1. In the lessons, all pupils achieve equivalent standards and make equivalent progress whatever the cause or complexity of their special needs because teachers use specialist procedures to match the learning needs of pupils very well. Teachers and the support assistants work very hard, and mostly succeed, despite the small size of the classrooms, to ensure that pupils with the most complex needs have equal access to all lesson tasks. These pupils are predominantly taught by sensory approaches, which emphasise touching, seeing, hearing and smelling. Pupils with autism are taught well through the specialised procedures of the treatment and education of communicationally challenged children (TEACCH).
2. Over all the school, pupils make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills. They work hard at their learning, behave very well and have fully accepted their role as learners. They gain very good support, advice and encouragement from staff in lessons and at other times throughout the day, such as at lunch and break times. The very good relationships they have with the staff makes them confident learners who are willing to act on the advice and guidance they receive, and this contributes to the very good progress they make in becoming mature and independent.
3. In speaking and listening, pupils make good progress in English lessons. In lessons in the other subjects, constant reinforcement of language by the teachers and the support assistants gives additional help to the development of communication skills. The speech and language

therapist gives good support to those who have specific difficulties in communicating. By the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils follow straightforward instructions and use simple sentences to talk about their work and themselves. By the end of Year 11, the progress of many has been good enough for them to hold a conversation, contribute to discussions and express opinions, both in familiar and unfamiliar situations. Those with good speech talk easily and properly to visitors. Those who require help in communication, either through electronic aids or signs, symbols and pictures, are equally as comfortable when dealing with visitors. Pupils begin learning mathematics by manipulating and sorting simple shapes. By the end of Year 9, the best at mathematics cut fruit or sandwiches into halves or quarters, add simple fractions, and are able to handle a small shopping bill and give correct change. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 apply their knowledge and skills well to functional situations, such as shopping and reading bus and television timetables.

4. Too few lessons were observed in French, the modern foreign language, or religious education for judgements to be made. In the lessons in all the other subjects, pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve well, but because of deficiencies in planning and in recognising the small gains they make, progress over time is only satisfactory. However, this is not the case for ICT and swimming, where achievement is good. Since the recent opening of the computer suite, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have achieved well and they have made good progress. Computers are used regularly in the lessons in the other subjects and this helps reinforce and extend their knowledge and skills. Those with the most complex special needs are adept at using a range of switches and peripheral devices to help them gain access to lesson tasks. All pupils have a good understanding of computers and what they are capable of. Even the youngest pupils have good control of the screen through keyboard, mouse or special switches. In swimming, pupils in every year make very good progress in lessons and over time because they have regular opportunities to swim, and the quality of the teaching, planning and assessment is very good. Many pupils gain either the bronze, silver or gold certificates of the Amateur Swimming Association.
5. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve good standards and make good progress in preparation for life after school, which for most means a place at one of the local colleges. The recent introduction of the accredited programme of Awards for Life and Living (ALL) has made the curriculum relevant, with good planning and assessment procedures. This is adding rigour to teaching and learning with the result that the good gains made in lessons are sustained over the longer time.
6. A small number of pupils have their learning experiences broadened by being included in some lessons with pupils in mainstream schools. They are doing well, both socially and in their learning, because their visits are organised well and enjoyable.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils' attitudes are very good. Behaviour is very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The very good attitude pupils have to their work and to all that the school offers.
- The good behaviour of pupils in lessons and throughout the day helps makes the school a good place in which to learn.
- The very effective way in which pupils develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

COMMENTARY

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to their work. They enjoy school and want to attend. They arrive full of enthusiasm and participate willingly and conscientiously in all activities. They like their teachers and support assistants, co-operate well with them and enjoy working hard to please them.
8. Pupils behave very well. They are polite to adults and are considerate towards each other. Bullying or harassment is extremely rare and is dealt with quickly and efficiently. Praise and recognition promote good behaviour very effectively. Targets for behaviour in individual education plans also help improve behaviour. Parents agree the targets and many use the school's strategies at home. Sanctions, such as forfeiting a privilege, are occasionally applied. Members of staff are trained in crisis intervention and prevention, although they have few opportunities to practise their skills.
9. Pupils have many very good opportunities to increase their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, they reflect on spiritual values during the thought for the day sessions and assemblies. They react with enjoyment to the moods of music and particularly value its calming effects. They are fascinated by visiting musicians and enthralled when they watch ballet. Pupils show that they respect the beliefs and views of others by their actions and are very considerate toward each other. They have developed a clear understanding of what is right wrong through lessons, especially in personal, social and health education and by observing the actions of staff, all of whom are excellent role models. Social skills develop very well through the regular visits pupils make to, for example, the local shops, cafeterias, the leisure centre and to mainstream schools, when they take lessons or visit as a class to take part in assemblies. Visits to places of interest to support classroom learning help develop a good knowledge of local heritage and history. Theme days in which visitors demonstrate the dance, dress and language of the country, over the school year, celebrate the characteristics of many countries. Lessons in art and design and music also extend pupils' knowledge of different cultures although, because of the characteristics of the school, pupils' understanding of living in a multicultural society is not as well developed.
10. Attendance, at about 90 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average for similar schools. It has declined compared to previous years, mainly because of the increased absence of pupils because of medical reasons and family holidays taken during school time. Transport is arranged for pupils and punctuality is not a problem. Last year, one pupil was excluded for one fixed period of two days.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.4	School data	2.6
National data	9.1	National data	0.6

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Unsatisfactory accommodation affects the learning experiences of pupils by limiting what can be taught and the strategies teachers can use. This is compensated for, in part, by good quality teaching and learning; the very good care taken of pupils; the very good way in which parents and carers contribute to the work of the school; and the very strong links with local schools and colleges, which make a considerable contribution to making the curriculum relevant to pupils and satisfactory, overall.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The good quality of teaching results in good quality learning in lessons. Teachers know the learning difficulties of their pupils very well. Those who teach pupils in Years 1 to 9 do not know the capabilities of pupils in the subjects as well.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The very good work of the teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to pupils' good learning in lessons.
- The curriculum planning documents and the procedures for assessing pupils' work in Years 1 to 9 do not sufficiently inform subsequent lesson planning.
- The small size of the classrooms limits the choice of teaching strategies.
- The increasing range of skills of teachers and support assistants helps meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- ICT is used well in teaching and learning.
- Teachers make good use of the home-school books to encourage the continuation of learning at home.

COMMENTARY

11. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well and deal sensitively with them. Lessons interest and challenge pupils because the tasks selected match with their needs and the expectations for learning and behaviour are high. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the good standards pupils achieve because they are very competent and are deployed very effectively. They are at ease working with individual pupils and when they support teaching of the full class. The very good relationships between staff and pupils contribute to pupils' working hard to do their best. Pupils delight in achieving success because they know their teachers and teaching assistants will celebrate with them. They enjoy their lessons because most of the time learning is fun.
12. The small size of the classrooms limits the strategies teachers are able to use. For example, few opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility for their learning, either as individuals or as part of a small group, because the lack of space and inadequate accommodation inhibits such organisation. Some pupils with complex learning difficulties require special equipment to help them stand and also soft cushions so that they can be prone when learning. Both require considerable space, which is not always available or cannot be easily organised. This means that in some lessons these pupils are not included in all the activities because it is not possible to devise tasks to match their needs in the classrooms. Sometimes, they are given equivalent tasks but in another room. There is simply too little space in classrooms for pupils to experiment in science or work in art and design with different materials. Also, the small size of the

rooms makes storage difficult and getting equipment out, using it and then returning it demands excessive time that is then not available for lessons.

