

INSPECTION REPORT

MAYFIELD SCHOOL

Whitehaven

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112464

Headteacher: Mrs S Leathers

Lead inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th November 2003

Inspection number: 259809

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	111
School address:	Moresby Road Hensingham Whitehaven
Postcode:	CA28 8TU
Telephone number:	01946 852676
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Derek Hetherington
Date of previous inspection:	12/10/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mayfield is a school for boys and girls aged 3 to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, 111 attend the school, including five children in the nursery and reception years and 25 post-16 students. Ten pupils spend part of the week in mainstream schools. When they join the school, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. They all have statements of special educational need. The majority have severe learning difficulties, but 22 have profound and multiple learning difficulties and 29 have autistic spectrum disorders, far more than at the time of the previous inspection. Only one pupil is not white. Although pupils' socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are below average. During the previous year, nine pupils joined the school at other than the usual time of admission. The school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy School Award. It is a regional centre for MOVE – a mobility programme. The deputy headteacher is a Sports Co-ordinator, spending two days each week supporting other schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Design and technology
11437	Anthony Anderson	Lay inspector	
32217	Elaine Cole	Team inspector	English Art and design Music
32232	Sue Garland-Grimes	Team inspector	Science Personal, social, health and citizenship education Post-16 provision
32244	Barbara Mole	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History Religious education Special educational needs
10781	Robert Thompson	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Modern foreign language English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Mayfield is a **good** school with a number of very good features. Pupils achieve well and the quality of teaching and learning is good. The children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well. Pupils' personal development is very good. The school is well led and managed. It provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher ensures that the school's work is closely focused on raising pupils' achievement.
- Partnerships between teachers, teaching assistants and therapists contribute strongly to pupils' good achievement.
- The school collects very accurate and detailed information about pupils' learning and uses this very well to help them move on.
- The assistant headteachers and subject leaders are not yet sufficiently involved in identifying the very good teaching and helping other teachers to become more effective.
- The achievements of the oldest pupils and the post-16 students are not fully recognised by the examination courses available to them.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and work very hard during lessons.
- Links with parents are very close and support pupils' achievement and welfare.
- The school takes great care to ensure that all pupils are safe, secure and happy and able to learn.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection. There have been many developments but especially good progress has been made in the way the school measures and records pupils' achievement and uses this information. Standards in reading have risen noticeably as a result of changes made to the way it is taught.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Good	Very good

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. The children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well, as do those in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is also good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The post-16 students achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 achieve very well in physical education. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in personal, social, health and citizenship education. In the other subjects inspected – English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education – achievement is good. Girls and boys with autistic spectrum disorders or profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve as well as those with severe learning difficulties, because the school successfully meets their needs.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are also very good. They try very hard to do well during lessons and when taking part in daily activities. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are seldom absent unless they are ill.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and results in pupils learning well. The children in the nursery and reception years are taught very well, as is physical education throughout the school. Teachers often plan lessons in great detail, setting out their high expectations for individual pupils or groups to achieve. They are able to do this because assessment systems are very good. In the very good lessons seen, teachers insist that every pupil works very hard. Teaching assistants and therapists make important contributions to pupils' learning and achievement. Occasionally, the range of methods of communication (such as signing) used in lessons is too narrow.

The curriculum offers high quality and well planned experiences for pupils of all ages and abilities, enabling them to achieve well. Good account is taken of their changing needs as they move up through the school. A small number of pupils have very good opportunities to spend part of each week in mainstream schools. The range of external accreditation does not fully recognise the achievements of all Year 11 pupils and post-16 students. Because the quality of care is very good, pupils are comfortable and confident and able to play a full part in lessons. Links with parents and other schools are very strong and enhance pupils' learning and achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is well led. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very thoughtful and strong leadership. Management is also good, with regular checks on all aspects of the school's performance. However, the newly created assistant headteachers and the subject leaders do not consistently play a large enough part in moving the school forward. The action plans for subjects vary in usefulness. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and appreciate its strengths and weaknesses.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive opinions about the school. They are very certain that their children like school and that the teaching is good. They are very satisfied with the arrangements for settling in their children when they join the school and feel that they are treated fairly by the staff. Although a significant minority would like their children to have more homework, the current arrangements are satisfactory.

Pupils' views are also very positive. They especially enjoy physical education and sport.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to develop the roles of assistant headteachers and subject leaders in order to spread good practice in teaching and further improve pupils' achievement.
- Increase the range of examinations pupils and students can take, in order to fully recognise their achievements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well.
- Boys and girls, and pupils and post-16 students with different special educational needs, achieve equally well.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Between Years 1 and 11, achievement is very good in physical education.
- Year 11 pupils and post-16 students have aspects of their work recognised through external examinations, but many of their achievements are not recognised fully.

Commentary

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Good	Very good

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

1. The children in the nursery and reception years get off to a flying start because they are taught very well. They make particularly good progress in the areas of communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional development and physical development because their curriculum emphasises these aspects. In mathematical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, their achievement is good.
2. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils and students achieve well regardless of their gender or special educational needs. This is because teachers treat them all as individuals and make sure that they are provided with a curriculum and teaching methods that suit their particular needs. For example, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are offered experiences that encourage them to use all their senses to explore the world around them. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are able to choose from a variety of methods of communication – such as signing or using a picture exchange system. The pupils who might be able to cope in mainstream schools are identified and offered dual placements. Their achievement is supported because they are stimulated and stretched by the opportunities and provided with very effective support to help them to cope. Teachers are well aware of the needs of boys and girls and make sure activities and topics do not exclude any of them. Pupils regularly achieve their individual targets – for example, in English and mathematics.
3. Pupils' very good achievement in personal, social and health education is a result of a very well planned curriculum. Timetabled lessons are reinforced regularly by plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their social skills. Physical education is another subject where pupils achieve very well. This is strongly linked to the expertise of teachers, combined with the partnerships between them and occupational and physiotherapists. As a result, pupils take part confidently in lessons, with work pitched very accurately to challenge them to try hard.

4. In English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education, pupils' achievement is good. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils are successful in a youth award scheme at Bronze or Silver levels. Similarly, post-16 students achieve well in their courses. They gain accreditation linked to their 'Moving On' courses, but overall the opportunities for taking examinations are limited. Pupils' achievements could be recognised more by increasing the external courses they can take.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their learning, and their behaviour, are consistently **very good**. Their personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **very good**. Pupils' attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy their learning and work very hard.
- They are almost always well-behaved and considerate of others.
- Pupils' views of the school are very positive.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very supportive.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' growing maturity, self-worth and confidence.
- Occasionally, opportunities to develop pupils' independence are missed.

