

INSPECTION REPORT

SELWORTHY SCHOOL

Taunton

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123943

Headteacher: Mr David Machell

Lead inspector: Mike Smith

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th June 2004

Inspection number: 262381

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:	2-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	61
School address:	Selworthy Road Taunton Somerset
Postcode:	TA2 8HD
Telephone number:	01823 284970
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors	Mr Barry Havenhand
Date of previous inspection:	12th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Selworthy is a special school for children with severe learning difficulties. Around a quarter of the pupils, has profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and an increasing number of pupils have complex learning difficulties or ASD (autistic spectrum disorder). The majority of pupils are aged between five and nineteen and attend the school from Minehead to the north, the Devon border to the west, Chard to the south and North Petherton to the east. The majority of pupils receive school transport to and from school.

Currently, there are 61 pupils on roll, one of Anglo-Indian and 60 of white origin and where English is the first language. All pupils have a Statement of Special Education Need. There are six pupils in the care of a local authority. Inclusion initiatives within the county have resulted in a decline in numbers of primary aged pupils, who now make up 23% of the roll. This is more than offset by the rise in the secondary aged pupils and post-16 students. A consequent focus of the school's outreach work has been to support secondary schools develop appropriate accredited courses for those pupils aged 14-16 with learning difficulties.

Pupils are organised in eight classes, of which three specialise in provision for PMLD or ASD students. Classes are broadly age related, although any class may have pupils whose ages span a number of years. Post-16 provision is well established and there are active links in place with other local post-16 providers and post-school provisions. Work experience placements, experience of work, summer play schemes, after school clubs and residential activities are supported by the local community in both practical and financial terms.

Accommodation at the school includes three temporary buildings that have been in use for over 30 years. These dilapidated buildings are to be replaced by new temporary buildings in August 2004, despite proposals developed by the governing board for replacement permanent buildings.

Unlike the other four areas of the county, Taunton does not have a Learning Resource Centre. One teacher is on an exchange teaching visit in America, with her American counterpart taking her place for the academic year. The school has held the Investor In People award since 1999.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15303	Mr M J Smith	Lead inspector	Physical education
9052	Mrs H Barter	Lay inspector	
22391	Mr N Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History
2512	Mr B Emery	Team inspector	Science Design and technology
22178	Mrs K Robertson	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design
31106	Mrs K Khan	Team inspector	Citizenship Personal, social and health education Religious education Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, this is a good school with a number of very good features. Pupils achieve well overall with post-16 students achieving very well. Pupils and students make very good progress in their personal and social development. Pupils make satisfactory progress against their individual targets up until Year 9 and very good progress thereafter as a result of good teaching and effective support from teaching assistants and extremely good relationships with all staff. The headteacher has correctly identified a number of areas for change and development to increase the effectiveness of the school. All staff are dedicated and committed to school improvement. There are aspects of curriculum management, its delivery and aspects of school self-evaluation and analysis that require improvement. Provision and opportunities for post-16 students are particularly good. Accommodation has been imaginatively adapted and substantially improved, although there is still a lack of specialist provision that prevents further improvement in some curriculum areas and overall it is still unsatisfactory. The temporary classrooms are obsolete and their replacements are scheduled for the summer 2004. The school is successful in meeting most of its agreed aims and currently provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Hard working teachers, with very able support staff help pupils to learn successfully, improve communication skills and become confident, mature young adults.
- Overall, teaching and learning is good. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupil achievement.
- The headteacher is fully supported by all staff, governors and parents and ensures that everyone feels valued for their work in the school. Parent links are very good.
- Governors know the school very well, are fully supportive of its work and fulfill their statutory requirements.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and social skills are the direct result of positive and carefully structured support; they clearly enjoy being in school.
- Relationships between all staff and pupils are excellent and the care and pupil welfare is good.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good and community links are excellent.
- Overall curriculum provision requires further development to effectively meet the needs of all pupils, as does the role of the subject coordinators. In addition, the current class grouping of pupils does not support age related pupil progress or curriculum continuity.
- Assessment procedures do not consistently or constructively inform planning. Recorded data needs to be more effectively analysed to contribute to improvement strategies and consequent school actions
- The current lack of specialist accommodation restricts some areas of curriculum development, as well as movement in classrooms and around the school. It is unsatisfactory.

Since the last inspection the school has improved in most areas. It has made satisfactory progress overall. Importantly, the quality of education, teaching and learning and pupil achievement has improved. There is still a need to improve curriculum monitoring and the development of subject coordinators. The school is well aware of the need to improve these areas.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 6	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 9	Satisfactory	Very good
Year 11	Very good	Very good
Year 13	Very good	Very good

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress as they go through the school, up until they enter post-16 provision when their achievement is very good. All pupils are included in all activities and there are no variations in standards or progress. Pupils' progress is consistently good where they increasingly and effectively develop their communication skills. Staff help those pupils who are able, to achieve very well in speaking and listening. Pupils' achievement is good in mathematics, physical education, geography and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. Achievement at 16 is good and at post-16 is very good. Students gain creditable passes in a range of relevant vocational courses.