13. Increasingly, teachers are teaching pupils who join the school with complex special educational needs, including autistic spectrum disorders. Staff have broadened their expertise through training, for example, in additional and augmentative communication techniques, and in the specialist procedures of TEACCH. They use both very well, in making sure that all children have equal access to the lesson tasks. In this, they are supported very well by the speech and language therapist and by the physiotherapist. Both work regularly with individual pupils, and provide teachers and the support assistants with detailed programmes in lessons and in special individual sessions. The increasing range of skills, knowledge and expertise of teachers and the support assistants means that day-to-day the learning and additional needs of most of the pupils are met very well.
14. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are in the early stages of development, and, especially for pupils in Years 1 to 9, they are not yet working well enough. In most of the subjects, the planning documents are not detailed enough and do not identify the learning objectives with sufficient precision. As a consequence, the progress pupils make over time is compromised and does not reflect the good quality of teaching seen in individual lessons. Teachers gain too little information from the assessment procedures to be of use in planning lessons that enable learning always to be ordered and sequenced and in enough detail for each pupil. This means that, although pupils might achieve well in individual lessons, their achievement over time is not as good. The absence of a whole-school approach to assessment is variable for different groups of pupils and subjects. The detailed descriptors of attainment provided by the 'P' scales are beginning to help. But these have only recently been introduced, and are not yet sufficiently well established over all the subjects.
15. In most subjects, ICT provides good help in supporting teaching and learning, especially in promoting literacy. Most teachers have completed the national training programme. They have good skills and a good understanding of how computers and peripheral devices, such as smartboards, switches and Big Macs, help in teaching pupils in classes where learning needs and capabilities are wide ranging. The new computer suite provides access to the Internet although, because the room is so small, it is not being used as well as it could in helping pupils gain the skills of independent learning. Each classroom has at least one computer. In many lessons, pupils move quickly and quietly to the computer, for example, to match sounds to letters in lessons in English or complete repeated addition and subtraction sums in lessons in mathematics. One pupil gains from using a multi-media program in a local secondary school to help her with English and mathematics. Less use is made of computers in the other subjects because resources, such as CD-ROMs, are more limited, although good use is made of programs such as Paint and fresco in lessons in art and design. Pupils with the most complex special needs gain very good access to their learning through an assorted range of switches and peripheral devices that control lights, sound and noise as well as the computer screen.
16. In the home-school book, teachers provide rich information on what pupils have achieved during the day. Many parents and carers take a lead from this and use the information well in continuing learning at home. Most have contributed to the targets identified for their children at annual reviews. This information is also used well in continuing the work of the school in the home.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	15 (34.1%)	21 (47.7%)	8 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is satisfactory, although it has not improved since the time of the last inspection and the consistency of planning is not as good as it was. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, despite some improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There continues to be too few specialist teaching areas and the classrooms are too small and cramped. Staffing and resources are good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The accommodation is an unsatisfactory base for teaching the curriculum.
- The good curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The planning for pupils in Years 1 to 9 is unsatisfactory and lacks consistency.
- The curriculum is not checked well enough.
- The community is used well in supporting learning and the curriculum is enriched by the contributions of many visitors.
- The residential opportunities provide pupils with very good learning experiences.

COMMENTARY

17. The accommodation is unsatisfactory for the demands of the curriculum and for meeting the needs of pupils. Inspectors agree with the judgements of the Fitness for Purpose report (2nd April 2004) commissioned by the local education authority. There are no specialist teaching rooms except for ICT and food technology. Classrooms are smaller than the minimum recommended size and this is further complicated by the need to store equipment within the classrooms. Only half of the classrooms have access to a small group room. There is no dedicated medical inspection or treatment room and no discrete areas where pupils can receive therapy treatment in privacy. The toilets are small and do not secure privacy or dignity. The hall is too small for physical education and the time-out room is unsuitable. The outside is attractive and is made up of ample grass and hard top play areas. However, circulation around the building for pupils in wheel chairs is hampered by the lack of accessible paths. The headteacher, governors, teachers and support assistants have done all they reasonably can to modify and improve the buildings, but the quality of accommodation has an adverse impact on the effectiveness of learning and on what can be taught.
18. The curriculum taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils are prepared well for life after school. There is an appropriate range of externally accredited courses, which match the capabilities of all pupils. Very good links have been established with a number of local colleges, which provide good experiences for pupils because they follow relevant courses, such as small animal care, catering, horticulture, yoga and beauty. A system known as 'Bus Buddies' helps pupils gain confidence in using public transport. The link with the Connexions Service is very good and pupils are given good advice and support for the next stage of their education.

19. The short and medium-term planning documents for pupils in Years 1 to 9 are unsatisfactory and this has an adverse impact on learning and progress. Planning is better for pupils in Years 10 and 11 where external accreditation through the ALL system, and also Edexcel, provides a syllabus that helps in the planning of lessons and information for judging learning. Because of the inconsistencies in the planning documents, lessons for pupils in Years 1 to 9 sometimes contain activities that do not always relate well to what pupils should be learning. Schemes of work are a mixture of published and school-developed resources. Teachers plan on an individual basis and this leads to confusion and a lack of consistency and cohesion between year groups. Planning does not always precisely match the needs of pupils with the most complex learning difficulties and this, compounded by the small size of the classrooms, means that they are not included all the time in a small number of lessons. Some have individualised timetables and this means that they take lessons apart from the rest of their class. Many times, this is entirely appropriate and their additional needs are dealt with very well, but on other occasions, the main teaching activity is not accessible to them, so that they are unable to take a full part in the lesson. The school intends to introduce a commercially produced curriculum, which will be helpful in promoting consistent planning over all the school and in meeting the full range of pupils' learning needs.
20. Not enough time is devoted to English and mathematics in some classes. The timings for most lessons are not stated clearly enough and this, and the fact that each teacher has their own approach to forming their timetables, makes monitoring, then evaluating, the effect of the curriculum very difficult. Some lessons are too long and in these pupils sometimes lose their concentration.
21. Planning in some subjects, for example, in mathematics, is good, and the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy are followed. But not all teachers plan in this way. Subject co-ordinators generally do not have a clear overview of the development of their subjects. The core subjects of English and mathematics have temporary co-ordinators. This has meant that leadership and management in these subjects are not as well developed as they should be. In the other subjects, the time allocation varies over the year groups without sensible logic, and the procedures for assessing pupils' progress and the planning have become fragmented. The action plans for some subjects are vague and not up to date.
22. Residential opportunities beneficially extend and enrich the learning experiences for many pupils. The youngest pupils sleep over in tents, pupils in Years 7 to 9 go camping and those in Years 10 and 11 stay at an outdoor activity centre. These experiences make a considerable contribution to the very good progress pupils make in becoming independent and increasingly mature. Facilities in the local community, such as the museum, library, leisure centre, shops and mainstream schools, are used very well in supporting learning. Science laboratories and the sporting facilities at local schools are used well. Many visitors, including African drummers, artists, drama groups and specialist sports coaches, provide very good experiences that help make the curriculum exciting, enjoyable and relevant.
23. There are a good number of well-qualified teachers and support assistants. The support assistants are very competent, are deployed well and make a considerable contribution to presenting the curriculum. Resources are good in English, art and design, music, ICT

and personal and social education, and satisfactory in the other subjects. Teachers make good use of the Learning Resource Centre to gain advice and materials to support teaching and learning.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides very good care, welfare and health and safety for its pupils. It offers good quality support, advice and guidance, but does not sufficiently seek the views of all pupils. The high standards noted in the previous inspection have been maintained.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The very good arrangements for pupils when they join the school.
- The very good way in which the additional needs of pupils are catered for.
- The very good provision for ensuring that pupils are safe and secure while at school.
- The good way pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being prepared for life after school.
- The extensive range of enrichment activities makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