Commentary

5. Due to the very good relationships between pupils and adults, the atmosphere in school is warm and welcoming. In their responses to the questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors, pupils and students indicated very strongly that they enjoy coming to school and feel that they are learning. They are cheerful and work to the best of their ability, encouraged with humour and patience by the staff. For example, one Year 6 pupil with quite complex special needs was delighted to see herself featured in a PowerPoint presentation. She responded joyfully to the music and was very proud to press a switch to move the slides on. Staff take genuine pleasure in pupils' successes, however small these might be. Following the example of staff, pupils appreciate the hard work and achievement of others. For instance, after watching a dance display by girls in Years 11 and 12, a group of boys of the same age burst into a spontaneous, and well deserved, round of applause.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
117	4	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

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

6. Although there were four fixed-period exclusions during the previous year and many of the pupils have a history of challenging behaviour, owing to their special educational needs, hardly any outbursts were seen during the inspection. This is because the school has very good procedures to help pupils manage their behaviour. Pupils behave very well in lessons, during breaks and when out of school – for instance, during visits or at college. Parents feel strongly that their children are not bullied, and there is no evidence of this or of racial harassment. On the

contrary, pupils are very tolerant of each other and show understanding when their classmates need extra support. For example, they wait patiently for someone to answer a question using an electronic speech device.

7. In many ways, pupils are encouraged to become mature, responsible and confident. For example, pupils with limited mobility are helped to enjoy as much self-directed activity as possible, whilst students at post-16 are encouraged to be reflective and consider moral and ethical questions and articulate their thoughts and ideas. During a citizenship lesson, students considered natural disasters and those brought about by man, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In discussion with an inspector, pupils and students were not afraid to make constructive criticisms about, for example, the lack of a music room. However, the school has rightly identified that helping pupils to learn more independently and put into practice the skills and attitudes they are taught, are areas to be developed further. The children in the nursery and reception years achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. Staff challenge them consistently to be as independent as possible, within a safe and supportive atmosphere.
8. Pupils respond very positively to the school's very good efforts to promote their personal development. For instance, subjects such as religious education support their developing sense of morality. The staff encourage pupils to empathise with the misfortunes of others and, as a result, they try to make a difference, whether by collecting for good causes, such as the Aquabox scheme, or making 'angels' for the families affected by the September 11 tragedy. Cultural awareness is highlighted through the curriculum and activities such as visits to galleries – for example, to see Lowry's paintings at first hand. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to listen to live music – such as the classical guitar workshops and concert which took place during the inspection. Social activities at break and lunch times are limited by the fact that the school has no communal dining room and outdoor play spaces are currently unstimulating, following building work.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	9.0	School data :	0
National data:	8.5	National data:	0.5

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

9. Pupils' overall attendance is satisfactory and there is little evidence of them arriving late. The vast majority of parents support the school in helping to ensure that their children attend regularly and promptly. Pupils are seldom away unless they are ill. The few whose records cause concern are watched carefully by the school, with regular support from the educational welfare officer.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are **good**. Pupils are cared for, guided and supported **very well**. Partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are **very good** overall.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall and very good in the nursery and reception years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is often very detailed, with high expectations for individual pupils or groups to achieve. This degree of challenge is lacking in the lessons that are good or satisfactory, rather than very good.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed very well.
- Teaching assistants usually make very strong contributions to pupils' learning and achievement.
- Occasionally, the range of communication systems used in lessons is too narrow.
- Teachers (and the school's leaders) have a very clear picture of how well pupils are achieving.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (5%)	15 (26%)	31 (53%)	8 (14%)	1 (2%)	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.

10. During the inspection, the work of a small number of teachers was regularly of very high quality, whilst that of others was more often good or satisfactory. The key feature that distinguishes the very effective lessons is the teachers' determination that all pupils will learn as well as they possibly can. To bring this about, they firstly use their detailed knowledge of each pupil's current levels of knowledge, skill and understanding in order to plan lessons that will move them on at a rate that matches their particular learning needs. For instance, the speed at which pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are expected to learn is significantly slower than the pace set for those with severe learning difficulties. The very good teachers carry this same rigour through into the classroom, by demanding that every pupil works very hard. For example, in a communication, language and literacy session for the children in the reception year and pupils in Year 1, the whole class enjoyed sharing the story 'Where is Maisie?' responding with delight as a hidden soft toy played 'Boo' with each of them in turn. Because the teacher made full use of a wide range of methods to support pupils' communication – for example, signs, symbols and pictures, switches linked to voice recordings, eye contact and speech – they were each able to interact with the staff and resources and demonstrate their understanding. As a result of the comprehensive planning and insistence on each pupil being involved and challenged, a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties met one of his targets, by smiling in response to his contact with a fluffy duck puppet. At the same time, when prompted by a picture, a girl with severe learning difficulties used another puppet at the correct point in the story, demonstrating her developing reading skills and understanding. The children in the reception and nursery years are taught very well and this accounts for their very high achievement.
11. In less successful lessons, teachers are not as proficient at keeping every pupil constantly engaged in learning at a level that is just hard enough to make them try, without becoming discouraged. Similarly, opportunities to enable pupils to communicate may be missed. This happens less frequently when pupils are grouped in classes according to their ability in English or mathematics. However, when classes are made up of pupils with wide-ranging needs, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not always have time allowed for them to answer questions by pointing with their eyes or making a choice between two objects. The headteacher is very aware of teachers' strengths and areas needing improvement, stepping in quickly to address any perceived weaknesses. However, one reason for the decision to establish assistant headteachers and strengthen the role of subject leaders is her appreciation of the need to disseminate more widely the skills of the most effective teachers.
12. The expertise and experience of the teaching assistants are nearly always fully used in lessons. As a result, they make very strong contributions to pupils' learning and achievement. Teachers generally make sure that all staff are aware of the purpose of the lesson and their own role in it,

and this means that valuable teaching time is not taken up with explanations. Very occasionally, teachers and teaching assistants do too much for pupils – for instance, handing resources to them, rather than encouraging independence by expecting those who can do to fetch their own. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and this means that pupils feel confident to tackle tasks that might appear difficult. For example, in an English lesson for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders in Years 11 to 14, students volunteered readily to be in the ‘hot seat’ and submit to questioning by others. They improvised, used humour to very good effect, and responded as confident young adults. Unfortunately, the book used as a basis for their work was not entirely appropriate for students of their age. Although a number of pupils have challenging behaviour as a consequence of their special educational needs, as a rule, teachers manage their behaviour very effectively. For instance, they make sure that lessons involve suitable changes of activity, so pupils don’t have a chance to get restless. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are supported particularly well, with well established routines and activities providing a strong framework for their learning.

13. Parents feel strongly that their children are taught well. However, a significant number think that their children don’t get enough homework. Although formal homework is not provided routinely, parents are made well aware of their children’s targets and are asked to support them in achieving these, and challenges are set periodically for older pupils and students. A new homework policy has recently been drafted, which invites parents to ask for homework if they wish. These arrangements are satisfactory.
14. Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvements in the ways it measures and records pupils’ achievements, to the extent that procedures are now very good. The recent introduction of a commercial recording scheme enables teachers to establish each pupil’s next small step in learning in nearly all subjects, thereby ensuring that their developing skills, knowledge and understanding are provided for in lessons. Teachers have devised their own procedures for day-to-day record-keeping, which are largely effective. For example, in several classes, pupils’ targets are highlighted on daily sheets, which are made available to all staff working in lessons. As programmes or lessons are completed, a note is made of pupils’ responses or achievement, so the teacher can measure how successful the lesson has been and keep track of pupils’ progress on a daily basis. The outcomes of the detailed assessments and testing in English and mathematics are used to very good effect. For example, in these subjects, all but the youngest pupils are allocated to classes according to their ability. This enables teachers to more easily target lessons closely to pupils’ individual needs, helping them to learn and make progress.