Pupils' moral and social development is very good and their cultural and spiritual development is good. A harmonious and productive atmosphere has been created where pupils feel valued and where they are well prepared for life after school. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in their lessons and respond very well to the positive culture. Attendance is very good, as is pupil punctuality. Pupils love coming to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the school provides **good** quality education. Pupils learn successfully and achieve appropriately. Teaching is **good** and often it is **very good**. Teaching assistants give very good support and team work is a strength. Staff know pupils very well and ensure that their special education needs, including those of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or who have aspects of ASD (autistic spectrum disorders), are met. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a stimulating range of additional activities provided by learning opportunities outside of school, although it does require a review to ensure it is appropriately challenging for all pupils. Pupil care and welfare is good and pupil support and guidance is very good. Pupils work and play in a safe environment, where relationships are excellent and where they trust all staff to care for them properly. There are very good partnerships with parents and with other schools and colleges and excellent links with the wider community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is good and he has a strong commitment to the improvement of the school. Day-to-day management ensures the smooth and efficient running of the school and the positive learning environment that is effectively supported by all staff. Team work is a strength and all staff are very good role models and offer high level commitment and support to pupils. Governors have a clear idea of the schools' strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in the strategic management and monitoring of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely happy with all aspects of the school and fully support the headteacher and all the staff. They know the individual needs of their children are very well known and their progress is greatly appreciated. Pupils are exceptionally happy in school. They particularly like their teachers and all activities offered to them, particularly swimming and trips outside of school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop the curriculum more widely to effectively meet the needs of all pupils and ensure the role of all subject leaders is fully developed to include the monitoring of the subject across the school. In addition reorganise the current class grouping of pupils so that curriculum progression and pupil progress is more easily assured.
- Ensure that assessment procedures are more consistently and constructively used to inform curriculum and lesson planning.
- Ensure that any recorded data is effectively analysed and contributes to improvement strategies and consequent school actions.
- Continue to pursue improvements to the school accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' progress and achievement is satisfactory overall with achievement in post-16 being very good. All pupils achieve very well in their personal and social development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with additional special needs make good progress.
- All pupils' achievements prepare them very well for developing their independence skills beyond school.
- Lack of moderation in the use of the P-scales assessment process across the school means assessment data is not yet accurate enough to secure standards against national norms.
- There is sometimes a lack of challenge for higher-achieving pupils.

Commentary

1. As at the last inspection, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and achieve well in a number of subjects. Pupils make satisfactory progress over time as they move through the school from primary to post-16. The best progress is in relation to their personal, social and communication skills which are consistently reinforced across the curriculum. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is a core subject and this has a significant impact on achievement in this area. Pupils with complex needs make good progress through highly individual programmes of study and dedicated one-to-one support staff who are very familiar with how to work with them and support their learning. There are no differences in the progress of boys or girls. Pupils in the care of the local authority also make satisfactory progress in achieving their individual curriculum targets.

2. Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills, mathematics, physical education, geography and in their personal, social and health education and in post-16 overall. Signing is generally used well and together with the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), it effectively helps pupils to understand language. Speech and language therapists work effectively with staff to devise language programmes for pupils so that they are able to improve their learning in all subjects.

3. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English, science, art, music, religious education, history, design and technology and information and communication technology. Staff expectations of higher attaining pupils could be higher and currently in some lessons there is a lack of specifically challenging activities. None of the pupils are entered for National Curriculum tests. The fourteen to nineteen year olds continue to achieve success in OCR accredited courses. Nine students each achieved nine National Skills Profiles modules at first grade and twenty one students achieved a total of seventy two modules in Accreditation for Life and Living.

4. The very good personal and social development and behaviour are the outcomes of very high quality support and encouragement from the whole staff team. This means that most pupils become confident, mature young adults. Many of the students are confident communicators who enjoy responding to questions and putting forward their own ideas.

5. The main reason why achievement in the school is satisfactory overall and not better, is because of the mixed year groupings for delivering the curriculum in classes and the lack of clarity by teaching staff using the P-scales for assessment purposes. Pupils from different year groups follow the same curriculum which is not clearly defined or balanced, making monitoring and evaluation of individuals' progress over time difficult. Further, the use of the assessment data is not totally reliable because of the variability and lack of whole school moderation in how individual teachers measure pupil achievement in P-scales. There is no clear and effective system indicating

how individual pupils make progress against curriculum targets appropriate for their year group. Pupils who are able to, are not involved in setting their own targets and are unable to say what they are aiming to achieve. The school does not use assessment effectively to set realistic and challenging targets for particular year groups.

6. In lessons, there are some links with other areas of the curriculum such as personal and social education, however there are no formal cross-curricular opportunities for literacy or numeracy strategies in raising achievement. Digital cameras are used effectively to support and record pupils' experiences. A variety of communication systems are used for pupils with complex needs which support their overall language and communication development.

7. Inadequate premises inhibit the organisation of pupils into classes to their best advantage and the teaching of specialist subjects such as technology, science and the arts. This inevitably contributes to a negative impact on pupil standards achieved in these areas.

Pupils' attitudes, values, and other personal qualities

8. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to their learning are very good. Their social and moral development is very good and their spiritual and cultural development are good. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' relationships with each other and with staff are excellent.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and in situations outside school is very good.
- Pupils' have a very positive attitude to school and towards learning.

Commentary

9. Pupils behave very well both in school and in activities out of school. In lessons they listen to their teachers and support staff and indicate that they enjoy lessons by the things they say, their signing, smiling and other indicators, which because of the excellent relationships with staff, are picked up very quickly and appropriately reinforced. As a result, the ethos in lessons is excellent and pupils work confidently and securely in an atmosphere free from any form of harassment. The small number of pupils with challenging behaviour make good progress in their learning, respond to staff well and learn to manage their own behaviour. All staff consistently reinforce the difference between right and wrong and point out to pupils how their actions could make another person unhappy. In out of school activities, pupils behave very well and mix very well socially with members of the public.

10. Pupils enjoy being fully involved in lessons and try very hard to do their best and please staff. They indicate that they enjoy each others' company, for example, in a post-16 lesson the group remaining in school was delighted when the rest of the class returned to join them for a lunch they had made for them. They clearly enjoy being at school. All staff encourage pupils to be independent and take on responsibility, for example, taking registers to the office and during the whole school visit to a theme park when the teacher made it very clear to a mixed group of Year 11 and post-16 students that they were expected to explore the site on their own and plan the activities they wanted to do.