COMMENTARY

24. The arrangements for the induction of pupils are very effective. Staff quickly acquire detailed knowledge of the special educational needs, background and interests of pupils. They use this well to guide their personal development, care and welfare with a professional approach, characterised by genuine affection, a sense of fun and the very good relationships. The achievement of pupils is enhanced by the well-organised arrangements for their personal care and by the very trusting relationship each pupil has with staff.
25. Pupils with additional special needs are catered for well, despite the difficulties imposed by inadequate accommodation. The speech and language therapist and physiotherapist make a very good contribution to pupils' achievements and their wellbeing by their input in lessons, but also through the training programmes they form for pupils, including those for feeding, that are diligently presented by teachers and other staff.
26. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Child protection policy and practice is very good and many staff have undertaken recent training. There is no dedicated medical room or school nurse, but the arrangements for first aid and medical care are very good. The transports at the beginning and end of the school day are safe and efficient. All escorts travelling with pupils are trained, an improvement on the situation at the last inspection. Procedures to ensure pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are very good. The premises and grounds are well maintained, commendably clean and are monitored for risk by the governors on the premises committee. The health and safety policy is very clear. Practice, including risk assessment and the maintenance of the school's three minibuses, is very good.
27. Provision for pupils' career education and guidance is very good. Pupils and their parents and carers have access to impartial and personal advice. The link courses with local colleges for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the work experience placements for those in Year 11 prepare them well for life after school. In addition, the planned programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education and the good range of enrichment activities, including visits and residential trips, contribute to the very good progress pupils make in developing their personal and social skills. A small number of pupils benefit from taking some of their lessons in mainstream settings.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

The partnership between school and parents and carers is very good. Links with the community are very good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The high regard parents have for the school.
- The very good communication between staff and parents and carers, and the training programmes the school presents for them.
- The very good way in which the local community, and for a small number of pupils, other schools, are used to extend learning and to promote personal and social development.

COMMENTARY

28. Parents and carers are very pleased with the standard of education and care that their children receive. They unanimously agree that teaching, the progress their children make, the arrangements for settling in and the way pupils are treated are very good. They have much confidence in the work of the school and of the headteacher and staff.
29. The very detailed annual reports inform parents and carers very well the progress their children make and of the work of the school. The prospectus is excellent and includes all the relevant information presented in a way that is easily understandable. Parents and carers appreciate very much the termly newsletters, which include information on current activities and the future directions for the school. Staff and parents and carers work well together in supporting pupils. Almost all parents and carers attend their child's annual review meeting and they are well aware of the targets and strategies that are in place to support learning. Many parents and carers attend the parents' evenings and the special events in which their children participate. Home-school books are used exceptionally well for daily communication. Prompt telephone contact is made whenever there is significant need. Advice and guidance are available to parents and carers whenever appropriate. The courses run on communication techniques are well attended and valued, and plans are well advanced to begin workshops in literacy and numeracy. The school is a friendly school and the headteacher and staff are very approachable. Parents and carers are easily able to express their concerns and ask for help, but formal structures are not in place to seek their views and their satisfaction for the work of the school.
30. Local employers support the school very well. They welcome visits by the pupils to, for example, supermarkets and cafes, provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills by ordering and paying for food. Voluntary organisations arrange fundraising events for the school. A wide range of visits to places of local interest, such as the abbey, cathedral, magistrates' court and the nearby river, makes learning in the lessons in history, geography and citizenship relevant to pupils. Visitors such as the police, artists and the air ambulance provide the pupils with insights into the occupations of others.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher inspire staff to do their best.
- The vision of the headteacher for the future of the school, which is not limited by the current barrier to achievement.
- The relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum, is not checked well enough.

- Governors do not check sufficiently well all the work of the school.

COMMENTARY

31. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are conscientious and effective in discharging their duties. Both, in different ways, the headteacher more visibly than the deputy headteacher, inspire and expect staff to do their best. They have made a significant contribution to making Avalon an effective school. This has not been an easy task because the provision is very wide ranging, extending from nursery children through pupils in Years 1 to 11. The accommodation has too few specialist facilities and has classrooms that are too small for the number of pupils to gain in full their entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that also includes the National Curriculum. Children are entering with increasingly complex special educational needs and this imposes greater demands on the staff and the accommodation.
32. It is hard to form a clear vision of the school being of the very high quality that the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the chairperson of governors aspire to in its present configuration. The accommodation has to be changed or extensively developed. The headteacher has realised this and her vision for the future of the school is forward looking, matches with the philosophy of included pupils with special educational needs with others as often as is realistic and possible and, with the ongoing support of the governors and local education authority, is achievable. She has led the movement to change the school so that it links closely to a mainstream primary and a mainstream secondary school. This new organisation will have the potential to provide very high quality education to the primary aged pupils on their new site and to the secondary aged pupils on theirs. It is to the credit of the headteacher, the chairperson of the governors and the local education authority that plans are well formed to bring this vision to reality. When this occurs, the limitations imposed by the unsatisfactory accommodation, the very wide age range of pupils and the complexity of their needs will be lifted. When this has been achieved, the quality of the education of the pupils will not be constrained.
33. Day-to-day, the school is calm and ordered and many routines are established very well. The headteacher is frequently in and out of lessons. The headteacher has formed procedures for checking the quality of teaching that is well thought through and work well. Consequently, she knows the quality of the teachers and support assistants very well. This is not the case for the curriculum. The procedures for assessing the quality of the many policies and planning documents do not work as well, but they are, generally, satisfactory. Some teachers have responsibility for co-ordinating more than one subject, including those in which they have had little specialist training. Generally, they have accepted their responsibilities well, but their roles and responsibilities are not clearly enough defined, especially as these relate to their responsibilities for pupils over all the years. There are examples of very good leadership and management in the subjects, notably in physical education, in which very good use is made of specialist instructors to provide expert tuition in swimming. But overall, a greater commitment and more attention need to be given to the leadership, management and the development of each of the subjects. The procedures for reporting on the provision in the subjects are not yet formal enough. Subject audits are of variable quality and only a small number of these include priorities for development that can be discussed for inclusion in the school improvement plan.

34. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is well formed. The chairperson is committed, knowledgeable and has provided considerable help to the headteacher and governors alike, especially in supporting the headteacher's vision for the new configuration of the school. The committee structure is sensible and covers all aspects of the work of the school. Statutory requirements are met. However, all responsibilities are not met in full. Governors make regular visits to the school and know the staff and children well. However, the procedures for checking the quality of all the work need to be more formal, as do those for overseeing the performance management of staff, including the headteacher, so that they have detailed knowledge of the effectiveness of all parts of the school. When these are in place and are operating well, governors will have a detailed knowledge of the effectiveness of the school and of the leadership, and will then be meeting all responsibilities in full.
35. Financial planning is good and accountability is satisfactory. The school improvement plan includes detailed costings. Best value principles are satisfactorily applied. The recent reduction in money was resourcefully coped with. Standards funds and special grants are used for their designated purposes. The latest auditors' report required improvement in some financial controls, which were quickly adopted. The average cost per pupil is broadly in line with that of similar schools nationally.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,116,591
Total expenditure	1,056,626
Expenditure per pupil	13,902

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	56,671
Balance carried forward to the next year	59,965*

* Excludes money spent on maintaining the accommodation.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

THE LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE

The Learning Support Centre is very meaningful provision for teachers and their assistants from the schools in the central region of Somerset. It is a very effective base from which they gain advice and guidance to support their work and take materials, books and reading and number schemes to help them teach pupils with special educational needs.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The very good leadership and management.
- The wide range of relevant resources and assessment procedures provided for teachers and their assistants.
- The way in which the centre is evolving to meet the changing needs of teachers and their assistants.