The curriculum

The curriculum, including the opportunities for enrichment, is **good**. The accommodation and resources are also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils benefit from a curriculum that is well matched to their individual needs.
- Good account is taken of pupils’ changing needs as they move up through the school.
- A very well organised programme enables a small number of pupils to spend part of each week in mainstream schools.
- The curriculum for Year 11 pupils and post-16 students does not provide opportunities for all learners to follow suitable examination courses.
- Accommodation and resources generally support the curriculum well.

Commentary

15. The curriculum is well planned and provides a good range of experiences, which enable pupils of all ages and abilities to achieve well. The school does its very best to ensure that all pupils are fully included in every aspect of the curriculum. For example, very careful and effective

arrangements are made for meeting the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or an autistic spectrum disorder – for instance, by grouping pupils flexibly, according to their particular strengths and difficulties. The school environment is maintained so as to provide only low levels of stimulation for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, so as to avoid unnecessary distractions which might interfere with their ability to focus on their work and learn. Similarly good provision is made for any pupils with English as an additional language. Throughout the school, pupils' individual education plans are mostly very detailed and include targets for different aspects of their development, including English and mathematics, personal care and behaviour. These ensure that the curriculum provided for each pupil takes account of their individual needs, because adjustments are made to the content or the way subjects are taught. For instance, post-16 students with profound and multiple learning difficulties make very good progress in physical education, as a result of very well planned and innovative 'rebound therapy' sessions involving teachers and physiotherapists. Other pupils develop their mobility skills as an integral part of school life, within the very effective opportunities provided through a specialist programme (MOVE), run in conjunction with occupational and physiotherapists.

16. The children in the nursery and reception years benefit from a curriculum providing good quality experiences in all the necessary areas of learning. Because several Year 1 pupils are taught in the same class, there are very explicit links with the National Curriculum, enabling a smooth transfer to be made and supporting those of the Year 1 pupils who have links with mainstream schools. As they move up through the school, the curriculum takes good account of pupils' changing entitlement and needs. For instance, the school is effective in meeting its aim to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for pupils and students to operate in an adult world. Since the start of the current academic year, a number of students have taken part in a college course, such as first aid or health and safety, providing opportunities for them to develop their personal, social and independence skills and learn more about the world beyond school. The school offers several accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students. However, a weakness, identified by the school, is the lack of external accreditation to recognise fully the achievements of the school's higher attainers and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
17. The school operates a system of 'dual placements' for ten of its pupils, mostly in the primary years. This project enables the pupils, who are identified in conjunction with the local education authority, through the annual review process, to spend part of each week in their local mainstream school. There, they are usually supported by teaching assistants, who also work with them at Mayfield. The pupils receive a well thought out package of educational experiences, carefully tailored to meet their needs and supporting their academic, independence and social development. It is a very successful initiative.
18. The curriculum is generally supported well by the school's accommodation and resources, including the teachers and teaching assistants. The resources for physical education are particularly good and the accommodation for post-16 students has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Weaknesses include the outdoor accommodation, which provides only very limited space and the youngest children currently have no suitable outdoor play area. The library is large enough and has a satisfactory stock of books, but does not encourage pupils to spend time there. Despite the restrictions posed by the outdoor space, the school promotes successfully pupils' involvement in sport and other aspects of physical education. Together with visits and visitors, supporting many subjects and topics, this enriches the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. **Very good** support, advice and guidance are provided. The ways in which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school looks after pupils very well.
- The attention paid to the correct handling and moving of pupils is very good and is overseen by the deputy headteacher.
- The school's partnership with therapists effectively supports pupils' welfare and achievement.
- Great care is taken to protect pupils' dignity and privacy although there is no medical room.
- Pupils are supported very well as they move up through the school.
- There is no formal system to enable pupils to make known their views about the school.

Commentary

19. A vivid example of the way in which the school cares for its pupils is its rigorous procedures for administering medication. In addition to notification from parents, the school requires authorisation from whoever prescribed the drug, in order to ensure the correct dosage and conditions. All medicine is administered by an adult and witnessed and signed for by a second adult. As a result of these very good systems to care for them, pupils are able to learn in a secure, safe environment.
20. The very effective procedures for handling and moving pupils begin in the morning, when the pupils arrive in mini-buses and taxis, and continue throughout the school day. Much time and effort is spent ensuring that pupils are comfortable and correctly positioned before teaching begins and this means that they are able to concentrate on learning, helping them to achieve well. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately for lessons and educational visits undertaken by the school. However, there is no dedicated medical room in which health staff can hold clinics, although the parents' room is used for this purpose. This also means that there is no appropriate place in which pupils can recover when ill.
21. Pupils with complex difficulties are well supported by staff in lessons and breaks – for example, when attending to their personal needs. Staff know the pupils very well, especially those they work with on a regular basis, and have a similar knowledge of the strategies being employed to address those needs. The close working relationships with therapists adds significantly to this knowledge and contributes to the very good support and guidance pupils receive throughout the school day, enabling them to make good progress. In their response to the inspection questionnaire, pupils indicated strongly that they are given help when they need it.
22. There are good arrangements to help pupils settle into the school and parents very much appreciate these. For instance, children in the nursery and reception years are visited in their nursery or playgroup and offered 'weaning in' sessions. Similarly, older pupils and post-16 students are supported well when the time comes for them to leave school. Pupils and students visit colleges which provide courses for students with special educational needs. There are good links with the Connexions adviser, who is involved in providing guidance in careers and work-related learning.
23. Teachers provide timetabled opportunities for pupils to discuss matters of importance to them and the school improvement plan begins with the pupils' 'wish list'. However, although older pupils run a small 'enterprise scheme', there is no formal setting in which pupils can have their views heard and responded to. Discussion with pupils confirms that they would appreciate a process in which they could express their views and be more involved in the work of the school and its development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **very effective**. Those with the local community are **good** and with other schools and colleges they are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided to parents is of very high quality.
- The parents' group plays an active part in the life of the school.
- The school uses its links with the community and other schools well to support the curriculum.