11. Spiritual awareness is raised during religious education lessons and in the attempts staff make to present activities of which pupils will be in awe of, for example, during an assembly pupils enjoyed the story of the 'Thirsty Crow' and the way in which it was able to reach the water in a jug by adding oranges to displace the water and make it rise up the jug. In another lesson, Year 10 and 11 pupils were delighted with the discoveries they made in a study of 'life and living things', that is, collecting woodlice, insects and worms and examining them under a microscope. Through their work in PHSE, pupil's personal development is promoted very well. They study questions of right and wrong and safe and appropriate ways to behave in different settings. The oldest pupils and students at the school display very mature attitudes and behaviour in a wide range of settings. As at

the time of the last inspection, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development is a strength of the school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	School data	0
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

12. Pupils and students attend very well at school and there is no unauthorised absence. They come to school regularly because they enjoy it very much and do not want to miss their lessons and activities. Their punctuality is dependent upon transport, but it is mostly very good and there are few delays in the morning. Transport escorts are very effective in relaying messages between home and school, so the school rarely has to follow up unexplained absences. Parents value the education provided for their children and ensure that they come to school whenever they can. There have been no exclusions over the past year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

13. The overall quality of education is good. The school thinks carefully about how the individual and personal needs of individual pupils can be met. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with very good use made of external visits and members of the community. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The level of care and welfare provided is good and there are very good relationships with parents (who hold the school in high esteem). There are excellent links with the community that have a considerable impact on pupils' personal growth and progress.

Teaching and learning

14. The quality of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and generally adapt lessons well to suit individual needs. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is generally good and teaching is enriched by imaginative and interesting activities. The community is well used to support pupils' learning.
- The quality of teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures the needs of all pupils are fully supported.
- Teaching is very good at supporting pupils' progress in their general communication skills.
- Although assessment is well used to respond to individual needs it does not consistently inform curriculum or lesson planning.

Commentary

15. Teaching and learning are consistently good across the year groups which is an improvement since the last inspection and particularly within the subjects of mathematics, science, physical education, geography, personal and social education and the post-16 provision.

16. Pupils' physical, personal and social development is good because of the stimulating teaching within the school and the opportunities that are presented within the community. Parents support the judgement that teaching is good and that teachers and teaching assistants know their children's needs. The school puts a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' communication skills so that they can play a part in all that happens in the school. There is increasing and effective

support for teaching communication skills by the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication Symbols).

17. Many of the staff are competent signers and are able to use their skill to make lessons and other school occasions accessible for pupils. For example, school assemblies, story telling and general communication are well supported by signing and all staff and many pupils sign during the singing of familiar songs. It is this consistency across the school which encourages learning and places value on individual choices.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
	7 (22%)	17 (53%)	8 (25%)			

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.

18. The intentions, aims and approaches of the good teaching and learning policy are evident in most classrooms. Very good relationships and concern for individual needs are clearly apparent in lessons. Subjects are well linked so that parents and pupils can see the connections of topics and the relevance of reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills. However, the national literacy strategy (NLS) and the national numeracy strategy (NNS) are not consistently evident in planning or delivery, although there is good practice in the school which should be more widely shared.

19. Teaching and learning are good when teachers effectively use the local community. For example, pupils walk to the shops to select items already discussed in school. These walks use the parks well to back up lessons on trees, insects and rivers. Teaching includes supporting pupils' self-esteem and pupils are always keen to take part. Pupils trust their teachers and support staff and they accept the challenges when they are asked to try new activities. For example, a pupil who had been afraid to use a climbing frame was delighted to overcome this and gain the praise of the adult supporting him.

20. Teachers and teaching assistants plan carefully to meet pupils' individual targets and use their good knowledge of the pupils to match activities to targets. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and the impact of each day is evaluated and discussed by the teaching assistants in staff meetings. This helps towards improving the quality of provision by sharing practice and ideas and enables staff to examine how effective lessons are.

21. Teachers have good subject knowledge, although currently there appears to be little opportunity within the design and technology curriculum for teachers to work with resistant materials. Teachers also have very good knowledge of a wide range of special educational needs including ASD, sensory impairment and behavioural difficulties ensuring these pupils have appropriate support for their learning and personal development. Staff, including teaching assistants, are looking continually to improve their knowledge and skills to benefit pupils as much as they can. Currently, there has been insufficient sharing of the very good practices, including behaviour management, within individual classrooms through lesson observation or joint teaching. This was apparent where teaching was less effective. However, teachers are generous in the time and support they give to colleagues informally, during training days and in their regular training sessions in school.

22. The good use of resources, some very imaginatively adapted by teachers, makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers are very good at using a wide range of multi-sensory resources to support pupils' learning and it is clear that pupils enjoy this aspect of their learning. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons and the positive relationships with teachers and support staff are obvious. This helps them to achieve well. *'If I can't do it, I ask for help and she helps me,'* said one boy. However, some more able pupils could be challenged more and encouraged to take a larger

part in their own learning. Pupils are not involved as some could be, in helping to set and review their own targets.

23. The purposeful activities organised by most teachers ensure that learning is fun, which is confirmed by pupils' laughter and enthusiasm in the classrooms. For example, in a physical education lesson (indoor skittles) in the hall, a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties was able to engage in the activity because of the imaginative planning, use of resources and the skilled support of all staff ensuring that individual needs were met. Staff and pupils had fun.

24. Assessment of pupils' learning and guidance to enable them to improve is not yet fully developed in all subject areas across the school. Overall, ongoing feedback to pupils is encouraging and positive, but does not always have a strong sense of the next step in learning for them. However, most lessons end with the celebration of pupil success. Marking is not generally used to analyse achievement and set new targets. The school has made an encouraging start in systematically tracking pupils' progress through P-scales, although there is a need to ensure that levels of achievement are agreed by all teachers. Currently, pupil assessment is not consistently informing curriculum and lesson planning or ensuring the accurate recording of pupil progression from year to year.

The curriculum

25. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for pupils is satisfactory overall and good for students in post-16. There is a very good range of activities that enrich pupils' learning. Poor buildings play a significant part in hindering achievement in those subjects requiring specialist accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning does not follow national curriculum programmes of study closely enough and the organisation of classes impedes the delivery of appropriate programmes of study.
- There is a lack of specialist facilities for science and creative subjects.
- Provision for post-16 pupils is good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- A very wide range of interesting and motivating activities enriches pupils' learning during the school day, after school, and through links with other schools, colleges and the community.
- Highly effective relationships ensure that all pupils settle into school, learn, and prepare for leaving.