COMMENTARY

36. The Learning Support Centre is located on the campus of Avalon School. It is one of four centres within the local education authority to support, predominantly, the education of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings but, increasingly, also for those in special schools. It serves the central area of Somerset, which includes schools in the Crispin Federation, Shepton Mallet and Wells. In all, this comprises four secondary schools and 40 primary schools. Detailed records show an increasing number of teachers and their assistants are visiting the centre to gain information on, for example, specialist teaching approaches and specialist materials that can help them in their work. Different resources are available to borrow, such as books and examples of reading and number schemes. Those who visit the centre are fulsome in their praise for the support, advice and encouragement they gain as well as for the quality and relevance of the resources they borrow and use.
37. The centre is led and managed very well by an experienced teacher, who is supported well by the assistants. Since her relatively recent appointment as centre leader, she has worked very hard and with wisdom gained from many years of teaching pupils with special educational needs to increase the centre's resource base. This has extended the provision through the establishment of outreach programmes in schools and a programme of twilight training. Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and teaching assistant support groups have also been set up. The extent of the centre's success is seen in the year-on-year increase in the number of teachers and support assistants who use it.
38. The centre is very well resourced. For example, there are 15 reading schemes that are relevant to pupils with special educational needs in primary and secondary settings and slightly fewer number schemes. Of great use to teachers is the specially designed support material for topics in the Programme of Studies for each key stage of each major National Curriculum subject. Teachers who use the materials report on their success and their evaluation is also included in the boxes. The centre has many examples of assessment procedures, especially for literacy and numeracy, but also for process measures, such as reasoning skill. Links between National Curriculum Programmes of Study, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work, the National Curriculum levels and 'P' Scales are clearly made and available for teachers who are not used to judging the small steps that characterise the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
39. The level of dialogue between the centre staff and those who use the centre is very good. They are encouraged to evaluate the usefulness of the centre against the purpose of their visit. This information is used very well to refine, for example, the effectiveness of training and also to gain information on areas and topics that the centre can develop that will be useful to teachers and their assistants. The establishment of the very successful SENCO support group two years ago is an example. The differentiation of QCA material, using widget symbols for pupils with difficulties with language in Years 1 to 6, is another. The centre is very good at evolving to meet the changing needs of teachers and their assistants who, as a function of the local education authority's commitment to inclusion, are dealing with increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The mainstream community nursery located within the school is attended part-time by children from age three until they move into the reception class of neighbouring infant or primary schools at age four.

Provision for children attending the nursery is good and is better than at the last inspection. Children achieve well and make significant progress towards the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning. This is due to effective teaching and planning, the detailed monitoring of progress and the effort the teacher and the teaching assistants make to ensure that the children are happy and that they enjoy their time at the nursery. Much of the learning takes place appropriately through play. The nursery is very well organised with a wide variety of stimulating and interesting toys and activities.

The quality of teaching is good, because the staff have a comprehensive understanding of children's needs and they know the best approaches. The very good relationships they have with the children enable children to grow in confidence and attempt new tasks under the guidance and supervision of adults they know and trust.

The leadership and management are very good. The curriculum is planned well and activities and resources are carefully chosen to help the children learn. Parents are regular visitors to the nursery and their links with staff are very close. Many parents make good use of the lunchtime club, where they share their concerns and gain advice in a friendly and relaxed setting. Some pupils from the school spend short periods of time working and playing in the nursery, often as a reward for good work or behaviour. They mix very well with the children.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The many opportunities for the development of children's skills, confidence and initiative.
- The very good behaviour and the positive attitudes to learning.

COMMENTARY

40. Over their time at the nursery, children become effective and increasingly independent learners. They are encouraged to be responsible for their own property and to respect that of others. They put on and take off their outdoor clothes with little help and quickly learn the rules and routines. The first activity of the day follows a set pattern with children and staff greeting each other then, as a group, they discuss the days of the week and the weather. The children are attentive, join in and are interested in the proceedings.
41. Activities are interesting and well organised so that children not only work independently but also learn to co-operate with each other, share and take turns. At snack time, they manage their own personal hygiene, are mindful of the needs of others and are polite and sociable. The nursery staff are excellent role models and this helps the children develop

appropriate personal and social skills. They experience and learn through role-play and through the wide range of activities they take part in each day. For example, through their imaginative play with a toy hospital, they develop an understanding of different situations and the differing roles and responsibilities of the people involved.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good way in which language skills are developed.
- The very good resources that interest the children and support the development of language.

COMMENTARY

42. Throughout the day, children take part in many activities to develop the skills of speaking and listening. This happens in the 'Hello' sessions in the morning, in individual and group tasks and in the free choice activities. The teacher and support assistants skilfully use questioning to help the children describe their experiences, and they willingly share their knowledge with the staff and with each other. They listen attentively and respond appropriately to instructions and directions. They enjoy looking at books, know that print carries meaning and they understand and can recall the stories that are read to them. They know some letter names and sounds and can recognise with help their name and the names of others in the group. The range and quality of resources are very good. There are many books, toys and games, and the colourful displays around the nursery provide a rich environment for promoting language use. As a result, children are interested, motivated and excited, for example, when they took part in the Big Book stories such as the Hungry Caterpillar.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good opportunities for children to acquire mathematical skills.

COMMENTARY

43. In all activities and areas of learning, staff make use of opportunities to introduce and reinforce number and mathematical language. For example, during registration, the children are encouraged to count how many are present and identify the numbers needed to represent this. Most children count from one to ten with minimal help and the highest attaining children count beyond this. Children use mathematical language, such as 'big' and 'small', 'full' and 'empty', and 'long' and 'short', in conversations with the staff that take place as part of most activities. For example, when playing with wooden blocks and Lego bricks, they recognise and recreate simple patterns and shapes.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good way in which children develop computer skills.

COMMENTARY

44. Children gain a good knowledge and understanding of the world. Aided by an interesting and very varied range of resources, and through role-play, they are beginning to develop an awareness of what happens in particular buildings, such as hospitals, cafés and shops. Many children are developing good skills in using computers, and do so purposefully. They operate the mouse confidently and know how to access some programs. They make patterns using different shapes and colours before printing the finished result. The children are curious and eager to find out about everyday objects and staff are good at encouraging this. For example, when children were interested in a pasta spoon, they discussed its many possible uses, including as a mirror when they examined their reflections in it.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good way in which children use the outside facilities and the fixed and moving play equipment.

COMMENTARY

45. The outside play area is used well and provides good opportunities for children to develop their co-ordination and physical skills. They spend a substantial period of time outside each day and benefit from using a wide range of different play equipment. They climb, run, jump, balance and slide with confidence on the fixed climbing frame, enjoy building in the sandpit and when they play with water. Many are skilled at operating 'ride on' toys, and pushing doll's prams and toy wheelbarrows. They are developing good control in throwing and kicking balls. During inside activities, they select, and safely use, a range of tools, such as paint stick, brushes and scissors, materials and equipment that they use well to develop fine motor co-ordination.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The wide range of activities used to provide creative learning experiences.

