

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **STOWE TEACHING UNIT**

Lichfield

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 132131

Headteacher: Mr K P Paylor

Lead inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 259112

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 unit. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the unit 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 UNIT

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	15
Unit address:	Stowe Street Lichfield Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS13 6AF
Telephone number:	01543 510755
Fax number:	01543 510755
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of management board:	Mr Eric Lunt
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNIT

Stowe Teaching Unit is part of the provision of the Lichfield local education authority for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. It deals with pupils from Years 7 to 11, but most pupils are in Years 10 and 11. Pupils come from the Lichfield region of Staffordshire. Nineteen pupils attend the unit and a variable number of others, sometimes as many as eight, are supported off site, mostly at home or on work experience. The agreed maximum number of pupils to be taught in the unit is 21. Six pupils are dual-registered with other schools; all but two are white British. There are no traveller children, and no one is learning English as an additional language. When pupils enter the unit, their attainment is below that expected for their age. Nine pupils have statements of special educational need. The unit is not involved in any national initiatives, but the inclusion programme is a local initiative that closely links four secondary schools to the unit. The schools purchase up to two places at the unit and send pupils who are having difficulty in dealing with the rules and expectations of their schools. They remain at the unit for a pre-determined duration of from six weeks to two terms. During this time they are taught by the inclusion teacher, with work that is prepared for them, and often marked, by the teachers in their mainstream school.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27424	Dr D Alan Dobbins	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Mathematics; Art; Information and communication technology.
9736	John Brasier	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
3055	Clive Tombs	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Science; Geography; History; Physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Ltd  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD

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 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>4</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE UNIT</b>	<b>8</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Inclusion programme	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE SUBJECTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>25</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Stowe Teaching Unit is a very good pupil referral unit.** The two primary aims of the unit are to prepare permanently excluded pupils for the next stage of their education or the world of work, and to provide an enriched learning environment for pupils on the inclusion programme so that they can return successfully to their mainstream schools. These aims are being met in full for most pupils, and the unit gives good value for money.

#### The unit's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who are fully supported by a staff team of very competent and committed professionals.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour allows them to attend very well to their learning and to make very good progress.
- The staff have excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach and of the pupils.
- The very good provision for supporting pupils on the inclusion programme.
- The range of subjects and the awards that pupils take to show their learning are too limited. The length of the teaching week is too short.
- The management group does not check the quality of all the work of the unit.
- The unit is not given sufficiently clear information on its role in educating some pupils referred to it by the District Panel.

This is the first inspection of the unit.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Subject	Judgement
English	Very good
Mathematics	Very good
Science	Very good
Information and communication technology	Good
Personal, social and health education	Excellent
Creative, aesthetic, practical and physical subjects: Art and design, design and technology, physical education	Very good for art, good for physical education, satisfactory for design and technology*
Humanities: Geography, history	Very good*
Quality of learning of pupils on the inclusion programme.	Very good

\* These judgements reflect the quality of the provision and not the standards pupils are achieving. In these subjects, too little information was collected on the quality of teaching and learning to make a judgement on the achievement of pupils.

**Overall, pupils' achievement is very good.** They make excellent progress in their personal and social development and especially in controlling their behaviour. The gains made by most pupils are considerable and are sufficient for them to move to the next stage of their education or begin work with substantial confidence. Pupils apply themselves very well to their learning, and achieve very well in most of the subjects. In part, this is because of the excellent progress they are making in developing their self-confidence, self-esteem and especially their behaviour. In all of the subjects, they make better progress than was the case in their previous schools. The standards

that pupils in the inclusion programme achieve are very good. Most importantly, they benefit from being fully integrated into the rules, routines and expectations of the unit. This results in their making sufficient progress in their personal and social development to be able to return confidently and successfully to their schools.

**Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** The guidelines for behaviour are very clear, and the expectations are very high. The quality of teaching in the lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good; and all staff are excellent role models. Each contributes to pupils' quickly developing excellent attitudes to their work and to their behaviour, which is exemplary. Progress in spiritual and cultural development is good. Attendance is good. Most pupils attend more regularly than was the case in their previous schools.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education is very good.** At the end of his or her time at the unit, every pupil gains a place on a course in a college of further education, or a place in the armed forces, or begins work.

**The quality of teaching is very good.** Teachers have specialist knowledge of the subjects they teach, know their pupils very well, and have learned the skills of teaching classes with small numbers of pupils. The very talented teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning because they are deployed very well. The excellent attitudes and behaviour of the pupils means that all lesson time is used for learning. Rarely is there a need to remind pupils of their responsibilities as learners. Learning is assessed very well and the information gained helps in the planning of lessons, so that they match very well the needs and capabilities of pupils. This is especially so in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). In these lessons, because of the wide range of capabilities, pupils carry out individual work on tasks and topics that are relevant to them. The very good quality of teaching, the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the very high expectations for behaviour create a powerful ethos for learning. Pupils are routinely challenged as learners, and for all pupils **the quality of learning is very good**, irrespective of their capability or need.

**The curriculum is satisfactory.** It is relevant to pupils' primary needs because it focuses on promoting personal and social skills and literacy and numeracy. It includes ICT, geography, history, art and some aspects of design and technology and physical education. The links with the four local secondary schools are excellent, in part because the schools see the inclusion programme as a very valuable extension of their own provision. The range of accredited qualifications and of courses that pupils are able to take, for example non-vocational courses, is less than in some equivalent units. Weekly teaching time is less than recommended.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher is an excellent leader and manager, who inspires and motivates. He sets standards and maintains conditions in such a way that staff and pupils regularly achieve their best. In this, he gains excellent support from the deputy headteacher. They make a formidable team. The work of the unit takes place in an environment which emphasises support and encouragement and the celebration of good effort. The use of specialist experienced staff to teach art and geography, and to help teach lessons in PSHE, enriches the curriculum and broadens the learning experiences of pupils. **Governance by the management group is satisfactory.** The management group is, generally, well formed and of sufficient number. It has made a good start to fully meeting its responsibilities to the unit, although formal procedures do not operate for checking the quality of all of the work.

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

**The links with parents are good.** Parents are very appreciative of the work of the unit and have no significant concerns. Pupils report that they are comfortable at the unit, and they appreciate the effort staff make in helping them to become mature and responsible. Pupils in the inclusion programme know they are making better progress in their learning than was the case in their mainstream schools, and very good progress in dealing with their other difficulties. It is a measure of the regard that pupils have for the staff that many return to inform them of their successes, for example on college courses or in the workplace.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

**The most important things the unit should do to improve is to:**

- Broaden the curriculum and increase the length of the teaching week.
- The management group should operate procedures to check the quality of the provision.
- Ensure that the Pupil and Student Services District Referral Panel gives clear guidance on how placement at the unit is to contribute to the pupils' educational entitlement.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in the subjects**

When pupils enter the unit their attainment is lower than is the case for most pupils of equivalent age in mainstream schools. However, given the difficulties they experience in dealing with their emotions, and their behaviour over their time at the unit, they achieve very good standards.