Commentary

26. Curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection and an appropriate range of learning activities is now provided for pupils. In most subjects the planning that teachers follow ensures that pupils gain in knowledge sufficiently as they move through the school. However, planning is based too much around P- levels which tends to narrow pupils' access to national curriculum programmes of study. It would help to ensure that pupils continue to make sufficient progress within each subject if plans, based more directly on the programmes of study, were drawn up for each stage in pupils' learning. Difficulties are further compounded by the current class groupings, which often cover a very wide age-range. This raises complications in delivering appropriate programmes of study in a variety of subjects.

27. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory and presents a barrier to curriculum improvement. There is a lack of general office and administrative space where, for example, visiting professionals can interact with pupils and staff. Changing facilities are inadequate and there are few facilities where therapy and other treatments can be applied in privacy. Access to a number of areas is only possible by walking through others, which can be distracting and inconvenient. The lack of specialist accommodation has a significant impact on learning. This affects pupils' achievement in science, design and technology and art and design. In spite of good

efforts by the school to improve and keep the environment stimulating and safe, the accommodation for learning is overall inadequate.

28. Provision for students at post-16 is good, since learning opportunities are tailored well to meet their needs and abilities. Students undertake work experience and lessons promote the practical application of skills to prepare them well for life after school. They follow a course that provides them with accreditation in important life skills. They attend college to extend their learning and these courses provide an extensive range of specialist resources and very good social experience.

29. The school places a strong emphasis upon promoting pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education and this provision is very good. The school is very successful in ensuring that opportunities for pupils and students to develop their personal and social skills are introduced into all aspects of school life. Pupils have access to a range of suitable experiences according to their needs. These vary between their personal development and learning about living in a community. All pupils have been disapplied from learning a modern foreign language. The school should reconsider this decision as a number of pupils would benefit from the experience and challenge.

30. Pupils receive suitable guidance on careers and the emphasis upon preparing pupils for life after school continues into the post-16 department. Pupils with very severe and complex needs communicate choices and have formed effective relationships with the staff closest to them.

31. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities and the extended day are other strong features that have a positive effect on pupils' enthusiasm for school. There is a particularly wide range of activities on and off site for pupils with visits to farms, local woodlands and with access to the 'Tribe Club'. Here the school has used its excellent links with parents and the community to provide young people from eleven to twenty in the local area with a regular activity-based evening club where they can meet others with a disability in a sociable and fun setting which is appropriate to their age group.

32. In addition they benefit greatly from a variety of residential experiences, undergoing a wide range of different and stimulating activities even, for older students, riding camels in Lanzarote. There are many visitors to the school who support the curriculum, including theatre and music groups. All pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy these activities. Parents appreciate the very good range of activities that is of interest to their children and that provides appropriate stimulation.

33. Learning is further enriched by whole-school activities such as theme days when pupils learn about, for instance, art and foods of different countries. Links with local schools and colleges are very good and enhance pupils' learning. The excellent local community links are effectively used as an extension of the classroom and pupils are steered very well towards effective inclusion through these activities. They know that they are valued members of the community and make their contribution, learning how to behave and respond to others through these practical experiences. There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting activities and special events, in football, for example, give pupils the opportunity to compete against pupils from other schools.

34. The school is well staffed by teachers and support staff whose skills match the requirements of subjects and the needs of pupils in the school. Teachers are very well supported by their teaching assistants who are very experienced, well trained and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Both teachers and teaching assistants possess extensive knowledge of pupils and use this most effectively in looking after their welfare, health and safety.

Care, guidance and support

35. The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. They receive very good support, advice and guidance throughout the school. The way in which the school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are supported, guided and cared for very well.
- The school's policy for child protection does not meet requirements.
- All pupils have excellent and trusting relationships with staff.
- Formal processes for regularly gathering pupil views are underdeveloped.

Commentary

36. The school has successfully maintained high standards of care and support since the last inspection. The happy atmosphere throughout the school and the attention to every pupil's needs is very impressive. This is a very caring school where pupils are happy and well looked after. The quality of support and guidance given to pupils is very good because staff understand their individual needs very well and show care and concern for them in all aspects of their lives at school and at home. The school has very good awareness of health and safety requirements and completes risk assessments for areas of potential concern; for example, when using hoists to move pupils, or when undertaking visits outside school. Staff are sensitive and caring when pupils are unwell and are respectful and discrete when carrying out any personal care. Teaching assistants, therapists, office and lunchtime staff make a very significant contribution to the care provided for pupils. Parents say that they have total confidence in the quality of care provided for their children and that they can relax knowing that they are in good hands.

37. All staff have a very good understanding of pupils' backgrounds and any difficulties that they may have and have very good relationships with their parents and carers. The school follows child protection procedures correctly and regular training is provided for staff, including those who are new to the school. However, the child protection policy is overdue for revision in line with the area committee's guidelines and, because it does not name the headteacher as the designated person responsible for child protection, does not meet requirements. The headteacher is also not named in documentation as being responsible for procedures relating to pupils in public care.

38. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Staff know the pupils very well and respond to them with warmth and patience so that pupils grow in confidence and know that the school is a safe place to learn and to make friendships. Induction arrangements are very good because staff take time to get to know the pupils and their families so that they can support them at a time when they may be feeling anxious. Staff care very much about pupils' and students' futures and give good guidance to their families during the transition period and when students leave the school.

39. Annual Reviews are very well attended by relevant staff with clear individual targets for each curriculum area. Therapists clearly have a very good relationship with the pupils and staff and work closely to support pupils' physical development and well-being. Pupils' individual educational targets are linked directly to their individual curriculum plans, allowing for continuity of approach where all staff involved with the pupil are aware of what to do in order to facilitate and improve personal development skills. Statutory processes within the school are fulfilled.