COMMENTARY

46. Creative development is provided for well. Children join in enthusiastically with songs and, especially, enjoy a music session that takes place jointly with the reception class children from a neighbouring school. In response to the many activities provided, they play imaginatively, both independently and with each other. The teacher and support staff ensure that the nursery is a stimulating and exciting place, and that there are toys, books and play equipment that appeal to the children. They use crayons and pencils confidently in making drawings and when they attempt to write and they enjoy painting with brushes and sponges.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**. This is the same as at the last inspection.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good teaching that matches lesson tasks to pupils' needs and abilities.
- The limited time allocated to teaching English.
- The inconsistency in assessment means planning is variable, as is the time allocated to teaching English by different teachers.
- The good resources to support teaching and learning.

COMMENTARY

47. The standards pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve and the progress they make are satisfactory. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well and make good progress. Despite good teaching, the progress pupils in Years 1 to 9 make is adversely affected by too little time being allocated to the subject by some class teachers. Teachers compile their own class timetables and the time allocated for English varies considerably between the classes. Progress, for pupils in Years 1 to 9, is hindered also by inconsistency in the planning documents and in the way the learning is assessed. Teachers have the freedom to develop their own curriculum and choose the materials suitable to meet their pupils' learning needs. Some do this better than others. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the syllabus of the ALL and Edexcel accredited schemes. This is suitably matched to their abilities, defines in detail what should be taught and has appropriate assessment procedures built into the modules. For these pupils, because curriculum planning is better, the good quality of teaching results in equivalently good learning.
48. In all years, when pupils with complex learning needs are fully included in lessons, they make similar progress to their peers. However, they are frequently withdrawn to other areas of the school to follow an alternative curriculum that is based on multi-sensory activities loosely linked to English. Sometimes, this occurs because there is insufficient space in some classrooms for the needs of the pupils to be appropriately met. When this occurs, their experience of English is different from that of the others in their class, because they are not fully included in all the lessons.
49. In speaking and listening, all pupils make good progress in lessons. In lessons in the other subjects, teachers' constant reinforcement of language makes a good contribution to pupils' language development. Teachers and the support assistants use symbols well in communicating with those who have language and literacy difficulties. The good support from the speech and language therapist contributes significantly to the progress made by pupils with specific problems or additional learning needs. By the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils follow straightforward instructions and use simple sentences to talk about their work and themselves. By the end of Year 11, many hold conversations, contribute to discussions and express opinions both in familiar and unfamiliar situations. Over all years, pupils enjoy looking at books and some are fluent

readers, although they do not always fully understand the meaning of the text. Achievement in reading is assessed regularly, but the detailed information gained on how well pupils are doing is not always used in teachers' planning to set targets for future work. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop an awareness of how books work by listening to stories and looking at the words and pictures. As they progress through the school, they benefit from being introduced to a wider range of both fiction and non-fiction texts matched to their reading ability. Support for individual pupils who find reading difficult is good. Resources to support the development of reading are very good because of the ease with which staff can gain materials and equipment from the Learning Support Centre. The majority of pupils find writing difficult. As they progress through the years many learn to write their names and copy letters and words accurately. The best writers do so at greater length and for many purposes. For example, letters written to employers by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well structured, with the address and the beginning and ending correctly and neatly written.

50. The quality of teaching is good inasmuch as pupils are interested in their lesson tasks, try hard to do their best and do this over the full duration of lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and in most lessons activities and tasks are matched well to their needs and abilities. Teaching is most effective where lesson activities are broken down into small manageable steps that enable pupils to learn in an organised and sequential way. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 6 on turning statements into questions, the teacher set clear objectives, reminded pupils of the vocabulary they should use, asked very simple questions and provided appropriate examples. The very good relationships staff have with pupils creates a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, well supported and confident in their learning. In most lessons, computers are used well to practise the skills of English, such as spelling, and also to help in the presentation of written work. Even though there are many elements of good and very good teaching in lessons, the inconsistent planning and assessment procedures means that over time the good quality of teaching is not reflected in equivalent progress.
51. Leadership and management are satisfactory. For the past two terms, the deputy headteacher has acted as the temporary co-ordinator. She has established procedures for checking planning, but not teaching and learning.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

52. Opportunities for the development of language and reading and writing in the lessons in the other subjects are satisfactory, but are good for speaking and listening. The strong emphasis on communication and the good use of symbols for pupils with limited language skills means that pupils talk freely and confidently. Their speaking and listening skills develop well because of this. In all lessons, teachers encourage pupils to ask and answer questions and to make choices. The use of specialist vocabulary is reinforced well through key words displayed in classrooms.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

53. No judgement is possible on the quality of the provision, the standards pupils achieve or the progress they make because no lessons were observed. Other evidence, including the

planning documents and records of pupils' work, suggests that lessons in French meet requirements for teaching a modern foreign language to pupils in Years 7 to 9.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good focus on using mathematics in the real world.
- The good attitude pupils have to learning mathematics.
- The good quality of the teaching that stimulates pupils to do their best.
- The inconsistencies in subject planning over all the years and the ineffectiveness of the assessment procedures in helping plan lessons.
- The good work of the co-ordinator over the short period of time she has led and managed the subject.

COMMENTARY

54. Pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve satisfactorily. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. They have good skills and good experience of using their mathematical knowledge in real life situations. When pupils enter the school, they begin learning mathematics by manipulating and sorting simple shapes. By the time they leave, the best at mathematics apply their skills in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division well in functional situations, such as shopping, planning journeys by reading bus timetables and an evening of television watching.
55. Pupils have good attitudes to learning mathematics. They concentrate well and try hard to do their best. They respond especially well to teaching through use of the smartboard. They find this stimulating, it captures their attention and because of the flexibility in moving numbers and signs around, enables them to achieve well because they gain a good understanding of the procedure. Occasionally, some lessons are too long and pupils find it hard to maintain their focus, but in most lessons, they work hard and behave very well.
56. The quality of teaching is good. In the best lessons, the recommendations of the National Numeracy strategy are used well and the lessons hurry along. The short starters, such as number fans, get the lesson off to a fast start, the main activities have clear objectives and the plenary is used effectively to reinforce the learning objectives. Tasks are matched well to all abilities and staff are deployed well to ensure the learning needs of all pupils are met. Information technology is used effectively to present examples of simple addition and subtraction in a way that interests the pupils. Some lessons rely too heavily on work sheets. In these lessons, those with the most complex learning difficulties are sometimes not engaged over the full duration of the lesson.
57. At the time of the last inspection, the provision in mathematics was judged as good. The standards pupils achieve in lessons remain good but are satisfactory over time for the pupils in Years 1 to 9. Since the last inspection, changes in staffing have resulted in different co-ordinators leading the subjects and a reduction in the effectiveness of leadership and management. Planning is not as consistent as it was and the amount of

timetable time allocated to mathematics varies considerably across classes. The assessment procedures do not provide sufficient detail of the progress pupils are making to help in planning lessons that, week in, week out, result in new learning being based on prior learning.