Commentary

24. The pocket-sized newsletters allow parents to read about the activities of every class in the school through the cleverly designed presentation. Annual academic reports to parents are informative and the annual review process is well managed by the school and well supported by parents. Home/school files provide good opportunities for parents to be informed about day-to-day events and for them to pass on information to teachers. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of parents feel that they do not get enough information about their children's progress.
25. The parents' group meets every Thursday morning in a dedicated room at the school and occasional speakers are invited to discuss issues relevant to parents' interests. Several parents interviewed during the inspection spoke very highly of this provision which is well supported by parents who feel that they have a 'voice' in the everyday life of the school and that this has a very positive impact on their children's progress and achievement. The parents' meeting with the inspectors was reasonably well attended and the parental questionnaire was returned by almost two-thirds of the parents. Nearly all parents who responded are very supportive of the school.
26. The school has very good links with several local schools and an observed extra-curricular football training session at a nearby mainstream secondary school was well attended and very effective. The very good partnership with schools is a significant factor in Mayfield's successful efforts to enable several of its pupils to have lessons in mainstream schools. These arrangements were praised highly by parents at the meeting with inspectors. There are good and growing links with a college of further education.
27. Strong links with the community enable students and pupils to find out about the world of work. For example, higher attaining students have worked on local farms, at a nearby nursery and in an old people's home. In addition, the school has arranged for a number of students to take part in 'taster' sessions in which they shadow other people's jobs. Recent examples include safety workers at Sellafield and shop, travel agency and railway station staff. The impact of this good provision is to provide students with experience of the outside world of work and also to stimulate their own thoughts of possible employment in the future. The school welcomes visitors to enrich the curriculum and, during the inspection, all age groups were entertained by two excellent musicians who played classical guitar and successfully encouraged students to join in with a wide range of percussion instruments.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. Leadership is **good**. The management of the school is **good**. Governance is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership displayed by the headteacher is very good and ensures that the school is focused on raising pupils' achievements.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective, innovative and outward looking team.
- The roles of the assistant headteachers and subject leaders are yet to be fully developed.
- The leadership team, in negotiation with the governing body and staff, has developed a comprehensive and prioritised school improvement plan that provides clear strategies and a framework for development linked to financial planning.
- Subject development plans are of variable quality, often insufficiently detailed and not always linked to the school improvement plan.
- The analysis of information about pupils' achievements helps to ensure that they all achieve equally well.

Commentary

28. The headteacher's leadership is very good. She has high expectations and a total commitment to moving the school forward to achieve higher standards. Her strong leadership and clear vision have ensured that governors and staff know what they are working towards. This helps the school to successfully fulfil its aims and targets for development. The headteacher and leadership team have recognised the school's strengths and perceptively analysed areas for development. The headteacher and her deputy have distinctive roles and responsibilities. They complement each other and, as a result, form an effective and efficient partnership. The deputy headteacher sets a very good example to other teachers – for example, in the way she leads and manages personal, social, health and citizenship education. She has begun to share her expertise with other schools, through the Sports' Co-ordinator programme, widening the scope of the school's influence.
29. Following changes in national policies and the appointment of new staff, a larger leadership team with specific responsibilities has been appointed to oversee and develop the curriculum and teaching for pupils of various ages. The new assistant headteachers have not yet had time to fulfil the tasks and responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions. However, they have had good opportunities for training to help develop their leadership and management skills. Checking the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning is currently carried out systematically by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who give formal feedback to staff, identifying strengths and areas for development. This provides information on how pupils are learning and achieving and forms part of the performance management process. The formation of the larger leadership team is intended to increase the opportunities for carrying out checks – for example, on the quality of teaching – to ensure the sharing of good practice and reduce the variation in the quality of teaching seen during the inspection. Subject leadership overall is good and it is very good in physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Again, the school is seeking to provide more opportunities for these teachers to influence the quality of education in their subjects.
30. The governing body carries out its statutory duties conscientiously and is very supportive of the school. The governors make a significant contribution to the school improvement plan and, through reports received at meetings and visits to the school, gain an understanding of its daily work. They have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the part they have to play in bringing about further improvements.
31. The school's improvement plan is comprehensive. Where individual subject action plans identify clear targets and make links with the overall plan – for example, in English and mathematics – it is clear to see how they will impact upon school improvement and pupils' achievement. However, few of the subject action plans have clear targets based upon strengths and weaknesses identified as a result of evaluating pupils' achievements and observation of lessons. This lessens significantly their effectiveness. Whole school educational priorities are supported well by carefully considered financial planning. For example, several part-time teachers are employed to provide management time for senior staff, including the new assistant headteachers. The arrangements for ten pupils to have dual-placements, in Mayfield and mainstream schools, are very well led and managed by the headteacher and co-ordinator,

whose post is funded from the school budget. This financial support helps to ensure the success of the initiative.

32. The headteacher oversees the careful analysis of teachers' assessment of pupils' achievement, by using a system linked to a scale used nationally to measure progress. This has provided the school with a clear profile of pupils' achievement as they move up through the school, particularly in the areas of communication, literacy, numeracy and personal development. The achievement of groups of pupils with different special educational needs is analysed and the school is beginning to compare the achievement of boys and girls. This contributes to the good progress all pupils make in relation to their capabilities because teachers can see where there are gaps in their learning and the steps that need to be taken next. Additionally, consideration of the data has revealed to the school that the current range of external examinations does not meet the needs of all pupils and students. Accordingly, alternatives are being investigated.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1275078	Balance from previous year	107604
Total expenditure	1209175	Balance carried forward to the next	65903
Expenditure per pupil	10161		

Barriers to raising achievement

Currently, as older pupils leave, they are not replaced by a similar number of younger ones. The consequent uncertainty about the school's budget affects its ability to plan with confidence for future developments – for example, extending the mainstream links. Because of this, the school rightly has a reasonable reserve in its budget, to cover unforeseen changes.

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

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects.

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve particularly well in learning to communicate, controlling their bodies and becoming more mobile, and developing the skills needed for everyday life – such as feeding themselves.
- The teachers' planning for lessons and for individual children's targets is very detailed and effective. Children's progress is measured and tracked very accurately.
- Teaching assistants make a very significant contribution to children's learning and achievement. The teacher who leads and manages the class has created a very strong team.
- The time available is not always used flexibly to best meet the needs of individual children.
- The involvement of therapists is very effective and supports children's achievement.

The Foundation Stage was not referred to in the previous report, so progress since then cannot be evaluated.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Commentary

33. Children achieve very well, in line with the quality of teaching. Throughout the day, teachers and teaching assistants work consistently to help children develop the attitudes and skills they need for daily life and to help them become confident and eager learners. For each child, the teacher establishes detailed targets for aspects of their care, such as feeding and dressing, and for social skills – for instance, taking turns or becoming familiar with classroom routines. Plenty of planned opportunities are provided, enabling children to practise regularly what they have learned and then take the next small step in learning. Once each week, children who do not have special educational needs visit the class and join in the activities. This enables the Mayfield children to observe children playing together and speaking, providing good models for them. Owing to their special educational needs, different children are able to concentrate on tasks without prompting for varying lengths of time. Occasionally, teachers expect too much from particular individuals, requiring them to try to focus when they have clearly had enough of formal numeracy activities, for example. In these instances, there is a need to take more account of pupils' stages of development and use time more flexibly, by adjusting the balance between tightly structured tasks and opportunities for children to freely explore resources.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Additional main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of methods of communication is used.
- Resources and activities are exciting.