40. Staff treat pupils as individuals and know them very well, so pupils have the confidence to express their wishes and to make choices. Older students choose what to cook for their class lunch, for example, or those with severe learning difficulties choose to listen to music or have a foot massage in the sensory room. Staff listen carefully to pupils and respect their wishes. The school has recently piloted a questionnaire with some students to gain their views of the school, the results of which were very positive. However, this consultation was restricted to the views of the older, more able students and the school has not yet decided how best to ensure that this is open to all pupils, whatever their ability.

Partnership with parents, other schools, and the community

41. The school's links with parents are very good as are the links with other schools and colleges. There are excellent links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the education and care provided for their children.
- The school works hard to ensure all parents are as involved in school life as they can be.
- There is inconsistency between classes in the quality of pupils' annual reports.
- There are extensive and productive links with schools, colleges and the local community.
- The Tribe Club is an excellent example of the work the school does to build its links with the community.

Commentary

42. The school has successfully maintained its very good relationship with parents since the last inspection. As a result of the open and strong relationship between the school and its families, parents hold the school in very high regard and are delighted that their children want to attend. They are very positive about the education provided and the impact this has on the achievement and happiness of their children.

43. Parents strongly feel that the school works closely with them and that they can approach the school easily with any concerns. Parents feel that their children are making good progress because of caring, knowledgeable staff who are always willing to support, give advice and provide resources which they can use with their children at home. Parents raise funds for resources that are used to improve the quality of education for their children. They join the Parent Teacher Association and support community activities and concerts. A very strong relationship develops between families and school. Parents say that communication with them is honest and fair and that the links between home and school are a real strength. Inspectors agree with all the positive views of parents.

44. Most parents feel that they are kept well informed about how well their child is getting on. Day-to-day communication through home-school books and telephone calls is very good and there are very good arrangements for parents to have regular discussions with teachers at review meetings. However, there is inconsistency between classes in the way in which pupils' progress is reported in their annual reports. In some subjects analysis of pupils' progress gives insufficient detail and evaluation.

45. There are very good links with a wide range of other educational institutions from pre-school groups and primary schools to further education and residential colleges. Much of the value of these links lies in the personal and social opportunities for pupils and students to work and socialise with others of their own age, to learn to participate in activities outside their own school setting and to develop confidence through link and transition courses in preparation for the next stage of their education.

46. The school makes excellent use of the local area and community to enrich the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils go on visits to a wide range of places such as churches, parks, theatres and sports facilities. Many visitors come into the school including dance, theatre and musical groups. These additional activities do a great deal to broaden and enliven the learning for all pupils. The school has a well-established place in the local community and is very well supported through its links with local businesses and charitable organisations. These help to raise further the profile of the school in the community and have a direct impact on pupils' educational experiences, for example, when undertaking work experience at a local supermarket.

Example of outstanding practice

The 'Tribe' club

The Tribe Club is a prime example of the way in which the school and its dedicated staff think about pupils' needs and personal development well beyond the school day. The school has used its excellent links and support from parents and the community to provide young people from 11 to 20 in the local area with a regular activity-based evening club where they can meet others with a disability in a sociable and fun setting which is appropriate to their age group. Skittles, barbecues, snooker, swimming and bowling feature regularly on the programme as well as special events such as trips to the pantomime. Local charitable groups and businesses contribute significant financial support to the Club, but the young people also help themselves by participating in sponsored walks which are well publicised in the local press. In a recent school survey, older students gave a unanimous and very positive 'thumbs-up' for the Club.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

47. The leadership of the headteacher is good as is the overall leadership and management of the school. Together with a supportive management team and very good governance, the school continues to develop and improve. There is very good financial management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher knows the school very well and is clear about areas for improvement.
- Team work is a strength and a very positive learning environment has been established.
- Performance management is well established and there is a commitment to school improvement by all staff.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are fully involved in strategic planning.
- The role of all subject leaders is not yet fully developed in terms of monitoring the subject across the school.
- The school's own self-evaluation processes are developing, but require more careful analysis and subsequent action.
- The school is well organised and efficiently run.
- The positive support and contribution made by the administrative staff and site manager.

Commentary

48. The headteacher has a clear commitment to the development and improvement of the school and is aware of the necessary improvements that need to be made, particularly in the areas of the curriculum and assessment. He leads by example and with the support of the deputy ensures the school day runs smoothly.

49. All staff present very positive role models for the pupils and reinforce and successfully demonstrate on a daily basis, the school aims, that include developing the physical, social, moral and intellectual potential of each pupil. In addition to the headteacher and deputy, the senior management team includes a third member of the senior staff on a rolling programme, which effectively supports their personal and professional development as well as adding a fresh dimension to school improvement discussions.

50. Subject leaders have clear responsibilities and roles. However, their role could be further developed in terms of monitoring the subject across the school, to ensure the consistency of quality provision. The processes for school self-evaluation are developing well and there is increasing collection of useful recorded data. Not all data is sufficiently analysed, or discussed, to help

formulate strategies for improvement and subsequent action. For example, the school undertook a very comprehensive questionnaire survey with parents, staff, governors and community members, on school effectiveness in November 2003, but has yet to discuss or fully translate the outcomes into possible improvement strategies and appropriate action plans.

51. The senior management team undertakes effective whole school monitoring of planning, teaching, learning and pupil achievement and constructive feedback is given to staff for improvement. Performance management for teachers is well established and linked to school improvement and pupil achievement. The school is currently further developing the performance management procedures for support staff. The school is well organised and efficiently run. Day-to-day organisation and management is smooth and teaching and support staff communicate and support each other very effectively. There are clear procedures and documentation provided for staff is helpfully focused on what the school is about and how it operates. Induction procedures for new staff are very good and the well-planned and relevant school based training also makes a good contribution to the effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

52. Management of resources, including staffing and learning resources, is good. There are clear policies to guide the work of the school, which are successfully implemented ensuring the school's focus remains on pupils' learning and their personal development and overall achievement. The school has had clear guidance on necessary improvement areas from the local education authority.