58. The current co-ordinator has a clear overview of strengths of the subject and the areas that require development. In the short time she has been in position, she has done much to develop the subject, including beginning initiatives to provide a consistent approach to planning over all the years.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

59. Teachers reinforce pupils' understanding of mathematics well over all the subjects. For example, in personal and social education, pupils are taught simple budgeting skills, and in music lessons, they count out instruments to match with the number of pupils in the class. Teachers are good at using opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills, but they do this in an ad hoc way, as there is no formal planning to ensure that opportunities are provided across the curriculum in a systematic way.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good quality teaching and pupils' good achievement in lessons.
- The inconsistent planning and assessment procedures and the imprecise details on when science is to be taught on the timetable.
- The good use made of the links with a local secondary school to give pupils experience of working in a laboratory.
- The lack of specialist science accommodation for secondary-aged pupils limits their full participation in practical activities.
- The way in which some pupils with complex special educational needs get less science than others in their class.

COMMENTARY

60. Pupils achieve well in lessons but satisfactorily over time on a narrow curriculum that is limited by the absence of satisfactory teaching facilities.
61. The quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well in lessons. In the best lessons, the activities are planned well and linked to clear learning outcomes. A good emphasis is placed on scientific enquiry. For example, a Year 6 group carried out a simple experiment on conditions for plant growth. The teacher read the 'Sunflower' book so that pupils would recognise what a plant needs to grow and identified the parts of the plant the story referred to. Good questioning, such as 'How do you feel if you are hot?,' led pupils to think about the need for water. The support assistants made a considerable contribution to the quality of learning by ensuring that pupils remained on task through timely interventions and prompts. Group work was well organised and pupils, with support, were able to predict outcomes and record the results of their experiment, using the correct scientific terminology.
62. Although pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve well in lessons, the progress they make over time is only satisfactory. Achievement is limited by inconsistent planning across the school, by timetables that do not accurately reflect the time actually allocated to the subject and by the considerable difference in the time given to the subject by the teachers of the different classes. These anomalies do not ensure that new learning is built carefully on prior learning as pupils move through the school. Monitoring procedures are presently insufficient for checking the planning documents that would recognise these inadequacies. The absence of a specialist teaching facility limits what can be taught and the strategies teachers can use. Pupils in Year 7 and beyond are, especially, disadvantaged by having science lessons in ordinary classrooms.
63. Good links with a local school enable some Years 10 and 11 pupils to work in a science laboratory and gain experience of handling scientific equipment and materials. This motivates them. For example, pupils in Year 10 were excited when they safely and efficiently carried out an experiment using hydrochloric acid, glass test tubes and Bunsen burners. They learned well enough to make accurate predictions about the effect of the acid on metallic and non-metallic substances. Pupils in Year 11 take practical modules leading to the ALL accreditation, but the lack of a specialist teaching room limits their access to a full range of practical and investigative work and this slows up their progress toward completion of the modules.
64. Pupils with additional special needs are often taken out of science lessons to follow therapy programmes or alternative activities. This is good as it means that their additional needs are being catered for. But it also means that they spend less time learning a core National Curriculum subject. In some of the lessons in which they remain throughout, too few

strategies are followed or the appropriate sensory experiences are not organised and they do not always make the same progress as others in the class.

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers try very hard to limit the effect of the shortcomings in the accommodation on the curriculum, but the range of science offered pupils is more restricted than is the case for pupils in many equivalent schools. Information and communication technology is not used as well as it could to support teaching and learning because there are too few CD-ROMs that bring colour and movement to, for example, the ways in which organs of the body work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good quality teaching does not realise equivalent progress for pupils in Years 1 to 6 because of inadequacies in planning.
- The very good new computer suite and the range and quantity of hardware and peripheral devices, such as digital cameras and a whiteboard, provide very good support for teaching and learning.
- The good level of skills and knowledge of teachers and the confident way in which they use computers to support teaching and learning in the other subjects.
- Lesson planning and the procedures for assessing progress for pupils in Years 1 to 6 are not precise enough to recognise the small steps pupils make in their learning.
- The very good work of the recently appointed co-ordinator has resulted in considerable improvement in all aspects of the provision.

COMMENTARY

66. In most lessons in ICT, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make are good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 sustain these standards over time because the planning documents are good and learning is sequenced and organised. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress toward the completion of the National Skills Profile. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not sustain the good standards achieved in lessons over the longer duration, although they make satisfactory progress because the planning and target setting for these groups are not precise enough, and do not ensure that new learning is built on prior learning. The result is that, although the quality of teaching and learning in individual lessons is good, it is not translated into good progress over time.
67. The new ICT suite is small, but is a very good base from which pupils learn about computers and other electronic devices, such as the smartboard. Up to eight pupils work at their own workstations and have access to a wide range of hardware and relevant software. The smartboard is used very well to demonstrate what pupils need to do in the lessons and to show what computers can do. For example, in a lesson to pupils in Year 8, it was used to introduce them to spreadsheets and how data can be presented visually. In a prior lesson, pupils had collected data from others on who they would like to invite to the annual sports day. They created labels in a spreadsheet, for example, 'parents' and 'governors', and typed in the frequencies for each label. They worked well and confidently at this, with only a little help from the teacher and teaching assistant. The highest attaining pupils presented the information as pie and bar charts, saved their files

and printed the information. Pupils understand that the Internet is a source of knowledge, even though their limitations with language restrict its usefulness.

68. The quality of teaching by the specialist teachers in the computer suite is very good. She has increasing specialist knowledge. Pupils who take their lessons in the computer suite are excited about their learning. Introductions to lessons make very good use of the smartboard in demonstrating the use of programs, such as Word and Excel, and, for the younger pupils, in showing how programs can be loaded, files created and saved. The teacher's very high expectations means that pupils are challenged as learners to do their best at all times. This was clearly the case in a lesson when pupils in Year 9 used the Fresco program to create their own picture out of dots following the pointillist style of Seurat. The smartboard was used excellently to show three of Seurat's paintings, the zoom feature showed how they were composed out of dots and the pupils fully understood their tasks for the rest of the lesson. They loaded the program and used the dot size and colour features to create their own pictures, for example, of a house or a beach scene. The lesson was very successful, pupils were excited by what they were doing and learning was fun. Good assessment procedures recorded the progress each pupil had made.
69. Planning documents are variable, but satisfactory overall. They will be better after the re-drafting is complete of the scheme of work as a whole school document. Planning is best for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Their scheme of work is organised and detailed and linked to the National Curriculum Programme of Study. It provides good guidance for teaching and promotes effective learning because it ensures that learning is organised and sequenced. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are for the first time being prepared for the National Skills Profile, which contributes to accreditation for ALL. The award is appropriate to pupils' capabilities and the syllabus provides detailed information on what should be taught. Planning is not as good for the younger pupils. Their schemes of work do not relate sufficiently well to the Programmes of Study and the assessment procedures are not clear or closely enough linked to the learning objectives for both key stages. The progress pupils are making, especially the small steps made by those with the most complex special needs, is not being recognised or recorded sufficiently well to help lesson planning. Consequently, in some lessons, pupils complete tasks that do not realise new learning and judging the progress they make against the key skills of ICT is difficult. Lessons tend to focus on the learning of isolated skills and knowledge. They do not link well with each other and there is little cohesion to the learning. This is limiting the progress pupils make.
70. Since her recent appointment, the co-ordinator has worked very well in developing the provision. The planning documents for pupils in Years 7 to 9 form a very good template for teaching and learning. The computer suite and resources, such as peripheral devices, digital cameras and robotic toys, are very good. The national training programme has contributed to teachers being confident and knowledgeable. The teaching assistants have sufficient skills and understanding of computers to support pupils very well in completing their tasks. The co-ordinator recognises that more improvements are necessary. The current curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is not yet organised systematically enough so that the good effort teachers and pupils make is reflected in better progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

71. In the other subjects, ICT is used well in meeting pupils' learning needs. The two smartboards located in classrooms are used very well, classroom computers help pupils in their learning and many use switches and other equipment, such as Big Macs, to gain more control of their learning. In many lessons, teachers and teaching assistants use computers confidently and well in supporting their teaching. In lessons in English, many programs help pupils match letter

sounds to shape and in learning spelling. In mathematics, the older pupils reinforce partially learned skills through the repeated presentation of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division sums. One pupil, who takes some of her lessons at a local secondary school, uses a multi-media program to become more literate and numerate. In the other subjects, a greater number of CD-ROMs, especially, will make computers more effective in promoting learning. The school is developing a good initiative which will result in a database on targets for annual reviews on CD-ROMs for individual pupils.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**. This is a similar judgement to that made at the last inspection.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good use of local facilities helps make learning relevant.
- There are too few resources to support teaching and learning and ICT is not used sufficiently.