Commentary

34. This area is taught very well and children's achievement is correspondingly very good. All staff encourage children to communicate during timetabled literacy lessons and throughout the day. In turn, the teacher responsible for the class provides an excellent example for her team to follow. Although most of the children are not able to speak, they learn to make themselves understood – for instance, by using signs or a picture exchange system. During the morning drinks session, every child makes a choice – between milk and orange juice, for instance – by pointing with their eyes or presenting one or more cards with symbols on them. The staff limit the vocabulary they use and allow the children plenty of time to communicate their wishes. As a result, children understand what is required of them and do not feel under pressure: they are confident to try out their developing skills, making very good progress in their learning. Stimulating activities and resources are chosen to help children learn. For example, during a literacy lesson, three children took turns to throw a large dice, matching pictures and names of animals to soft toys, with the teaching assistants singing and signing alongside. The children were captivated and made very good progress in communicating and in early reading skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Commentary

35. Children's achievement is good, because they are taught well. As in the other areas of their learning, the teacher plans very carefully, so all staff know what each child is expected to learn during the lesson. This means that they are all able to contribute to recording what gains in skills, knowledge and understanding have taken place. The teacher then adjusts subsequent lessons, making tasks harder or easier for individuals, enabling them to build systematically on what they have learned already. For instance, during the lesson observed, the teacher led the whole class as they took turns to choose toys and puppets while the staff sang and signed a number rhyme. Afterwards, the children were divided into three groups to take part in activities matched carefully to their ability. There are also lots of informal activities to encourage children's awareness of numbers, colours and shapes, such as counting as the teacher blew up a balloon during a physical development session.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Commentary

36. This area is taught well. As a result, children's achievement is good. Careful planning by the teacher ensures that children are provided with a wide range of interesting experiences that help them to use all their senses as they find out more about the world. For instance, during the inspection, children took part in structured activities with water – watching objects float or sink, stirring in bubble bath, listening to the glugging noises as they held small bottles under the water. Staff encouraged children to listen, look and feel – for example, to search for toys they had dropped into the bubbles or to blow bubbles off their hands. In addition to exploring water, the children made good progress in learning to play alongside each other. All children were fully included – for instance, when a pupil with autistic spectrum disorder was reluctant to be involved, an assistant took some bubbles to her, so she could experience them as well. Children learn to operate mechanical and electronic toys and to use a computer, developing their knowledge of technology.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Additional main strengths and weaknesses

- Currently, children are not able to play outside.

Commentary

37. Teaching is very good in this area and physiotherapists and occupational therapists provide very effective support. Children achieve very well. Plenty of time is allocated to children's physical development, both their mobility and their smaller movements, for example, holding and using paint brushes or building with construction toys. The weekly afternoon of physical development is very challenging for the children, but their activities are varied – from sessions in the hall, with Years 1 and 2 pupils, to swimming or structured sessions for children with limited mobility. Because the teaching is so assured, relationships with adults are very positive, and the stimulating activities are closely matched to their individual needs, the children thoroughly enjoy these sessions and try very hard indeed, even at the end of a long afternoon. Therapists work in close partnership with the teacher. They regularly provide expert advice and individual support during lessons, enabling them to check how well children are developing and identifying activities and programmes to help them maintain their very good progress. A weakness in the provision is the current lack of a suitable outdoor play area, which prevents children having daily fresh air and exercise.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Additional main strengths and weaknesses

- Not enough time is devoted to enabling children to learn through play.

Commentary

38. Children achieve well, in line with the quality of teaching. The teacher provides regular opportunities for children to express themselves, through art or music for example. During the inspection, they handled and investigated a variety of orange-coloured objects, as the teacher signed and repeated the word, before painting with their hands and making a collage of orange feathers, paper and textiles. As a result of the teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement, one higher attaining child used her imagination while painting and pretended to be a tiger, growing and raising her hands. Again, a child with autistic spectrum disorder laughed when the teacher held up orange cellophane and pointed out that another child had 'turned orange.' Children regularly make music and have opportunities to hear and work with professional musicians. The curriculum is being revised and is already offering more opportunities for children to develop their creativity by learning through play – for instance, acting out roles in the home corner or choosing from a selection of toys, varied each day.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Eight lessons were seen in English. French is the modern foreign language taught to pupils in Years 7 to 11. Two French lessons were seen but overall judgements are not made about French.

English

The provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with several examples of very good and excellent practice.
- The National Literacy Strategy, suitably adapted and modified, has been successfully managed and implemented.
- The reading books used with pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always suitable for teenagers.
- In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievements are not acknowledged through an accredited course.
- Speaking and listening and communication are promoted well during English lessons. The full range of communication methods is used less consistently in other subjects.
- The introduction of flexible grouping arrangements and a daily reading programme has led to raised achievement for all groups of pupils.

Commentary

39. During the inspection, examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen. The good quality of teaching is a direct result of detailed planning and good use of assessment data. In the best lessons, teachers spend time and effort ensuring that planning and resources match the needs and ability of individual pupils. Consequently, pupils' concentration is maintained and effective learning takes place. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 with autistic spectrum disorders, profound and multiple or severe learning difficulties show real pleasure when sharing the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. They especially enjoy making choices to match the bears to the bowls of porridge and the beds. Year 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties study the poem 'Funeral Blues' and compare this with 'Presents from my Aunt'. The thorough planning, coupled with a crisp start and consistently high expectations, moves pupils forward in their learning. Because of the guided class discussion and skilful questioning, pupils are able to manage the sensitive topics in both poems thoughtfully and with increasing maturity. The pupils' independent written responses show the valuable contribution that the lesson has made to their personal, social and cultural development. Opportunities for pupils to be entered for accredited examinations at the end of Year 11 would acknowledge their hard work and achievement. This is an area for further development.
40. Teachers modify and adapt the National Literacy Strategy to suit their pupils and this has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers make clear to pupils the objectives of the lesson and, as a result, pupils know what they are expected to do and can get on with the activities. The Key Stage 3 Strategy guidance and resources have been used less effectively in Years 7 to 9 and as a consequence pupils have had less opportunity to access reading and writing activities more suited to their age group. The English team leader has recognised the need to provide more challenging activities and resources for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The library has a range of reading books for older pupils; however, these were not seen being used in lessons or incorporated into the reading programme.
41. Communication and speaking and listening skills are a focus throughout the school. The high level of co-operation between all staff and the speech and language therapist helps pupils to develop their communication skills and enables them to participate more independently in all aspects of their school life. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well through the use of language, signs and symbols. Those with autistic spectrum disorders or profound and multiple learning difficulties understand the routines of the classroom and express choices and preferences. In Years 5 and 6, pupils with these complex communication difficulties are encouraged to use signing or their individual picture exchange books. As a result, they are able to contribute to the lessons and make choices – for example, about their snacks.
42. Leadership and management of English are good. The role of subject leaders has been reviewed and adapted this year and the importance of the role in reviewing the curriculum and checking on and evaluating teaching and learning highlighted. A further initiative has been to arrange pupils into ability groups for English lessons. As a result, there is a narrower range of needs in each teaching group. This enables teachers to focus their planning and resources more

effectively and efficiently. Overall the outcomes have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. In Years 1 to 11, the introduction of a discrete reading programme timetabled for at least three days of the week, has led to pupils' reading skills improving well since the previous inspection. They are now good overall. The school has maintained good standards of achievement in speaking and listening and writing. The school has a library with a satisfactory selection of fiction and non-fiction books to suit the age range of pupils. However, the lack of seating or tables makes it less appealing as a place to develop reading and encourage a love of books.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43. Provision to develop pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in applying these skills to their work. For example, pupils in Year 7 made books as part of a follow up to a science visit. In the minority of lessons where communication methods such as signs, symbols and technological aids are not used consistently, pupils are more dependent upon adult support to complete their work and communicate their needs. The school has identified this as an area for ongoing and further development. Older pupils use their skills in discussion and in reading for information to help them to achieve parts of their youth awards. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to record their responses as independently as possible and so develop their writing skills.