53. A positive learning and caring ethos has been created through consistent and supportive management, which also contributes to the governance of the school, which is itself, very good overall. The governing body successfully fulfils all its statutory duties. Governors take an active part in strategic planning and decision-making and relationships between them and the school are very good. The governors receive, scrutinise and respond to regular monitoring reports from the headteacher and school staff. The chair of governors has an effective relationship with the headteacher and takes the responsibility very seriously. The chair and governors are proactively engaged in doing the very best they can and clearly understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governor organisation is effective, policies are reviewed, although not often enough, and there is a clear corporate view of the direction in which the school is developing.

54. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are fully included in all opportunities and the needs of each are met and school policies promote this, although some are in need of review and up dating. Policies, procedures and practices related to all aspects of special needs provision are in place.

55. The headteacher, senior management team, governors and administrative staff work closely to ensure that best value principles are effectively adopted. The administrative staff and site manager provide an effective and positive introduction to the school and contribute positively to the overall ethos of the school, its public face and the care and support for the pupils and their parents and carers. There is very good financial planning and management; all policies are in place, controls are very good and overall the school is efficiently run. Pupil costs are average and considering the positive pupil outcomes, the school currently offers good value for money.

56. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the leadership, management and governance of the school is ensuring that improvements continue for the benefit of both pupils and parents/carers.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	919454	Balance from previous year	22875
Total expenditure	972275	Balance carried forward to the next	15073
Expenditure per pupil	5182		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING

SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Provision for English is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupil achievement in speaking and listening is good throughout the school.
- Achievement for post-16 students is good.
- More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is very effective and pupils' behaviour is managed very well.
- Assessment does not sufficiently identify gaps in learning.
- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

57. Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory level of improvement. The department has adapted its provision well to the changing needs of the pupils. Speaking and listening is good throughout the school with all pupils being very enthusiastic to engage visitors in conversation and take part in discussion within lessons. Good use is made of alternative communication systems, such as signs and symbols, to support pupils' communication throughout the day. They enjoy listening to stories and respond positively when involved. They respond in different ways, some use pictures or symbols, while others use signs or spoken language. Where teaching was good pupils listened attentively to staff, and even pupils with speech and language difficulties attempted to express themselves verbally. The introduction of a picture exchange communication system (PECS) is significantly improving communication skills, particularly amongst pupils with features of ASD (autistic spectrum disorders). There have already been improvements in the ability of several pupils to use the picture exchange system to indicate that, for instance, they want a snack.

58. In the post-16 groups, all students sustain consistently good achievement. Speaking and listening continue to be a strength as students learn the social use of language. All aspects of English are taught through the setting of real tasks, which they find interesting and motivating. Students use their skills learned in English lessons to help them to cook meals, prepare for work experience and plan outings. They use their recording skills well when presenting evidence towards accreditation.

59. Achievement and progress in writing is satisfactory for all pupils, however, more use of information and communication technology in all classes would be beneficial. The teaching of early writing skills is satisfactory. In their writing, younger pupils are beginning to make marks on paper, trace over tactile letters and recognise symbols. They understand the routines of the classroom and express choices and preferences. There are many examples of younger pupils throughout the school using a range of writing implements to make marks on paper, draw pictures, describe their experiences and practise their writing. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils can write their own simple sentences while lower attaining pupils have many opportunities to explore with their hands and develop their sense of touch. Achievement and progress in reading is satisfactory overall and it is good in post-16. Many students can use computers to word process their work and display it to good effect.

60. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has led to pupils' satisfactory achievement. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the students, although the level of challenge does not always match student needs and a closer relationship between student assessment, evaluation

and planning is required. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupil learning, working closely with teachers reinforcing learning and encouraging pupils' attention. Because of these approaches, pupils achieve well in communication skills. They work hard and are fully engaged in the tasks required of them. Their behaviour is very good.

61. Teachers use resources and books well in to gain pupils' interest and promote achievement. For example, in one lesson a group of pupils with ASD listened intently to a story of 'The old woman who swallowed a fly'. They joined in excitedly as they attempted to put various animal toys into the old lady's mouth. A multi-sensory approach is used in many classes in which pupils have the opportunity to look, touch, taste and smell real objects and artifacts to extend their language skills. The national literacy strategy (NLS) is not consistently evident in all planning or delivery, although there is good practice in the school which should be more widely shared. Effective home-school diaries keep parents and carers informed and involved in their children's reading.

62. Pupils are not engaged enough in setting their own targets. Recent improvements have been made to aspects of assessment, although procedures still lack the necessary clarity and consistency to effectively track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some good analyses of pupils' achievements are helping to inform staff about the strengths and weaknesses within the subject. However, the use of assessment, on a daily and regular basis, is inconsistent and does not clearly enough identify what pupils know, understand and can do. This means that their small steps in learning are not always noted to enable the teacher to plan further work.

Language and Literacy across the Curriculum.

63. Provision for pupils and students to extend their communication skills is a strong element of the school's work. Teachers listen respectfully to pupils, and this helps them to communicate. Pupils greet the teacher confidently and are prepared to join in lessons orally in response to the teachers' questioning. Their capacity for collaboration helps them to learn from the teacher and from each other. Pupils and students with complex needs respond well to signing and the use of symbols, and some are able to make their needs known by giving a simple illustration of what these needs are, to an adult. Speech therapy makes an effective contribution to pupils' achievement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

64. All pupils have been disapplied from this aspect of the curriculum. The school should reconsider this decision as a number of pupils would benefit from the experience and challenge.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall teaching is good resulting in good achievement for most pupils.
- There is effective development of the sensory curriculum in a number of classes to meet the special needs of pupils.
- There is inconsistent use of assessment procedures.
- Pupils and students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives through the practical mathematical experiences and opportunities given to them.

Commentary

65. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of activities. They learn successfully about the sequence of the days of the week, shapes and numbers and, as they get older, start to apply their learning well to solve simple problems. Some pupils can measure, while others understand how the time is worked out. Older pupils are following courses in modules which provide them practice with

the basic skills of using numbers and handling money. Teachers plan well for them to put their skills into various practices, and effectively prepare them for using these skills outside of school. The good level of achievement is the direct result of good quality teaching.