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

- Pupils' excellent behaviour means that learning takes place over the full duration of lessons. They quickly develop excellent attitudes to their work, and the result is that the standards they achieve are better than is the case for pupils in most equivalent units.
- The standards achieved in personal and social development are excellent, and they contribute to the very good standards that are being achieved in most of the subjects;
- In English, mathematics and science especially, pupils are making better progress than was the case in their previous schools.
- Over all the subjects, the standards achieved by pupils on the inclusion programme are very good, and better than in their mainstream schools.

#### **Commentary**

1. Most pupils enter the unit after having difficulties in dealing with the routines and expectations of their mainstream school, where some chose not to attend at all and many attended irregularly. Most have a poor self-image and lack self-confidence. Some are frustrated and a small number are angry. Over their time at the unit, all pupils gain a much better understanding of their emotions and achieve much greater control over their behaviour. As a consequence, they become more effective in their learning and in preparing for the demands of the next stage of their education or the world of work. Their progress in becoming mature and responsible is better than is the case for pupils in most other equivalent units.

2. Work in the lessons on PSHE is supported very well throughout the day. The tutorial sessions at the beginning of the day, and those at break and lunch times, help establish and maintain excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Through giving encouragement, advice, support and guidance, the staff are very effective in helping pupils make excellent progress in their personal and social development.

3. In the subjects, pupils are making better progress than was the case in their previous schools. Some enter the unit with the literacy and numeracy skills of a typical six and a half year old. By the time they leave the unit they are able to read, write and use their number skills to help them in their day-to-day routines. Examples are when they choose a television programme to watch, complete application forms, plan a journey by public transport, or purchase items in a store. Those who enter with better literacy and numeracy skills leave school with good grades in English and mathematics when they take their examinations for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE).

4. In English, pupils read to staff every day. Pupils take a standardised test of reading when they enter the unit and again after one year there. A comparison of their scores shows a typical gain of 15 reading months, with the greatest gain being about three reading years. They make comparable progress in speaking and listening, spelling and writing. All pupils make substantial gains over the period of a year, and the gains of those who make most improvement are remarkable.

5. In mathematics, the picture is similar. The many opportunities pupils are given to practise the four basic procedures of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division help them make very good progress. They apply their learning very well, for example to computations involving money, distance, time and weight. The gains they make in the skills of mathematics range from 13 to 36 months after one year at the unit. These are better than those of pupils in most other equivalent units. All pupils leave the unit with a grade on the certificate of achievement, and the best at mathematics gain good grades in GCSE.
6. Even though the accommodation does not include specialist facilities to support teaching and learning in science, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making benefits from the emphasis given to learning through doing. Very careful planning and the small number of pupils in classes allow much of the teaching and learning to proceed through practical sessions. Results are written up very well, with scientific vocabulary spelt accurately. All calculations and diagrams are completed neatly, and where necessary are corrected by the teacher's good system of marking. As a result, pupils are gaining a very good understanding of important concepts in science, but over a curriculum that is not as broad as they would experience if the facilities for teaching the subject were better. As a result, pupils are prepared for taking the certificate of achievement only, even though many are well capable of gaining a grade in GCSE.
7. In lessons in ICT, the standards pupils are achieving and the progress they are making are good, and they are helped by the regular use of computers in other subjects. A number of factors combine to help the pupils make good gains in presenting written material and in using publishing and spreadsheet programs. There are sufficient computers for pupils to work as individuals, good planning, and good specialist knowledge on the part of all teachers. The Internet is used well as a source for information. Some pupils have had very little experience in ICT when they enter the unit. They begin by learning to control the screen through mouse and keyboard. Others enter with advanced skills and are familiar with creating files, importing text and pictures and editing files. Good lesson planning matches tasks to pupils' capabilities and experience so that all pupils make the same equivalent progress. The most competent pupils in ICT gain good grades on the certificate of achievement.
8. Lessons each week in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and physical education help to keep pupils acquainted with these subjects. Pupils do not follow the full range of the relevant Programmes of Study or the syllabus of any nationally accredited award. The lessons in physical education help to balance the curriculum by giving pupils a chance to be physically active, though this involves learning to swim only. In each of these subjects, too few lessons were seen to make it possible to judge the standards pupils achieve or their progress, but judgements on the quality of the provision can be made. The teachers of art and design, geography and history have specialist training and considerable experience. They are managing provision in such a way that pupils have learning experiences of very good quality. In these subjects, pupils do not have an opportunity to routinely demonstrate the extent of their learning on relevant national accredited awards. This is disappointing, because they are well capable of attaining good enough standards to gain a pass grade on the certificate of achievement and even in GCSE. A specialist instructor teaches swimming in the nearby leisure centre. Provision is good. Lessons in design and technology focus on learning about food studies only. Planning is not as detailed as is the case in the other subjects. The facilities and resources for supporting teaching and learning are limited and the quality of the provision is satisfactory.
9. Over all the subjects, all pupils, despite the severity and complexity of their emotional and behavioural difficulties or their capabilities, achieve equivalent standards.
10. Pupils who are on the inclusion programme are learning very well, and are making much better progress than they did in their lessons in their other schools.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the unit. Attendance is good, punctuality is very good and, overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The provision for developing personal and social skills is excellent.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' excellent behaviour and their excellent attitudes to their work provide a powerful foundation for learning.
- Expectations for behaviour are extremely high.
- The guidelines for distinguishing right from wrong and for identifying what is acceptable behaviour are very clear.
- There are very good procedures for promoting attendance.

### Commentary

11. At the beginning of each day, pupils check their dress, put on their unit tie and quickly settle to Victorian board games with staff. The polite conversation that takes place exemplifies the calm, ordered and industrious atmosphere that continues throughout the day. There are no raised voices. Pupils treat each other and the staff with respect. Pupils talk politely with the many visitors and are especially eager to tell of their positive feelings for the unit. The induction programme is very effective in helping new pupils learn about the rules and expectations of the unit. Most pupils are brought in initially for a half-day per week, which quickly builds to full attendance. Records of racist incidents and bullying are kept, but there has been no need to record any entries for several years. Pupils confirm that bullying of any type would not be tolerated and does not happen. Parents agree that the behaviour of their children is excellent, as is the way they approach their learning. Both are very much better than was the case in their previous schools. No pupil has been excluded in the last three years.

12. In lessons, pupils attend to their tasks quickly and, most often, with enthusiasm. They participate very well in discussions and listen politely to the views of others. They have a very high regard for their teachers and teaching assistants.