COMMENTARY

72. Progress and achievement in geography are satisfactory. Teaching is good, overall. Teachers make especially good use of visits to relevant places in the locality to support classroom learning and to develop pupils' understanding of their local environment. They visit local parks to compare facilities and comment on conditions. Pupils are made aware of the purpose of the visit and what is expected of them. Follow up activities link well and are often supported by diagrams, pictures and photographs to remind pupils of their experiences. For example, following a visit to a local town, pupils in Year 6 identified some of the main features and chose what they liked most in the town. In lessons, they are supported and encouraged very well. Teachers and support assistants make good use of symbols and signing to ensure that pupils with communication difficulties take a full part in lessons. They know their pupils well and this helps them match tasks and activities to their needs and abilities.
73. The curriculum and schemes of work are planned to take account of the diverse requirements of the pupils. Resources require updating and extending so that they can better support both the requirements of the curriculum, and the learning of pupils with complex needs. Computers are rarely used in learning in geography. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Although she checks teachers' planning, over Years 1 to 9 there are inconsistencies in the amount of time and the regularity with which the subject appears on the timetable.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **satisfactory**. This is not as good as at the last inspection.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good use made of visits to places of interest in the local community to make classroom learning relevant to pupils.
- The planning documents do not pay sufficient regard to including pupils with the most complex special educational needs in all lesson activities.

COMMENTARY

74. Pupils' progress and their standards of achievement are satisfactory. History is taught through practical activities, wherever possible. This is a good strategy because pupils have first hand experiences and this makes learning about history relevant to them. For example, when they were learning about the Romans and the invasion of Britain, pupils made a model of a section of a Roman road. In Years 1 and 2, they learn about the effect that the passage of time has on people and places by identifying the changes between a day at the seaside in Victorian times with that of today. Regular visits to local places of historical interest are planned well and provide pupils with interesting and relevant experiences that extend their classroom learning of the topic. As part of their work on the Middle Ages, pupils visit an abbot's kitchen, a fish house in the locality and experience making medieval shoes. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow ALL units in history, but as this is a new venture, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements on their achievements.
75. Teaching is satisfactory. Activities are well planned and chosen to interest and motivate the majority of the pupils. The displays around the school are good and provide a good representation of the wide range of topics that are studied over all the years. The curriculum, schemes of work and assessment procedures require updating, as they do not take fully into account the changing needs of the pupils, including being able to recognise the small steps pupils make in their learning. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The co-ordinator checks teachers' planning, provides information and advice on the subject and produces an action plan that identifies areas for improvement. Appropriately, the action plan focuses primarily on acquiring additional resources and developing planning so that the learning needs of all pupils are met in full.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Too few lessons were seen to be able to judge the quality of the provision.

76. Pupils follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and study all the major world faiths through comparing features, such as special places and the meaning of symbols. These sessions make a strong contribution to pupils' multicultural development and they are supported well by 'religious education weeks' that are held each term. This year, these have been devoted to Islam, Buddhism and ethnic diversity. Traditionally, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have followed a course at a local college leading to the award of the Somerset Certificate of Religious Education. More pupils are entering the school with complex special educational needs and the course is now considered too difficult for pupils to complete. No alternative course has been provided.
77. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator's evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision is an accurate reflection of the present position. She has a good

understanding of the areas that require development, such as the increased use of ICT and the need to integrate the content of whole school assemblies more closely to learning in lessons.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- In food technology, over the years, pupils achieve well so that by the time they are in Years 10 and 11 they budget for a meal and cook it themselves.
- The good quality of teaching and the emphasis given to designing in the designing and making cycle.
- The lack of specialist facilities for resistant materials and soft materials limits the range of what can be taught in the different aspects of the subject.

COMMENTARY

78. Facilities are good for food technology, although very inadequate for other aspects of the subjects, such as resistant materials. The food technology room is well-resourced and consequently good quality teaching results in good learning in the lessons. Pupils of all years achieve satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress over as wide a range of the subject that is possible without the specialist facilities required for teaching each aspect of the subject in full. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils make clay tiles using different textures. In Years 3 to 6, they explore a range of fabrics to make Easter cards and in Years 7 to 9 paint plates for Mother's Day. In food technology in Years 7 to 9, pupils make simple snacks and by Years 10 and 11 they are learning to cook for themselves, including budgeting for a simple meal as part of their units for the ALL certificate.
79. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching is imaginative and encourages pupils to problem solve and to think about potential difficulties in designing, for example, an activity board for less able pupils. Good attention is given to the importance of the design phase in the design and making cycle, and pupils are encouraged to plan their designs in detail and discuss possible problems before they begin the making phase. Pupils with difficulties in fine motor control gain good access to all lesson tasks, such as starting a blender in food technology by operating a specially designed switch.
80. The subject is presented well, considering the changing nature of the pupils, many of whom have more complex special educational needs than at the time of the last inspection. The improvement since that time has been satisfactory. The absence of a specialist facility for working with resistant materials or textiles and other soft materials seriously limits what pupils, especially those in Years 7 and beyond, can be taught in the subject. The planning documents require updating, as at present they do not follow a consistent format over all the year groups. Currently, teachers plan according to their own model and this does not ensure continuity and progression in learning the key skills of the subject, as pupils move through the school. Records of pupils' achievements are

satisfactory, but detailed assessment does not always inform subsequent planning and teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good achievement and progress that is sustained over time.
- The good attitude pupils have to their learning.
- The good way ICT is used to support teaching and learning.
- The good use of visits to art exhibitions, of visiting artists and the way completed work is presented in the community.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation that limits what pupils can be taught.