Modern foreign language

French

44. In the lessons seen, good quality teaching was evident, leading to good achievement by pupils of all abilities. Pupils enjoyed learning and tried hard to get things right – for example, improving their pronunciation. Well prepared work cards and a computer program and touch screen motivated pupils – for instance, to interact with the program to practise using numbers, in French. Relationships are very good and, as a result, pupils responded very positively. Teachers and teaching assistants build up pupils' confidence which enhances their progress.

MATHEMATICS

Six lessons were seen.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Grouping pupils into classes for mathematics, according to their ability, is successful and enhances their achievement.
- Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure that the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities are met, leading to good achievement.
- Pupils work hard and enjoy their lessons.
- Computers are used well to reinforce learning in mathematics.
- Mathematics is well led and managed.
- There is a lack of opportunities for Year 11 pupils to take examinations.

Commentary

45. Pupils from Year 3 upwards are grouped into 'ability' sets for mathematics. This works well for pupils of all abilities, including those with additional special needs. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and, as a result, pupils achieve well. The school has maintained this high standard since the previous inspection. The curriculum, guided by the National Numeracy Strategy, is well established across the school. Checks on how well pupils are learning enable

teachers to plan lessons that closely match the individual needs of the pupils. As a result, pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with especially complex needs, make consistently good progress as they move through the school.

46. Teachers often plan lessons in great detail, ensuring that there are well-timed changes of activities. These motivate pupils and enable them to work hard for long periods of time. For example, lower attaining pupils in Years 9 and 10 made very good progress in learning about addition during a lesson involving them working in large and small groups, or independently. Because the activities were very interesting and required pupils to try hard, they lived up to the teacher's high expectations.
47. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and encourage pupils to respond positively. Their enjoyment during lessons is obvious. They are keen to participate and this enhances the progress they make. For instance, pupils with autistic spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed banging a drum when counting numbers up to ten. However, because the staff know the pupils so well, the teacher was able to judge accurately when they had been in their seats for long enough, changing the activity before they got restless. Comprehensive, detailed records are kept; these are easily accessible and used effectively to plan lessons and individual programmes for pupils.
48. Mathematics is well resourced and teachers use these materials effectively to motivate pupils and increase their achievement. For example, information and communication technology is included regularly in mathematics lessons. In one lesson, higher attaining pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 used a computer program to enable them to plot 'patterns' and find the next object in the pattern.
49. The teacher responsible for mathematics has collected detailed information about all pupils across the school. These well kept records enable her to analyse the achievement of individual pupils, or of groups, according to their gender, age or ability. A recent development is the formation of a mathematics team with representatives from the lower, middle and upper departments of the school. This is still in its infancy, but has the potential to enable ideas and information to be shared more easily between teachers, in order to improve achievement still further. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.
50. There is no suitable external accreditation for pupils at the age of 16. The school recognises this and is at present investigating different examination boards to see what would be most suitable for Mayfield's pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Mathematics is used satisfactorily in other subjects because teachers take advantage of suitable opportunities that occur. For example, in physical education lessons, pupils count the number of rebounds they do, and in music they use 'sound beams' to make music and count to the beat, using the switches and beams to change the rhythm of their music. Older pupils match the time to activities they pursue during the day or in some instances when they are involved in after school activities, such as football. In information and communication technology lessons, links with numeracy are often planned, rather than incidental – for example, when pupils collect data, such as the range of birthdays in their class, to prepare spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Five lessons were seen.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities are achieving well because of the good quality of teaching.
- Lesson planning is good and makes it clear what pupils are intended to learn.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn through first hand experiences.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to teaching and learning.
- The subject leader does not have opportunities to observe science lessons across the school.

Commentary

52. Pupils enjoy their science lessons and work hard, because teachers include lots of practical activities, helping to develop pupils' curiosity and ability to learn from their investigations. For instance, during one lesson, pupils in Years 8 and 9, including those with autistic spectrum disorders or profound and multiple learning difficulties, learned that some solids do not dissolve and can be separated from water by filtering. Through effective questioning, the teacher successfully encouraged pupils to think of ways of carrying out an experiment, making it fair. Higher attaining pupils were able to explain that using different quantities of water would make the test unfair.
53. Teachers make sure that pupils of all abilities are included in lessons and activities that successfully motivate them to learn. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6, many of them with autistic spectrum disorders and others with profound and multiple learning difficulties, were kept interested and busy by the selection of 'elastic' resources and activities available for them to choose from – such as trying on hats or braces. As a result, they all made good progress in learning about how materials can change. Teachers' thoughtful lesson planning includes what different groups of pupils are intended to learn. This means that all staff appreciate what needs to be done and are able to work together effectively to help pupils to achieve.
54. Like the teachers, teaching assistants know the pupils very well. Because relationships are very good, a climate of trust and security is created in class. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils and helping to keep them on task. For example, in a Years 1 and 2 lesson, support staff sensitively intervened when necessary to assist pupils to stir melted chocolate, withdrawing where pupils could be encouraged to complete the task independently.
55. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader is enthusiastic and has a clear view of how science will be developed. For example, she is keen for teachers to carry out joint assessments of pupils, to ensure common standards. She has built up a good range of resources for bringing science alive in the classroom. The subject has developed well since the previous inspection, through improved curricular planning and the acquisition of resources. There are currently no arrangements in place to enable the subject leader to see science taught across the school or systems for the sharing of the existing good practice in order to further raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons and part of a fourth were seen. Inspectors also observed information and communication technology being used in other subjects.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and effective planning, assessment and recording ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good, as is the commitment of staff to improving their own skills and knowledge.

- Resources are good, with a wide range of access devices and specialist software available to ensure that all pupils are included.
- Information and communication technology is well used to support other subjects.
- Those staff who are less confident in the subject would benefit from the time and opportunity to share the expertise of those with more experience.