13. Attendance is monitored very efficiently. Every day, information is put on a database that can be analysed to recognise trends in the attendance of individual pupils and to provide attendance statistics over all pupils. All absences are queried with pupils. The close link with the education welfare officer means that telephone calls and home visits are made very quickly. For example, six home visits were made on behalf of the unit during the first week of the current term. No national data are available on the attendance of pupils at pupil referral units. On the evidence of inspectors' experience, pupils attend the unit more regularly than do those in other equivalent units.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
Unit data	17.0	Unit data	0.0

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year for pupils who are referred to the unit by the Pupil and Students District Referral Panel*

14. Provision for spiritual development is good. Religious education is not taught, but over their time in the unit pupils adopt a set of values, principles and beliefs that inform their perspective on life and their patterns of behaviour. The excellent ethos of the unit helps pupils to grow and flourish and to learn to respect others. Lessons in English, art, history and science help them to develop a sense of empathy, concern and compassion, because they include opportunities to reflect on the spirit of human enterprise and achievement.

15. Provision for moral development is very good and underpins the ethos of the unit. On entry, pupils are made aware of the expectations for behaviour, and firm boundaries are consistently applied. Pupils quickly learn what is appropriate and what is not, and clearly understand right from wrong. The daily board games stress the importance of rules that cannot be changed. Individual education plans contain clearly written personal and social targets. These are agreed with pupils and monitored and reviewed systematically. Staff reinforce the values of honesty, politeness and consideration and are excellent role models. In many lessons, pupils are given opportunities to discuss moral issues, for example the misuse of drugs and the morality of war. Good opportunities exist for pupils to think about and work with others in the community. For example, they befriend the local pensioners who live adjacent to the unit, and they work with the Toddler Group in the local Christian Centre. They gain considerable benefit from these experiences.

16. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils develop a sense of community and understand the associated responsibilities that go with this. Formal mealtimes provide excellent opportunities for pupils to show their social awareness and skills. They are enjoyable occasions and form an important part of the day when staff, pupils and any visitors lunch together. There are visits to places of interest to support classroom learning, and many links with the community, especially with the Christian Centre and through the work experience programme. These add richness to the curriculum and make a very strong contribution to developing pupils' personal and social skills.

17. Provision for cultural development is good. In the lessons in English, drama, art, science and history, the pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on the significance of their own culture and that of others. For example, in recent lessons in art the pupils have studied the style and tradition of Aboriginal art and of the Renaissance artists. The detailed attention to the Victorian past informs pupils of their own culture. Cultural awareness is also promoted through trips to the theatre, local museums, places of historical and geographical interest, and the annual residential camp at Whitby. Classical music is very often played over lunch.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE UNIT**

The quality of education is very good. The ethos of the unit contributes to most pupils rethinking their attitudes to learning and to their behaviour. They apply themselves very well, work hard in their lessons and take advantage of the very good quality teaching. The outcome is that they make very good progress in their learning and in becoming mature and increasingly responsible.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching is very good, and this results in learning also being of very good quality. Pupils work hard at their learning, present their work very neatly, and consistently try to do their best. The very good use of standardised tests and the quick and informative marking of work help to make lesson planning very effective.

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

- Most lessons are taught by teachers with excellent specialist knowledge of the subject.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to become confident learners who commit themselves fully to their learning.
- Pupils have excellent behaviour and attitudes to their learning.
- Careful planning results in the selection of lesson tasks that match pupils' needs and capabilities very well.
- Very good work by the teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the good standards pupils achieve.
- The very good procedures for assessing pupils' progress give strong support to lesson planning.
- Good use is made of ICT in supporting teaching and learning in the subjects.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Common strengths***

18. The excellent behaviour of pupils in lessons allows learning to take place in an organised fashion without interruption. Pupils' behaviour is so good that it is difficult for visitors to realise that many pupils have been placed at the unit because their behaviour was seriously disruptive in their other schools. The excellent relationships with staff help the pupils to realise that the staff want them to do as well as they can, both in their learning and in developing their personal and social skills. As pupils gain confidence as learners, they achieve increasing success, and this contributes to their enjoying lessons and looking forward to them. For many pupils, because of the difficulties they experienced in their other schools, this is an important realisation. In most lessons, they work hard to do their best and enjoy doing so.

19. All subjects are taught very well. In part, this is because teachers teach subjects in which they have had specialist training. Lessons in art and geography, subjects that the full-time teachers have little experience of, are taught by part-time teachers with considerable experience and expertise. In all subjects, teachers are well capable of matching tasks to pupils' needs and capabilities and are able to make learning relevant to each pupil, even when the range in the class is very considerable. For example, in one lesson in mathematics the lowest attaining pupil operated at the level of a typical six and a half year old and the highest attaining pupil at that of a 14 year old. The situation is similar in the lessons in English. Many lessons are double lessons, but even in those of long duration the time is used very well. This is because lessons are planned carefully, the teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, and pupils' behaviour is routinely excellent.

## Assessment

20. Very good assessment procedures contribute to making teaching and learning very effective. Teachers have a clear idea of what their pupils know, understand and can do. When pupils enter the unit, good testing procedures provide baseline information that is used well in planning lessons. From that point, detailed records maintain very good information on what pupils have covered and what they are capable of. In English and mathematics, the progress pupils make over a year is assessed through repeated use of the same standardised tests. In both subjects, the gains some pupils make are remarkable and are equal to those achieved by the typical pupil over a three-year period. In the other subjects, good records are kept of what pupils have studied.

## Information and communication technology

21. Generally, ICT is being used well to support teaching and learning. Because the range of pupils' capabilities in lessons is great, computers are an important resource for supporting teaching and learning. In many lessons, pupils spend part of their time using computers. For example, in English they confidently use word processing and publishing programs to present information. They also use CD-ROMs to simulate taking tests such as the driving test and to practise completing the application form. In mathematics, the skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are reinforced. The pupils create spreadsheets and present data in visual form through graphs and charts. In art and design they use paint programs, especially to create symmetric designs. Internet access is readily available and pupils are practised at gaining information in all the subjects.

## Homework

22. Homework is set regularly. This works well in helping many pupils continue their learning at home, especially in English, mathematics and science.

## Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 11 lessons\*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	7	2	0	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The number of lessons observed seems small in total, but represents more than 80 per cent of all the lessons that could have been observed. This is because the daily timetable is made up of four lessons only, three of which are double lessons.*

*\* One lesson was not judged for the quality of teaching as it was taken by a teacher from another school.*

## The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It focuses on developing pupils' personal and social skills and literacy and numeracy. This makes it relevant because it corresponds very well with the primary needs of pupils. It is inclusive in content and organisation, and ensures equality of access and opportunity by meeting the diverse needs of all pupils.

## Main strengths and weaknesses:

- There is excellent provision for promoting personal and social development.
- The absence of specialist facilities limits what can be taught in many subjects.
- Extra-curricular provision very effectively extends and enriches learning experiences.
- Taught time is less than that recommended for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their learning on relevant national accredited awards.