COMMENTARY

81. Pupils achieve well in lessons and make equivalently good progress over time, but within the confines of a curriculum that is limited by the unsatisfactory accommodation for teaching the subject. The standards noted at the last inspection have been maintained. The attractive and varied art displays and photographs around the school enhance the building and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own work and develop self-esteem. Teachers plan a good range of interesting activities, which are appropriate for all pupils. Lessons are planned well and key skills and techniques are taught effectively.
82. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy art activities. They concentrate well and become absorbed in their work and experiences. They are comfortable working alongside each other, take turns well, treat equipment and materials with care and gain a sense of achievement from their finished work. Pupils with additional special needs use their fingers to paint and explore different media, for example, paint thickened with glue, sawdust or sand and different surfaces like paper, wood and metal. They enjoy doing this very much. Pupils with difficulties with movement, with hand over support, place their hand into a tray of paint then onto a large mirror and a print is made of the finished work. The highest attaining pupils make decorative clay and paper mache pots and paint in the style of famous artists, such as Picasso. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work together to design and decorate a play board with a range of sensory toys that can be used by younger pupils with complex special educational needs.
83. Computers are used well to support learning and to copy the style of famous painters using programs such as Paint and Fresco. The highest attaining pupils use up to five colours and adjust the size of lines, shapes and use different fill colours and designs to create, for example, portraits and seaside scenes. Information and communication technology is used well in ensuring that all pupils gain full access to lesson activities. For example, a Year 11 pupil with complex special educational needs used a toggle switch to paint lines of different colours and textures, which were printed out. The digital camera is used well in recording completed work.
84. Presenting their work in painting exhibitions and displays in the community enhances pupils' experience of art and design and the good name of the school in the community. For example, the display of tiles mounted in the nearby Clark's village is attractive and seen by many visitors. The regular visits made to art exhibitions improve knowledge and understanding because of the wide range of art that is seen. On the annual Arts Day, a professional artist works with the pupils on creating the attractive murals that decorate the wall of the playground.

85. The accommodation is inadequate and therefore unsatisfactory. There is no specialist room for teaching art and design. Lessons take place in classrooms that are too small and cramped for teaching art. Pupils have little opportunity to create large paintings, collage or other expressive work and some classrooms have no sink or running water. The absence of a specialist room seriously limits the access of pupils in Years 7 to 11, especially, to the broad range of the subject as reflected by the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, leadership and management are good because the co-ordinator makes great efforts to seek ways to limit the effect of the absence of adequate facilities for teaching the subject on the standards pupils achieve. Resources are good. The subject, through the content of lessons, makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Very good use is made of visiting musicians.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to perform in public.
- The different approaches to planning by different teachers do not secure progression and continuity in learning.

COMMENTARY

86. The standards pupils achieve are good, as is the progress they make. When they enter school, pupils explore sounds using a musical mat. They learn about 'loud' and 'soft', 'long' and 'short' and 'higher' and 'lower'. They enjoy listening to music played by different instruments, such as the harp. They take great delight in selecting from an array of percussion and shaking instruments and most start and stop at the correct time. Pupils progress well in appreciating music and in the way they perform music as they move through the school. They have good opportunities to learn to play instruments and currently 12 older pupils are learning the guitar or recorder. Over all the years, they have many opportunities to sing or play an instrument in front of other pupils, for example, in assemblies, special days and in school concerts. Pupils gain in self-esteem and self-confidence from this and show real pleasure in listening to their own compositions and those of others.
87. The provision has been considerably enhanced because of the regular input of specialised musicians. One has worked over many visits with the soundbeam through which pupils compose and play electronic music. They have created synthesised trumpet and electric guitar sounds that extend over many bars. The good use of specialist switches enables pupils with serious movement difficulties to join in all lesson tasks and they compose and create high quality sounds. The oldest pupils create more complex sounds that link to the rhythm of popular dance movements and they enjoy dancing to their own music.
88. Music is led and managed well. The co-ordinator is aware that the policy and planning documents require updating and that differences in the planning of different teachers is not helpful in ensuring progression and continuity in learning about music. As from next term, a music specialist will teach the subject throughout the school and this will do much

to ensure greater continuity in learning. The subject has improved from the time of the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The good way in which personal development is promoted in lessons.
- The teachers' high expectations for learning and behaviour and the contribution lessons make to personal development.
- The lesson planning does not specify sufficiently clearly what pupils are expected to learn and some pupils are capable of learning more.
- There are very good outdoor facilities but indoor facilities are unsatisfactory.

COMMENTARY

89. The very good provision identified during the previous inspection has not been maintained, although swimming remains a very strong area of the curriculum. Pupils achieve satisfactorily over most aspects, but make very good progress in swimming.
90. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well structured, with an introductory warm up session, a main teaching activity and a final cool down. Pupils know what to expect from this established routine and they respond very well. They are managed very well and teachers have high expectations for learning and behaviour. Consequently, lessons are orderly and pupils have many opportunities to work collaboratively and to take responsibility. Pupils' personal development is promoted well in lessons. They work sensibly in pairs, for example, when they pass and catch a ball, and they also work well as a whole class, as Year 9 did when they raced 'against the clock' to turn over all the cones in the hall. Support assistants contribute well to the standards pupils achieve. They help maintain appropriate behaviour and ensure that all pupils take a full part in the lessons. For instance, in a game of curling, support assistants used ramps to enable pupils with the most severe movement difficulties to send their 'stones' towards the target. At the end of lessons, pupils are asked what they have learned. This was skilfully done in a lesson for Year 7 pupils, who were asked 'What did you do better this week?' Many pupils answered sensibly, saying that they were better 'hitters' and 'catchers'.
91. There are two shortcomings in the quality of teaching and learning. Lesson plans for pupils in some years do not show the new skills pupils should learn by the end of the lesson and, therefore, it is difficult to judge the progress pupils make. In some lessons, pupils are practising skills they already know and spend too little time developing new skills because there is too little individual coaching to stretch and challenge the most co-ordinated pupils.
92. Resources are good and the large outdoor area is splendid for lessons in games, athletics and outdoor activities, such as orienteering. The indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory. The hall is too small and its multi-purpose function adds another difficulty to its use for lessons in any aspect of physical education, including dance. Good use is made of community facilities. Pupils go horse riding and very good leadership in the

past has resulted in the regular use of the excellent local swimming pool. The good links with a number of special schools means that pupils compete against each other and the joint ventures with the nearby primary school, such as the gymnastics, also extend pupils' experience of the subject.

93. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start. She has specialist training in the subject and has begun observing lessons taught by other teachers to help raise the quality of teaching and learning. However, the subject action plan is out of date and needs reviewing, and the assessment procedures do not show sufficiently clearly the small steps pupils make in developing new skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Learning in lessons is supported very well by the caring ethos of the school.
- The very good way in which local facilities enhance pupils' personal and social skills and their understanding of citizenship.
- The very good way in which pupils in Years 10 and 11 are prepared for life after school.
- The very good leadership and management.

COMMENTARY

94. The standards pupils achieve are very good. They make very good progress toward being as independent, mature and responsible as is possible, given the extent of their special educational needs.
95. The planned programme is supported very well by the emphasis on personal, social and health education that permeates all aspects of school life. For example, pupils enjoy the social aspects of eating and relaxing together at lunchtimes and sharing each other's achievements in assembly. They develop an understanding of social responsibility and of the appropriate way to behave through taking part in the regular visits to places in the local community and, especially, by taking part in residential trips.
96. There is an expectation that pupils will do as much as they can for themselves. They quickly learn that staff will support them in completing lesson activities and throughout the school day, but are always encouraged to attempt things for themselves. Lessons in citizenship provide good opportunities for pupils to behave responsibly towards others in the family, the school and in the locality. Senior pupils, for example, help paint areas of the school, collect rubbish and maintain the sensory garden. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part in college links, work experience, shopping and mobility training. They learn how to use a mobile phone and read a bus timetable. They take part in the local education authority initiative 'Bus Buddies', which carries out an assessment of each pupil's route from home to their intended college and prepares them to complete this journey independently. They are prepared very well for life after school.
97. The subject is led and managed very well. Younger pupils follow the planned programme integrated in other areas of the curriculum. Older pupils are taught topics such as sex education and the misuse of drugs in discrete lessons. Resources for the subject are good. The subject was not reported in detail during the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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