Commentary

56. The school now provides timetabled information and communication technology lessons for all pupils. This development helps to ensure that pupils learn about all the necessary parts of the subject and are taught systematically the skills and knowledge they need. The best teaching encourages pupils to use computers in meaningful contexts. For example, during the inspection, one group of Year 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties were learning to use a spreadsheet to keep track of expenditure for a party, whilst pupils with autistic spectrum disorders or profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 5 and 6 made a PowerPoint presentation showing their favourite activities. These interesting topics captured pupils' imaginations and ensured their motivation and enthusiasm for the subject. The effective use of carefully collected assessment information enables teachers to plan for what individual pupils are to do and learn. Consequently, in the Years 5 and 6 lesson, one small group with autistic spectrum disorders learned to use a digital camera. At the same time, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties developed their understanding of how they can control their environment, by operating a sound-beam to produce sounds.

57. The subject leader has clear vision and enthusiasm for the subject and provides very effective leadership and management. She has supported her colleagues through a period of rapid development by attending a range of training courses and disseminating her knowledge and skills. Many staff are to be commended for the amount of time and effort they have been prepared to invest in their own professional development. This hard work has contributed to the good improvement made since the previous inspection. There is now a need to ensure that all teachers develop the skills and confidence shown by those with most expertise – for example, by providing opportunities for the best practice to be shared.

58. The range of resources is good, with a rolling programme in place, following an audit, to replace older hardware. When insufficient computers are available, pupils are encouraged to work in another room, sometimes alone or in pairs if they are judged to be capable of doing so, and this fosters their independence skills. The ready availability of adapted keyboards, touchscreens and other technological devices ensures that all pupils are able to achieve well, whatever their special educational needs.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

59. Pupils gain an understanding of the power of information and communication technology in many aspects of life because they are given well planned opportunities to use the technology in other lessons. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils with severe learning difficulties in Year 7 used the Internet to research information about a local football team. Word-processing is well used to promote literacy skills and enable pupils to present their work neatly, whilst subject-related software enables more able students to practise mathematical skills independently.

HUMANITIES

One lesson was seen in geography and none in history, so judgements are not made about these subjects. Five lessons were seen in religious education.

Geography and history

The curriculum for these subjects ensures that pupils build up their knowledge of the world around them and events in the recent and distant past, as they move up through the school. For example,

in Year 1, they learn about their classroom and their immediate environment. When in Years 9 and 10, they go on to discover information about Peru.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, and all pupils are fully included in lessons and achieve well.
- In the best lessons, teachers use resources effectively in order to make religious ideas and messages meaningful to pupils.
- The programme of work promotes pupils' spiritual, cultural, personal and moral development well.

Commentary

60. Religious education is generally taught in an imaginative way which enables pupils to learn at a pace well matched to their needs. For example, pupils in Year 1 and 2 learn about personal responsibility, through caring for a pet. During one lesson, part of a series about the Hindu religion, pupils in Year 7 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders successfully made clay pots, based on examples of Divali lamps. The higher attaining pupils worked independently and all pupils chose from the resources provided – sequins, glitter, ribbon, etc. They were proud of their work and were able to correctly identify their own models at the end of the lesson.

61. Teachers use a variety of methods to help pupils to understand and learn. For example, they use real artefacts with symbolic significance such as incense burners, textiles, costumes and music, sometimes recreating religious ceremonies from other faiths. However, they occasionally find the more abstract ideas about faith and belief difficult to convey. In these instances, pupils find out facts about religion, but not necessarily the messages to be learned from them. For instance, in an introductory lesson about Sikhism, Year 10 pupils with severe learning difficulties remembered that the card daggers they had made were intended for 'fighting evil', but the teacher did not attempt to shed light on what this might mean.

62. Since the previous inspection, the subject has developed satisfactorily. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Action plans for each part of the school lack detail. Teachers base their lesson plans on the school's detailed programme of work derived from a nationally published scheme and the Cumbrian Agreed Syllabus. This ensures that the subject continues to support the ethos of the school and pupils' personal development and celebrate the moral beliefs enshrined in the major world faiths.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Only one lesson was observed, so overall judgements are not made.

Pupils have weekly opportunities to learn relevant skills and knowledge. For example, in the satisfactory lesson observed, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 build on their ability to use flaps to reveal pictures as they created pop-up animals. The school has a good-sized food technology room, about to be refurbished, which is used regularly by pupils of all ages.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

One lesson was seen in art and design and one in music. Inspectors also observed a series of music workshops and a whole-school concert. Judgements have not been made about these subjects.

Art and design

During their weekly lessons, pupils have opportunities to practise a variety of skills, such as collage, painting and printing. They learn about the work of famous artists and the art of other cultures – for example, through looking at African masks and basing their own work on these.

Music

Music plays a very important part in the life of the school and staff take full advantage of opportunities to use music to increase pupils' communication skills and learning. Music is embedded in the curriculum. Pupils were observed singing during registrations and in lessons in many subjects. They show their enjoyment of music and respond enthusiastically to opportunities for singing and using instruments. Pupils listen attentively to different types of music, which they have learned to appreciate. Concerts, workshops and performances also contribute to the pupils' overall musical experiences and personal development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because the teaching is very good
- Teachers are very aware of each pupil's needs and have very high expectations for them to achieve.
- Pupils make very good progress in a specialised movement programme.
- The quality of teachers' planning and assessment is consistently very good and supports pupils' very good achievement.
- The hydrotherapy pool is a very good resource.
- Leadership and management are very good but the plans for moving the subject further forward are too brief.

Commentary

63. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Classes often join together for physical education, with the lesson led by the teacher with most expertise in the area involved – for example, dance. This is a very efficient use of their skills. Teachers have very good knowledge of all pupils, combined with very good subject knowledge. This ensures that pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. The very good relationships pupils have with staff give them a sense of trust and security, and pupils respond by working very hard, trying their best and showing at all times that they thoroughly enjoy their work. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Because they know pupils so well, they pitch lessons so that pupils are challenged appropriately without their hopes being dashed. Staff ensure that all pupils succeed in their work. There is an entirely positive atmosphere in all lessons. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 with a range of special educational needs, squealed with delight as they moved spontaneously to sound effects of windy weather and felt the movement of air as staff waved large fans.

64. Teachers plan lessons in great detail. Teaching assistants are fully involved in the planning and teaching, and therapists have a very important input to ensure that all pupils participate fully in lessons. For example, during a dance lesson, staff used signs and picture cards to ensure that all the Year 2, 3 and 4 pupils understood what was required of them – moving like a particular

animal. Assessment records are kept very carefully. These records are easily accessible, used well, and inform the next step in learning for each pupil.