## Commentary

23. The curriculum meets pupils' primary needs very well. Its strength is in providing excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills, including improving their behaviour and their attitudes to learning. The use of Victorian games to help pupils settle at the start of the day and during break times is innovative and effective. Playing spiral ludo, quartette, chess and draughts at the start of the day helps staff prepare pupils for the first lesson and reinforces the excellent relationships. At break times and lunch time, staff and pupils play outside games such as hot rice, chain tag and grandma's footsteps in the small playground. The games are played in good spirit, with strict adherence to the rules. During these sessions, pupils learn about their own culture, and they gain most from being in contact with staff in a situation that is less formal than lessons.

24. Lessons in PSHE and careers education include sex education, drug misuse and aspects of citizenship. These, and the opportunities afforded the pupils throughout the day, help them to quickly develop positive attitudes to themselves and to their futures. They enter the unit as troubled young people. Most leave to enrol on a college course, take up a programme of training in the armed forces, or go into a job, much more confident of their chances of success. This remarkable turn around is routinely achieved for most pupils.

25. The curriculum is extended and enriched by very good extra-curricular activities, including a programme of 'special days', the most recent of which have focused on advances in technology and on increasing pupils' cultural awareness. The residential visits to Whitby and the good mix of work experience placements are rich opportunities for personal and social development, although less use is made of link courses with colleges of further education than is the case in many other equivalent units. Many visits are made to museums, the theatre, and places in and around Lichfield that have historical and cultural significance.

26. Lesson time each day sums to 3 hours and 30 minutes. When calculated over a week, this is less than recommended. Pupils gain great benefit from their on-going contact with staff outside lesson time, for example when they take part in indoor and outdoor sessions of Victorian games. These are very effective in supporting the planned programme of lessons in PSHE. However, planning for these activities is not precise and does not involve devising strategies to meet targets for learning identified for each pupil. The result is that recording progress against targets cannot occur. The quality of the planning is not as rigorous as is the case for lessons. Therefore, even though these sessions make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and to the excellent progress pupils are making in their personal and social development, it is not appropriate that they be counted as weekly taught time.

27. Pupils are able to take national accredited awards in English, mathematics and science, art and design and ICT. They have no opportunity to show how much they have learned in the lessons in the other subjects, or to gain experience of vocational subjects such as catering and bricklaying at local colleges. As a consequence, although the curriculum meets the primary needs of pupils, it does so within a narrow range of subjects. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to demonstrate the full extent of their learning, for example to colleges and prospective employers, by taking a wide range of relevant national awards.

28. The unit is housed in a compact building that was originally built in Victorian times as a school. The displays show the high quality of pupils' work over every area of the curriculum. Large photographs of previous pupils, and their framed certificates of achievement, celebrate their success and act as an incentive for current pupils. The museum corner is tastefully displayed with historical artefacts and is visited by pensioners who were pupils in the original school. These features are attractive and unique, but the lack of specialist facilities to support teaching in many subjects limits what can be taught and, therefore, the breadth of the curriculum. For example, there are no specialist facilities to support teaching and learning in science, art and design, design and technology or physical education. Music is not part of the curriculum. Staff do their best. In science, very good organisation means that pupils do have many practical sessions, but in a normal classroom without the most rudimentary of special facilities, such as a gas tap. Because of this, it is

not possible for pupils to follow the syllabus for science that leads to the examination for GCSE. They are limited to taking the certificate of achievement. There are no facilities to leave uncompleted artwork out to dry, and because of the absence of a kiln and wheels there are few opportunities to learn about three-dimensional art. Design and technology includes only food studies. There are no facilities to support any work in resistant materials. Good use is made of the local swimming pool to teach pupils to swim, but the lack of any specialist indoor space or outdoor grassed area means that swimming is the only aspect of physical education that pupils experience. The headteacher's room is used as the 'quiet' room in which to counsel pupils, or as a place they can go to when they are troubled. This is not satisfactory.

29. Careful planning and the generous sums of money that have been made available have allowed the co-ordinators to build up good resources to support teaching and learning, especially in the core subjects.

30. The number of teachers and support assistants, including those who teach part-time, is generous. The range of specialist training and knowledge is wide and matches the curriculum very well. Over the timetable as a whole, more subjects are taught by teachers with specialist knowledge or training than is the case in many equivalent units. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making benefit from this.

### **Inclusion programme**

31. The inclusion programme began in September 2000 as a joint venture between three secondary schools in Lichfield and the Stowe Teaching Unit. Since that time a fourth Lichfield school has joined. The programme caters for pupils who experience difficulties in dealing with the demands and expectations of their mainstream schools. These difficulties may be reflected in a changing attitude to their work, in unacceptable behaviour, or in irregular attendance. Schools purchase up to two places per year at the unit. Depending on the difficulties pupils are experiencing, they will spend from six weeks to two terms at the unit, before returning to their schools. Over the period of a year a school with two places may send from six to eight pupils to the unit. Five selected subjects are studied, with the work being supplied by the pupils' mainstream teachers and taught by the unit's inclusion teacher. The inclusion teaching assistant is very competent and makes a considerable contribution to the very good progress pupils are making in their learning and in the development of their personal and social skills.

32. When they are at the unit, pupils are required to adhere to its rules and expectations. For example, they wear the uniform and are expected to comply with the procedures for learning and for behaviour. This has considerable advantages for the inclusion pupils, because they join a unit which is ordered, calm and organised, with very clear expectations for learning and behaviour and an ethos of support and care. They quickly realise that they are able to attend to their work more efficiently at the unit and also gain great help in dealing with the difficulties they experienced in their other schools. Very good tuition over all the subjects they follow, and excellent support, helps pupils to realise that they can work to high standards and that schools are not necessarily difficult places. This is clear from the end-of-week reports sent to the home and to the other school; these show the very good progress pupils are making in their learning and in dealing with their difficulties.

33. The links between the unit and the four 'feeder' schools are excellent. The inclusion teacher is a frequent visitor to the schools. Heads of year, subject teachers, deputy headteachers and the headteachers of the schools regularly visit the unit. The planning that takes place before a pupil joins the unit is very comprehensive. It includes the gathering of detailed information about pupils' approach to their work, their self-confidence and control, and how they relate to adults and to their peers. This information is used very well in guiding the experiences they will gain at the unit.



Record keeping is extremely detailed and covers each of the four areas in considerable detail. This is helpful in showing pupils the progress they are making, in guiding lesson planning, advising counselling sessions, and in demonstrating the effectiveness of the work of the inclusion programme.

34. In the unit, pupils make better progress in their learning than was the case in their other schools. They make excellent progress in dealing with the difficulties which were threatening to disrupt their education very seriously, possibly through permanent exclusion. It is not surprising, then, that the inclusion programme was judged to be of very high quality by the teachers, heads of year, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO), deputy teachers and headteachers, all of whom saw it as a very valuable extension to the provision of their schools. Inspectors agree.

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

The provision for personal and social development is excellent. There are good procedures for pupils' care. Pupils' views are sought informally and are satisfactorily taken into consideration.