66. There have been improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection, although the subject has not benefited fully from the consistent application of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and has an inconsistent approach to planning and assessment. Plans do provide outlines of the areas of learning for the varying needs of pupils, and provide those teachers who have used the strategy with information to consider individual pupil targets. The good practice available has not been fully shared across the school.

67. Overall teaching is good, with some very good features in those classes with pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. In these lessons teachers provide a vibrant learning experience and the relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Because the staff have a good understanding of the pupils' needs they expect them to participate and contribute fully to all sessions. Communication is the key for other pupils and signs and symbols are used to help pupils understand what is happening, or to ask questions or find out what is expected next. There is very good use of songs and rhymes to reinforce counting from one to ten. Teachers are imaginative and provide pupils with a stimulating environment with resources which support the current topic. Pupils are helped to establish basic number skills to work towards independence.

68. The coordinator is currently in America taking part in a teaching exchange programme. Provision is good overall and has been consolidated since the last inspection with best practice being associated with the practical and sensory activities. The current class and pupil arrangements do not help the accurate monitoring and recording of pupil progress year-on-year.

Mathematics across the curriculum.

69. Provision is good. Teachers maximise opportunities to reinforce mathematics in all subjects and in registration and lunchtime activities. As pupils get older opportunities increase in lessons for practical applications to practise their knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use of practical work in lessons.
- Very good support from teaching assistants and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are developing their understanding of investigation processes well.

Commentary

70. Only two science lessons were observed during the course of the inspection. This was partly due to the whole school being out for a day and, although the scheme of work for the subject is very thorough, analysis of teachers' timetables indicates that the actual science content of lessons described as science, can be very little. However, scrutiny of pupils' work, their progress records and discussions with pupils and teachers would indicate that their achievement is satisfactory.

71. The two lessons seen represented both ends of the school's age range. In a lesson with primary aged pupils in work on the topic 'Myself' pupils were able to recognise and name a large number of parts of their bodies and in practical work built up a figure by sticking body parts in appropriate places. The higher attaining pupils were able to confidently name the parts of the body as they completed the task, for example 'this is an arm, these are the eyes.' Good teaching encouraged the pupils to work independently and use whatever communication skills they possessed to indicate their knowledge and understanding. Very good support from teaching

assistants meant that all the pupils were fully engaged and good questioning by the teacher at the end of the lesson indicated that the pupils had learned well.

72. In the other lesson, with year 10, 11 and 12 students work was focused on the topic 'Life and Living Things' and involved practical and investigative activities. The pupils have, over time, studied a range of living things within their environment. In this lesson the pupils sought out and collected woodlice. They returned them to the class room and studied them through microscopes. Pupils knowledge of investigative processes is good; they volunteered information willingly, for example 'they look like they are wearing armour' and 'they are not all the same colour.' Good teaching followed up the pupils' observations very well, asking questions such as 'why might they be different colours?' and explaining the fact that woodlice are crustaceans and are armoured like crabs etc. The pupils were very engaged with the activity and completed good summary sheets of their findings with effective support from the teacher and the teaching assistant. In both lessons seen the teachers had good subject knowledge and presented the lesson in an interesting way which captured the pupils' interest and as a result the pupils in both classes are developing some understanding of aspects of science and how things can be investigated in order to find out more.

73. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the subject has been well led by the subject co-coordinator who has updated the scheme of work. Resources and assessment arrangements are satisfactory and support pupils' learning and their individual progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been some improvement in the quality and quantity of hardware and software to enhance pupil progress.
- The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning needs to be monitored more closely.

Commentary

74. Information and communication technology is not taught as a discrete subject. Although pupil achievement is satisfactory overall, pupils do not receive consistent opportunities in all subjects to make good progress. The school has recognised that improvements are needed and a good development plan is in place.

75. All rooms have computer stations. Higher attaining pupils use the 'qwerty' keyboard and the 'mouse'. Lower attaining pupils use devices such as switches or 'Big Macs' to access the curriculum. As pupils progress through the school they increase their ability to use commercial paint programs and print out their drawings. Examples of satisfactory progress are, that by Year 2, pupils use a variety of ICT programmes, such as 'Dazzle'. They use 'touch screen' programs effectively, which allows them to interact well with the programs. By the time pupils enter the secondary department of the school, higher attaining pupils use word processing to record some of their work. Some pupils and students at post-16, use the internet, with adult support, for research.

76. Teachers and teaching assistants have begun to receive good training to improve skills since the last inspection. It is good that more is planned, as some staff are still insecure in their computer skills. The enthusiastic and well-organised coordinator has high expectations for further improvements which include the use of interactive technology to facilitate the teaching of computer skills.

77. The school needs to extend ICT into all subject areas to provide opportunities for students to practise their skills and use the internet to research and gather information. It also needs more specialist subject software and guidance on how to include ICT in subject work.

78. The co-coordinator has been successful in ensuring the gradual improvement in the number and quality of computers and of staff skills. This has led, for instance, to the very effective way in which teachers use digital cameras in lessons and for pupils to record their work. There are very high expectations and advanced planning to provide high quality resources, such as interactive white boards. The monitoring of teaching and the effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning is under developed and good practice is not shared enough. Pupils' achievement is largely the same as at the time of the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. Equipment is used satisfactorily in cross-curricular activities. For example, the younger and lowest attaining pupils are encouraged to use large keyboards to create music. Most classes use writing with symbols to display the week's timetable. Writing with symbols is used effectively across the curriculum to help pupils record their work, and where possible, read it back. Touch screens are used in all age groups and subjects to enhance pupils' access to the curriculum. Where it is used, it is used successfully but overall, more is yet to be done if ICT is to support pupils' work more strongly.

HUMANITIES

History, geography and religious education.

80. The provision for history is **satisfactory**. The way in which the school delivers the subject means that it was not possible to see any lessons during the inspection. The evidence of records of achievement, workbooks, photographs, compact discs and staff discussions indicate that the subject is satisfactory.