65. During the year, all pupils have lessons in the school's hydrotherapy pool or a public swimming pool. As a result, they increase their confidence in the water and their general self-confidence. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their activities in the hydrotherapy pool. Staff achieve great success with pupils. For example, one of the youngest girls was initially afraid of water and would not go anywhere near the pool. Over a relatively short period of time, staff have enabled this little girl to enter the water by herself, safely, and walk across the pool with very little support. Her confidence in the water has soared. Another young pupil demonstrated floating with a float, and cheekily took off one hand and then the other, lying back and freely floating with an enormous mischievous smile on his face, illustrating great enjoyment and confidence.
66. Pupils with restricted mobility make very good progress in their ability to move independently. This is a result of very good multi-disciplinary approach and planning between the school staff and physiotherapists, occupational therapists, disability team and parents, linked to the 'MOVE' (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) programme. As a result, each pupil involved has a detailed individual programme which provides stimulation and experiences which are taught very well and are effective in enhancing their achievement, both in physical education, independence and lessons in all subjects. This programme is overseen by the deputy headteacher, previously the subject leader. She has established the subject's prominence in the school and has now handed over its leadership and management to another teacher, who is maintaining the very high standards.
67. Leadership and management are very good. However, the current action plans do not show clearly how the subject's strengths are to be built on. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection. All but the youngest pupils have opportunities to use community facilities, which support their personal development well. In their response to the inspection questionnaire, a significant number of pupils indicated that they particularly enjoy physical education.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Two lessons were seen. A variety of other activities were also observed that contributed to the judgements made.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very many planned opportunities to promote pupils' personal development.
- A very good quality programme of work has been introduced across the school.
- The subject has very good leadership and management.
- Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to think hard about their feelings and opinions.

Commentary

68. The arrangements to support pupils' achievement include detailed high quality behaviour management plans and personal care plans, in addition to social targets for pupils to work towards within their individual education plans. Sessions where pupils join together and take part in activities to develop social skills or share their opinions make significant contributions to personal development. For example, pupils in Year 6 successfully achieved their individual targets to develop turn taking skills and participate as a member of a group, taking objects from the 'magic bag' and matching them to their choice of two pictures. At drinks time, pupils regularly take responsibility for deciding whether or not they want a drink or snack and communicating this. They frequently achieve very well by vocalising or using their picture

exchange communication system to make a request. Pupils are regularly provided with experiences to develop their self-awareness. An example of this was observed in a religious education lesson, for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 about the first Christmas, where a candle was lit and there was time for quiet reflection.

69. The subject leader has a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. She has been involved as a team writer in producing published personal, social and health education and citizenship programmes of work. The very good personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum is taught across the school as a discrete subject, in addition to being interwoven through other subjects and daily routines. The subject planning is very thorough and helps to ensure that pupils build systematically on what they have already learned. The school has gained the Healthy School award and has a comprehensive programme of drugs education, sex education and healthy living. Teachers' plans and samples of pupils' work are examined by the subject leader in order to provide information to enable her to plan to further raise standards. Data on how well pupils are doing in personal, social and health education and citizenship have been collected for the first time this year. Observations of lessons taught by other staff would provide additional information about the subject.
70. In the regular timetabled lessons, teachers plan carefully to enable pupils to learn more about themselves. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Years 8 and 9 with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders developed their awareness of people who help them and how they in turn can help their friends. This theme was extended successfully in a citizenship lesson for pupils in Year 11. The teacher had organised tasks which required pupils to work together to solve problems – for example, building a vehicle from a construction kit and transporting a ball by the use of ropes. Sensitive questioning enabled pupils to reflect on what they had achieved, with responses such as 'Deciding what to do', 'Communicating' and 'Change ideas'.

PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

Thirteen lessons were seen across the post-16 department

The post-16 provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well to match the interests and abilities of individual students. As a result, their achievement is good.
- Students enjoy their time in the post-16 department and have very good attitudes to their work.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to teaching and learning.
- Students achieve very well in personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- The curriculum is distinct from that of younger pupils.
- Students do not always have their achievements recognised through externally accredited courses.
- The students with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have access to college courses.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop and practise independence skills.

Commentary

71. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In a minority of lessons, the teaching is very good or even excellent. In these instances, teachers stretch students to think and work that bit harder. For example, during a modern foreign language lesson, the teacher spoke in German throughout. The students, in Years 12 and 13, with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders have only been learning the language for half a term. Nevertheless, they responded in German to individual greetings and learned how to construct the names of 'teen' numbers – 'drei' (three) and 'zehn' (ten) to give 'dreizehn'. This hard work was enjoyable,

because the teacher involved resources such as music and German flag and used humour very effectively to challenge students to learn.

72. Generally, teachers make sure that work is carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students and each lesson builds on the previous one, ensuring that students' learning is a continuous process. For example, a group of Year 12 students were reminded about the previous week's lesson on data handling, and the teacher checked on their understanding of what had gone before. The lesson was interesting and relevant, as it involved graphs projected onto the wall, which were based on the popularity of boy bands. Teachers are skilled at matching lessons to students' special educational needs. One group, with profound and multiple learning difficulties, experiencing an excellent multi-sensory imaginary journey into 'The Galaxies', responded spontaneously through signing, vocalisation and body movements. The opportunity to use a range of resources encouraged and enabled the students to be fully involved with the learning experience.
73. Students' behaviour and motivation are very good, they display sustained levels of concentration and put a great deal of effort into working hard. The excellent relationships they enjoy with adults contribute to students' good – occasionally very good – gains in learning. All staff have high expectations of behaviour and students respond accordingly. For example, during a citizenship lesson, where students were to elect a chairperson, the teacher reminded them that they must be adult and not sulk if not chosen. Staff are very sensitive to students' needs and because of this they can guide them carefully through their work, with humour and enjoyment. The results of this are seen in students' enthusiasm.
74. Teaching assistants give very good support to enable students to remain on task and involved in their work. For example, in a Year 12 information and communication technology lesson, teaching assistants were patient and calm and gave clear instructions. They also included opportunities for reflection, when they asked, 'What did you do?', and gave students choices about what information to search for on the Internet.
75. A good range of learning opportunities is offered through 'Moving On' and other courses, such as literacy and numeracy. A wide range of elements is included, appropriate to students' ages – for example, creative arts, world religions, leisure and recreation, work related learning and careers education and guidance. The skills that students need for everyday living are promoted well through timetabled sessions which include meal preparation and domestic skills. Although students have access to a variety of curricular experiences, they do not all have enough opportunity to gain accreditation through nationally recognised bodies or choice in what they study in their post-16 education. Students' knowledge and understanding of being a good citizen are promoted well through activities such as a very successful visit to the Save the Children shop in Workington. Students explored roles and responsibilities in the community by asking the charity staff a series of pertinent questions. The teacher's very thorough preparation extended to providing pre-recorded questions for students who cannot speak, so they all had equal opportunities to be involved. The majority of students will, over the course of this year, have opportunities to take part in a college course – for example, in first aid or catering. However, the college does not currently offer a suitable course for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
76. In personal, social and health education and citizenship, students gain relevant knowledge, skills and understanding because the curriculum places a strong and appropriate emphasis on this area of their learning. However, in lessons in all subjects and courses, activities are often led and directed strongly by staff. Students are not consistently given enough opportunities to practise being independent – for example, by making a drink at break or lunchtime or making choices about their work. An exception is the leisure and recreation session for Year 14 students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, where they are helped to choose pastimes from the range provided – for example, planting bulbs, massage or arts and crafts. They are then required to sustain their concentration and persevere as independently as possible. The teacher meets each student's needs very effectively – for example, by extending the choices available or reducing them for other students.

77. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for post-16 provision leads and manages it well. She has sound plans for future developments and is keen to develop accreditation and offer more independence to students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
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	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
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	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

**** In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.***