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

- The excellent procedures for improving the behaviour of pupils.
- The excellent arrangements for the induction of pupils.
- The trust and respect pupils have for staff, which helps pupils listen to the advice and guidance they are given
- The very good guidance on career opportunities.
- The good procedures for securing the health and safety of pupils.
- The good level of care and support.

### **Commentary**

35. The ethos of the unit includes placing a very high priority on the care and support of pupils. In their previous schools, many pupils found difficulty in developing trusting relationships with adults and positive relationships with classmates. This changes soon after they enter the unit. The excellent induction procedures give pupils, and their parents and carers, a clear understanding of what is expected of them at the unit. The initial visit by parents and carers and their children provides a full explanation of how the unit is run. If admission is agreed, then there is a formal interview which judges the commitment of pupils to work hard to achieve success in their personal and social development and in their learning. After this, arrangements are made for the pupils to begin attending the unit.

36. Health and safety is a prominent responsibility of the headteacher, who takes special care to check the risk involved in all visits outside of the unit. Several staff have been trained in handling critical medical conditions. The unit has good arrangements for administering medicines.

37. The provision for personal and social development, and for its monitoring, is excellent. It is regularly checked under 53 headings, using as a benchmark the judgements of six members of staff at the pupil's previous school. Colour coding is used to give a clear picture of progress. The procedures work very effectively, especially in improving the behaviour of pupils.

### **Example of outstanding practice: procedures for improving the behaviour of pupils.**

Pupils whose behaviour caused them to be excluded from their previous schools behave exceptionally well after only a short time at the unit. Staff expect pupils to behave well and to take responsibility for their actions, and they help them to achieve this. Firstly, before the pupils join the unit the staff explain to them and their parents the procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour, all of which have been very well thought out. They make clear what is acceptable and what is not. Good behaviour is rewarded with points, which can be traded for small amounts of money, and points are subtracted for unacceptable behaviour. Staff assign these points consistently and fairly and with the agreement of pupils. Pupils know how they are doing, because at the end of every day staff count up the points for effort and behaviour in five categories. Most of the time the points represent improving behaviour and this motivates the pupils to try harder. The weekly summary charts regularly show better behaviour from one week to the next. Secondly, pupils trust and respect staff, and accept their advice, counselling and guidance. Week on week this shows up in the greater number of points they gain. Pupils' exemplary behaviour is testament to the effectiveness of the Stowe procedures.

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

The links with parents are good. The links with the local community are very good. The links with the local secondary schools which send pupils on to the inclusion programme are excellent. The links with colleges are satisfactory.

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

- Parents and carers gain a good knowledge of the progress their children are making, because of the quality of the information they are given.
- Annual reports provide a good overview of how pupils have achieved over the year.
- The link with the local Christian Centre is especially beneficial to the personal and social development of pupils.
- Parents and carers who choose to help their children to learn are helped to do so by the good advice of staff and the programme of homework.
- There are too few links with colleges of further education.

#### **Commentary**

38. Parents and carers have very favourable opinions of the work of the unit. They are inducted into the work of the unit with their children, and are required to recognise their responsibilities to their children by signing the home-school agreement. This helps them and their children to commit to the work of the unit and contributes to the progress the children are making. Most parents and carers are fully involved in reviewing their children's progress on a termly basis. They are well placed to do this because of frequent telephone contact with staff and the good quality information they receive, for example through termly and annual reports. Annual reports cover the subjects taught and comprise a tick-list, a commentary and a target for each subject. They are short and to the point, but provide a clear judgement on progress.

39. The links with the community are wide-ranging and include those established with a supermarket and a local charity, but the link which benefits pupils most is the long established link with the local Christian Centre. It provides very rich opportunities for pupils to develop and refine their personal and social skills. The Christian Centre is a thriving community centre that attracts about 70 children each day to the toddler group and many adults to the Tuesday lunch for the elderly. Pupils help prepare and serve the lunches and assist with maintaining the facilities of the toddler group. Many pupils have not previously had opportunities to help others. They gain substantially from this. They take pride in completing their tasks to a high standard and gain considerably from listening to and talking with the elderly adults in a very comfortable social setting. Staff at the Christian Centre value the help of the pupils and speak very highly of the sensitive fashion in which they conduct themselves.

40. The schools from which pupils have been permanently excluded are helpful in providing information on the pupils. The link with the four Lichfield schools which take up places on the inclusion programme is excellent. It is based on a very close collaboration, which includes team teaching in the unit by the inclusion teacher and teachers from the mainstream schools. There are also regular review meetings between the inclusion teacher and the relevant staff of the mainstream schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the unit are excellent. The headteacher is readily visible and is involved in all aspects of the work of the unit. He receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher and all staff.

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

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher inspire staff to do their best, and they operate procedures that allow them routinely to achieve this, especially those procedures to do with pupils' behaviour
- Collectively, the staff form a very effective and united team.
- All staff are excellent role models and quickly establish excellent relationships with pupils.
- The teaching day is too short.
- The accommodation limits the easy presentation of some subjects.
- The management group do not check on the quality of all the work of the unit, or ensure that the information received when pupils are referred to the unit indicates how its provision is to contribute to pupils' educational entitlement.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Leadership***

41. The headteacher is committed to fully meeting the needs of pupils by ensuring provision of high quality. He and the deputy headteacher are a formidable team. They inspire and motivate, set standards, and maintain conditions so that staff and pupils are regularly able to achieve their best. They are excellent role models for staff and pupils alike and lead and manage a very powerful staff team. The substantial contribution of the deputy headteacher to the smooth running of the unit is recognised by the headteacher and staff alike.

42. The headteacher has a clear vision for the role of the unit, and this is shared by all staff. It includes creating an environment which is ordered and organised and which recognises the importance of trust, respect and discipline. The considerable gains pupils make in their learning and in becoming mature and responsible are a powerful testament to the success of the vision.

#### ***Management***

43. There are very effective schemes and procedures which consistently cover all the work of the unit on a day-to-day basis. Through these the vision of the headteacher is made real for most pupils. There are many strengths. The unit is calm and ordered, much more so than is the case for many equivalent units. Pupils know that they are going to gain from attending the unit, from their lessons, and from the discussions and advice they receive during the periods at the beginning of the day and at lunch and break times. They respect and trust staff. They know that staff work very hard in giving them opportunities to grow as young people and to be successful in their examinations.

44. The number of teachers is small. The teachers, and the headteacher, regularly visit one another's lessons to team-teach or to support an individual pupil. Because of this, the capability and competence of each teacher is known very well to the headteacher. However, the procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning are not formal enough. They do not provide information on teachers' competence that is sufficiently precise to be used as part of the performance management procedures. For example, they do not include a discussion following a visit to a lesson, or the writing of a report or the recognition of areas for development.

45. Also, performance management procedures themselves do not operate as formally as they should. The headteacher has not had his targets assessed by an external accredited adviser. Target setting for staff as a means of improving the quality of the provision is only beginning. At present the quality of the provision is not disadvantaged by this, but the principles of performance management need to be observed more closely. Further development to this end would also provide the management group with first-hand evidence of the effectiveness of the unit.

46. Policy and planning documents are generally very good. Some teachers have responsibility for co-ordinating three subjects. They have accepted their responsibilities well, and the leadership and management of each subject benefit from this. Resources are good. They link well with the attainment levels of pupils and their teaching needs. Subject audits, presented as part of the process for recognising priorities for development, are satisfactory, but if they were more precise they would provide better information for the management group in judging the work in the subjects.

47. Planning for development through listing priorities in the unit's improvement plan is hindered by the way the local authority finances the unit, which does not include assigning a totally devolved budget to the unit. Because of this, the management group and the headteacher have very little flexibility in meeting objectives for development, when they are not certain that they will be funded.

48. It is testament to the excellence of the management that pupils regularly achieve their best work. Even after a short time, most pupils recognise that attending the unit is a purposeful experience. They quickly realise that the unit is a place where they are safe, secure and valued. Many pupils surprise themselves by producing work of a quality that is much higher than was the case in their previous schools.

### **Governance**

49. Governance of the unit is satisfactory. The management group has been in place for a relatively short period of time, about 20 months. Over that time, it has made a good start at recognising and meeting its responsibilities, but more work is required before it is able to fully account for the quality of the provision or help in furthering development. For example, its procedures for checking the quality of the work need to be more formal, as do those for overseeing the performance management of staff. Although the management group is well formed, it does not include a parent whose child is attending or has attended the unit. The chairperson, who is the deputy headteacher of one of the linked mainstream schools, leads it very well. He is very aware of the general quality of the unit, because his school uses the unit's inclusion programme to benefit up to six pupils each year. He has a vision and knowledge that helps the work of the management group and the unit alike.

50. At present, information the unit receives on pupils referred to it by the Pupil and Student District Referral Panel does not specify the role of the unit in providing for pupils' full educational entitlement. Some pupils attend the unit for less than a full week and require alternate placement to gain their entitlement to full-time provision. The management group is well capable of being an effective and productive link between the unit and the relevant professional staff and committees of the local authority and the District Referral Panel.

### **Accommodation**

51. The accommodation has strengths. The displays of completed work are of a high standard. They help pupils' learning by reminding them of what they can achieve. Pictures of past pupils reflect the pride staff have in helping them on to the next stage of their education or into work. The unit is very clean, and the numerous posters and artefacts, for example those associated with the museum corner, are respected by pupils. There are, however, more disadvantages than strengths. Curriculum opportunities are limited because of the lack of even the most rudimentary of specialist facilities for teaching science, art, design and technology and physical education.

52. The classrooms are of good size but two of the three rooms are used as walkways that lead to other parts of the unit. Pupils and staff walking through these rooms sometimes interfere with teaching and learning. The library is small but is used well. The outdoor play area is very small, but it is used well at break and lunch times. There is no 'quiet' room to which pupils can go when they are troubled, or when they need advice or counselling on sensitive matters. The headteacher's room is most often used, but this imposes difficulties on the discharge of his duties.

53. Inspectors agree with the findings of the local authority regarding the toilet block. They note that it is regarded as a 'priority item' for development, to quickly minimise any hazards to health and safety. . Similarly, inspectors agree with the decision to make good the surfaced top area and provide an entrance, which will enable it to be used as a car park. This will reduce the anxiety and burden of the many visitors who at present are required to park on a busy main road adjacent to a very busy roundabout, a situation which is not ideal.

### **Finance**

54. Every attempt is made to operate according to the principles of best value, although this is sometimes difficult to achieve because the local education authority manages much of the budget of the unit. To the extent that he is able, the headteacher has used the unit's money to ensure that it is an attractive place in which to learn and work and that resources for most subjects are good. The cost per pupil is difficult to determine because the number of pupils at the unit during the year varies and a proportion of staff time is assigned to the inclusion programme, which has its own funding procedure. In the judgement of inspectors, the overall cost of sustaining the provision is marginally higher than that of other equivalent units.

#### **Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>	
Total income	211,000.00
Total expenditure	205,514.00
Expenditure per pupil	10,816.00

<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Balance from previous year	6,113.00
Balance carried forward to the next	5,486.00

### **Barriers to raising achievement**

55. Other than recognising the ways in which the unit's provision can be improved and the disadvantages of the accommodation, there are no specific barriers to raising pupils' achievement.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE SUBJECTS

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 4

### ENGLISH

Provision for English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and of the pupils.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are rediscovering their interest in literature, poems and plays.
- The library and ICT are used well to support teaching and learning.
- The good assessment procedures help in lesson planning.
- All pupils are entered for a national accredited qualification; the best at English take the GCSE.

#### Commentary

56. Pupils achieve very well and are making very good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. This is because the very good quality of the teaching motivates them to do their best. Most pupils enjoy learning English. All English lessons are taught by teachers with specialist knowledge and training. They have a very good awareness of the national literacy strategy, the recommendations of which are routinely embedded in lesson planning. Assessment procedures are used well. Baseline testing when pupils enter the unit provides good information on what pupils know, understand and can do. Continuous assessment also helps in the planning of lessons. This information, and the small number of pupils in lessons, means that teachers know their pupils' learning and personal and social needs very well. They use this information well in planning lessons that are relevant to all pupils, and they match the tasks very well to pupils' needs and capabilities. The very competent teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and make a considerable contribution to learning. As a consequence, irrespective of their capability, all pupils are making the same very good progress. Their excellent behaviour in lessons makes a significant contribution to this. Teaching and learning are rarely disrupted, and learning occurs over the full duration of lessons. Homework is helping the learning of many pupils.

57. Speaking and listening are catered for very well. In lessons, and over the day, pupils are given regular opportunities to ask and answer questions, take part in discussions, or just tell a member of staff how they are feeling. For example, in one lesson, a video of The Great War was used as a stimulus to learn new words that reflected the horror and suffering experienced by both sets of troops. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin the very good support provided for pupils who have difficulty in expressing themselves.

58. Pupils are encouraged to practise their reading skills regularly by reading for information and for pleasure. The results of annual reading tests show that all make substantial gains over their time at the unit, more so than was the case in their previous schools. For the poorest readers there is suitable emphasis on developing phonic awareness, sometimes in discrete one-to-one situations and in teaching them how to tackle unfamiliar words. The range of reading extends from a slow and halting rate that is typical of six and a half year olds to the fluent reading of most 14 year olds, with good expression. Irrespective of how well they read, all pupils are valued equally for the progress they are making.

59. Pupils improve writing skills by writing for a purpose and to an audience. As part of the initial assessment pupils write about themselves, and this work is used as a measure of their subsequent progress in style, content, spelling, punctuation and penmanship. Recent topics include writing about life in the trenches, about Shakespeare, and about space and the planets.

60. A conscientious specialist teacher leads the subject with drive and energy. She has a very good understanding of English, and of the requirements of the examinations, the Programmes of Study, the National Strategy for Literacy, and methods that work well for teaching a class of pupils with wide-ranging capabilities. Marking, recording and target setting are used as a way of giving pupils detailed advice and encouragement on how they can continue to improve. All pupils in Year 11 are entered for a nationally accredited award that reflects the quality of their learning. The highest attaining pupils take the GCSE and the others take the certificate of achievement. Results of previous cohorts of pupils show grades that compare very well with those gained by pupils in many other equivalent units.

61. Resources for English are good. They help to motivate pupils to learn, and foster the skills of independent learning. The library, which is sited at the centre of the unit, is small but is used well. It includes a good collection of fiction and non-fiction books, which pupils borrow to read for pleasure or to study as part of their responsibilities in lessons. Computers are making an important contribution to the progress pupils are making. They are used very well to draft and redraft work and to present information visually, with the use of publishing programs.

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

62. Pupils are given very well planned opportunities to extend their literacy skills in the lessons in the other subjects. Classrooms are presented well, with good displays that include, for example, key mathematical and science vocabulary, well-labelled diagrams and samples of completed work. Having a small number of teachers helps. It means that all teachers, and the teaching assistants, know how well pupils are doing in English and what they are working on in lessons. They use this information very well to reinforce specific literacy skills in the other lessons and, especially, at other times throughout the day. For example, the informal discussions over morning board games and at lunch times are used very well to improve pupils' confidence in their speaking and listening skills, so that they are able to express themselves more clearly.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

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

- Mathematics is led and managed very well.
- Pupils behave excellently and are fully committed to their learning.
- Information from the very good assessment procedures provides detailed records of pupils' progress and helps in lesson planning.
- Activities and lesson tasks match pupils' learning needs well.
- The good range of resources is used well to make learning relevant.
- All pupils are entered for a national accredited qualification, and the best at mathematics take the GCSE.



## Commentary

63. Pupils achieve very good standards. When they enter the unit, their attainment in mathematics is well below that expected for their age. The best at mathematics leave the unit with good grades in GCSE and the others leave with at least a pass grade on the certificate of achievement. For all pupils, this represents very good progress, which is better than they achieved in their previous schools.

64. The quality of teaching is very good. Even though there is a small number of pupils in lessons, the range of abilities in mathematics is considerable. The teacher recognises this and plans lessons so that new learning for all pupils is built upon prior learning. The very good use of standardised tests provides information on what pupils can do and understand when they enter the unit, and acts as baseline information against which progress can be judged. In most lessons, pupils work on different topics and levels. The commercial schemes of work match their needs well, and they support learning over the very wide range of attainment to be seen in any lessons, from National Curriculum Level 1 to Level 5. The good range and quality of resources also help, and include such items as plastic money, mathematical games, and shapes and mirrors for learning about symmetry. Computers are used well, for example to record and interpret data through spreadsheets and graphs. Teaching is very well organised and managed, and the expectancy is that pupils will work hard at their learning. Their excellent behaviour allows them to do this over the full duration of the double lessons. Completed work, including homework, is marked quickly and informatively. As a consequence, pupils see the gains they are making and this is helping increase their belief in themselves and improve their confidence as learners. They persist well with their learning, even when they find it difficult.

65. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator knows the pupils very well and has developed the provision to match the wide range of pupils' learning needs. For example, those with specific reading difficulties/dyslexia learn mathematics from a scheme of work that keeps to a minimum the use of text.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Mathematical skills are practised well in the other subjects. As was the case for literacy, the small number of teachers helps, because they know what pupils are working on in the lessons in mathematics and they regularly use this information to give pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in the other subjects. For example, in art lessons the concept of proportion is explored when pupils draw a body, and their work on patterns consolidates their understanding of shape. In geography, the pupils easily understand measures of latitude, longitude, height, depth and distance as these relate to topography.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**, within the limitations imposed by the absence of specialist accommodation.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher has a very good knowledge of the subject, and great enthusiasm for it. He leads and manages the subject very well.
- Pupils are interested and curious. Through practical work they grow in confidence and self-esteem, learn to work together and to co-operate, and gain a very good understanding of the topic.
- The lack of specialist facilities limits pupils' progress over the full range of the subject and also their access to a relevant level of accreditation.

## Commentary

67. Pupils achieve very good standards in a curriculum that is compromised by the lack of even the most basic of specialist facilities. The very good quality of teaching is helping to make up for this, but only in part. Lessons are planned well, and prepared and organised in such a way that learning proceeds at a very good pace. Behaviour is managed very well, with humour and sensitivity. The good use of open-ended questions, for example 'What if?' 'Why is?' 'When would?' extends pupils' scientific understanding and stimulates interest. They also provide the teacher with a good idea of what pupils are learning and what they find difficult. Opportunities to learn through practical activities are limited by the absence of any form of specialist equipment, such as gas taps, fume cupboards or even a laboratory bench to work on. Nevertheless, the practical sessions that are possible are effective in helping pupils learn because they are planned very well and the expectations for learning are very clear. In these sessions, especially good attention is paid to recognising safety risks, and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for safe working. They work well with each other. New learning is reinforced very well by the lively discussions at the end of practical sessions, when pupils interpret the results and attempt reasoned explanations. Homework is used well to consolidate learning.

68. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning science, and their mature and sensible behaviour, contribute to the very good progress they are making. They listen carefully and are keen to answer questions or put forward their own ideas. They work well in small groups and share and handle equipment with care. All pupils are able to conduct a simple test, for example detecting starch in a variety of foods by adding drops of iodine to the food, and recording the results on a chart. When required, the pupils help clear up quickly and quietly and, routinely, leave lessons with a sense of accomplishment.

69. A teacher with specialist training leads the subject very well and confidently. The deployment and interventions of the teaching assistant make a considerable contribution to the progress pupils are making. A feature of science lessons is the deliberately planned links to literacy, numeracy and ICT, and the everyday applications of the topic being learned. Pupils are encouraged to take great care in using scientific terminology correctly when explaining their learning, in spelling new words correctly when reporting their findings, and in using graphs and frequency charts to display those findings.

70. Lessons in science take place in an ordinary classroom. The absence of specialist facilities limits the development of pupils' practical and investigative skills and their opportunities to take GCSE. This is disappointing, because the grades pupils gain on the certificate of achievement suggest that the best at science are well capable of gaining success at the higher level.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teacher's very good knowledge of all aspects of the subject.
- The very good planning, which helps in the matching of tasks to pupils' needs and abilities.
- The good range and quantity of hardware and peripheral devices, such as digital cameras and scanners.
- The use of computer skills in the lessons in the other subjects.
- The lack of resources to support learning in control technology.

## **Commentary**

71. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a discrete subject for one lesson a week. In this, pupils follow the syllabus for the certificate of achievement. In many of the lessons in the other subjects they gain from using computers in support of their learning. The good quality of teaching in the discrete lessons and the frequent use of computers in other lessons result in good achievement and progress. Pupils in Year 11 regularly attain Level 3 on the certificate of achievement. This is equivalent to the grades gained by pupils in most other equivalent units.

72. The teacher has specialist knowledge and training and knows the pupils very well. Even though pupils' experience and abilities are wide ranging, this information is used well in planning lessons so that the tasks selected match well the abilities of pupils. Because of this, all pupils, irrespective of their experience or ability with computers, are making good progress. Some have computers at home and are practised in controlling the screen with keyboard and mouse, in creating, saving and editing files, and in using the Internet. A few have very little experience of computers and are beginning to learn to control the screen. The teacher is helped by the good number of computers and peripheral devices that allow pupils to work individually at their own base. Moreover, the teaching assistants have sufficient skills and knowledge of computers to provide good support for pupils in completing their tasks. Most of the syllabus for the certificate of achievement can be taught from the resources that are available. The lack of specific resources makes teaching and learning control technology very difficult. High standards for learning and for behaviour are expected and routinely achieved. Pupils enjoy their learning and behave excellently. They show respect for the equipment and work hard to complete their tasks to the best of their ability.

73. Leadership and management are very good. Planning documents provide good guidance for further developing the subject.

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

74. Planning to use computers to support teaching and learning in the subjects is good. In many lessons, teachers and teaching assistants use computers confidently to support their teaching, and pupils frequently use computers to help in their learning. They are practised at using the Internet to gain information and use CD-ROMS well for new learning. For example in English, CD-ROMS are helping prepare pupils for the driving test by simulating driving conditions, including recognising the meaning of road signs, and by giving them opportunities to complete the application form. In mathematics, pupils reinforce partially learned skills through the repeated presentation of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division tasks. In all the subjects, they are able to present their final work through word-processing, often supported by pictures and graphs. The small number of pupils in lessons and their wide range of attainment make learning through the use of computers a powerful strategy for teaching. Teachers are well on the way to making very effective use of new technology.

## **HUMANITIES**

75. Only one lesson in the humanities was seen. This was the weekly lesson in history. The weekly lesson in geography took place outside the time of the inspection. No judgement is possible on the achievement of pupils or the progress they are making. However, discussions with pupils and teachers, and an analysis of the displays, completed work and planning documents, suggests that in both subjects the quality of the provision is good.

76. History is held in high regard. This is clear from the unique museum, which presents artefacts from 1833 onward and features a Victorian classroom scene with life-size figures of the teacher and pupils, the original school bell, punishment books and logbooks and other memorabilia. The headteacher is a historian with a deep passion for the subject and in particular for the First World War. Pupils made very good progress in the lesson on 'Life in the Trenches' because the teacher had very good knowledge of the subject, used relics from that time for pupils to touch, smell and taste, and told a story that fascinated all the pupils. They will remember their learning if only because

they tasted a mixture of cold beans and pulses, a typical meal for soldiers of that time. Very good questioning helped pupils to identify differences between primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, and the need for careful interpretation.

77. Geography is taught by a part-time teacher with substantial and very successful experience of teaching it to GCSE and A Level. The enthusiasm he shows for the subject stimulates learning. The planning documents are very good.

78. Despite the good quality provision and the excellent specialist knowledge and experience of the teachers, pupils are at a disadvantage in both subjects. This is because they do not have opportunities to show how much they have learned by taking relevant nationally accredited awards.

79. Through visits to museums and historical sites, and by work on the life styles of people of different cultures on different continents, lessons in the humanities make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

80. No lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology, or physical education. It is not possible to make a judgement on the standards pupils achieve in any of these subjects. However, evidence gained through discussion with teachers and pupils and through looking at planning documents, records, displays and completed work show that the subjects are effective in adding breadth to the curriculum. This is especially so for art, but less so for design and technology and physical education, which provide pupils with a satisfactory awareness of just some of the aspects of each subject. Design and technology includes learning about food studies, and physical education includes only lessons in swimming. Opportunities to learn over the full range of each of these subjects are limited by the lack of satisfactory specialist accommodation.

81. Teaching in art is by a part-time teacher with very good specialist training and experience of teaching the subject. The quality of completed work as shown by the displays throughout the unit is very good. Pupils who show a talent for art are encouraged to take the subject to the level of GCSE, and they do this by joining the lessons at a linked secondary school. This arrangement has worked well, but for a very small number of pupils. Pupils who take part in the lessons in swimming at the nearby leisure centre follow a syllabus that leads to an award of the Staffordshire Schools Swimming Service. Teaching is by a qualified instructor, and each level of the award includes both practical and theoretical elements. Lessons in food studies take place in the main room of the building and involve pupils in the practical activities of preparing and making food according to a recipe. No qualification is gained, and food studies is seen, essentially, as a practical activity only.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Staff are excellent role models that pupils aspire to.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to accept the advice of staff in judging the action they should take.
- The caring and supportive ethos, which includes very high expectations for pupils' behaviour, is very 'visible' and makes an important contribution to improving pupils' personal and social skills.
- The very good quality of teaching in the discrete lessons is supported very well by many planned and informal opportunities during the day for staff to counsel, guide and advise pupils.

### Commentary

82. The development of pupils' personal and social skills benefits from the headteacher's commitment to creating an environment in which pupils can be nurtured, valued and respected. This orientation to the work of the unit is fully endorsed by all staff.

83. The time allocated to lessons in PSHE is spent very well and helps to make the curriculum relevant to pupils because it matches their needs very well. Pupils make excellent progress in controlling their behaviour and in becoming increasingly mature and responsible. Many leave the unit with clear plans for the future. This is an important advancement for pupils because most enter the unit insecure about their futures. The very good quality of teaching is based on good planning and a very good knowledge of the pupils and their backgrounds. Using a counsellor from the nearby Christian Centre adds a different and important dimension to the taught programme. He has gained the trust and respect of pupils. Because he uses examples that have meaning for them, he is very effective in helping them make decisions and in changing how they see themselves.

84. Advice, counselling and guidance occur throughout the day, but especially so when pupils enter the unit in the morning and when staff have lunch with them. Lunchtimes are very enjoyable occasions. All, teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff are excellent role models and very aware of the contribution they can make in helping pupils to mature and to take increasing responsibility for their actions. The favourable staff-pupil ratio means that staff spend more time throughout the day with individual pupils than is the case in most equivalent units, and this helps pupils to quickly learn to trust and respect staff. This shows in the way they willingly approach staff if there is something they are unsure of or are having difficulty in dealing with.

85. Over their time at the unit, pupils become mature and responsible young people who are much better prepared to meet the demands of the next stage of their education or the world of work. The transformation is impressive.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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