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The specialist co-coordinator has established a good quality provision. His knowledge and understanding of the subject is good.
- The subject is enriched by the imaginative use of visits and resources; pupils are interested and highly motivated.
- The teachers and teaching assistants form very effective teams to provide interesting and challenging lessons.

Commentary

81. The school is flexible and imaginative in its approach to geography and history and in planning themes to provide interest and challenge. This results in a strong delivery of basic skills and varied opportunities. The subject is greatly enriched through visits such as the one to Lanzarote where aspects of history and geography were seen from the vantage point of a camel's back.

82. The attitudes of staff are very positive and all work hard to find imaginative ways to involve all pupils in activities. For example, work on urban and rural beaches included every pupil in one class on a residential activity that included a theme park; these pupils will remember about beaches from the time that they met a March Hare. Sensory materials are effectively used to support teaching, where needed, and these are often reinforced with singing rhymes. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to deliver aspects of themes and topics chosen to illustrate the subject. There are good examples of the use of local sources and sensory techniques, for example, when the younger pupils set off to follow walking routes they had planned and learned. They then followed their leader to shops and the park and reinforced their understanding of trees,

grass, butterflies and various dogs. Staff use topic planning well and the whole team is clear about what each pupil can learn from the experiences.

83. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are examples of very good teaching, particularly when staff involve everyone and pupils concentrate and make choices. The most effective teaching combines the elements of a range of subjects well. Very good use is made of the locality, and beyond, to build confidence and social skills. The subject is well used to provide an exciting aspect of the overall curriculum.

84. The subject is well managed. The co-coordinator has improved the delivery of geography. He maintains good contact with parents and supplies them with very detailed information about what has taken place; this includes photographs, CDs and diaries that clearly illustrate pupils' learning and achievement. Overall pupils' achievement is good.

Religious education

Provision overall is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of visits both to the school and outside the school is a very positive feature.
- Pupils are aware of a variety of different cultures through effective theme days.
- The monitoring of provision is still under-developed.

Commentary

85. Because of timetabling arrangements under which religious education is taught as part of the rolling humanities programme with history and geography, no lessons were observed during the inspection. However, it was possible from looking at pupils' work, photographic evidence and teachers' planning to say that standards have been maintained since the last inspection. There is evidence of opportunities for a range of visits linked to the RE syllabus for all pupils. Low ability pupils at primary age were able to experience breaking open the piñata and helping to make it, to celebrate the Mexican new year. A high attaining secondary pupil was able to describe how he lit a candle and smelt incense whilst studying Buddhist artifacts.

86. The school follows the Somerset Agreed Syllabus which forms the basis of the scheme of work. Religious education is delivered through topics each Spring Term. There is a 5 year rolling programme with separate topics for the lower and upper school ranging from 'Ourselves' to 'Rules and Choices'. Festivals and Celebrations are covered as they occur throughout the year. Low ability pupils are able to experience some religious artifacts through touch, vision and sounds such as statues, stained glass and bells.

87. Improvements since the last inspection include the adoption of 'Theme Days' where the whole school celebrates together. These days are evaluated by staff. There are some examples of pupils evaluating their own work in this subject at secondary level, such as which presents they enjoyed most at Christmas. Extensive follow-up work on a visit to Exeter cathedral included a variety of pictures, drawings and writing by the pupils. Other celebrations which have been shared included a day based on Hindu culture and visits by the local vicar who continues to be closely connected with the school.

88. Resources are borrowed from the library or Exeter university so pupils are given an opportunity to experience 'real' objects from the different religions/cultures they explore. The school has few resources itself. Since the last inspection, there appears to have been little improvement in monitoring subject delivery which may, along with the lack of teaching of religious education for two terms have an impact on achievement being satisfactory overall.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of a dedicated art room places limitations on the progress that pupils can make.
- Links with the community are very good.
- The development of pupils' cultural awareness through art is good.

Commentary

89. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory. In the two lessons observed, pupils enjoyed their work and joined in with enthusiasm. Good use of the work of local and famous artists helps pupils to develop their observation skills. Younger pupils have worked with stencils, made leaf rubbings and printed on fabrics. During the inspection they were helped to make cards for a pupil who was leaving, using handprints. Pupils in the ASD group were absorbed as they worked on seaside collages. As soothing music played in the background they used a variety of tactile resources such as feathers and shells, gluing them onto a background of blue bubble paint. Staff in this lesson had a clear understanding of pupils needs and the excellent relationships effectively supported pupils to positively interact and achieve well.

90. Pupils' cultural awareness is fostered through a growing knowledge of the work of other artists and links with the community, such as with a local Arts Centre. Displays around the school show evidence of the cultural influences on aspects of art, both in paint and textile. Pupils in a Year 6 display have created pictures in the style of Andy Warhol. Digital photography has been used appropriately for pupils to interpret images of themselves. Older pupils and students have used art wheels, made marks with coloured chalks and painted pictures in the style of aborigines copying the distinctive use of dots.

91. There is little space to store work in progress or to display exemplars of work. A significant shortcoming is the lack of a suitable specialist room to give pupils and students the opportunity to select materials for themselves. Pupils lack the opportunity to develop independence, for instance, to have access to sinks to tidy up and change colours without the need for staff doing this for them. However the coordinator has worked hard to bring an extra dimension to the subject, forging links with the local Arts Centre, enabling pupils' work to be exhibited and visitors from the Centre to come into the school. Additionally resources such as book packs and examples of famous artists' work are being assembled. Overall there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Design and technology

Provision for Design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Food technology is well taught and pupils have good knowledge, understanding and skills
- The subject makes a major contribution to pupil's personal development.
- The subject is heavily biased towards food technology.

Commentary

92. Although a comprehensive scheme of work and policy is in place, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupil's work and teachers' planning indicates that a significant amount of the time allocated to design and technology is in fact, food technology. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding and skills are very good in this area, but they would benefit from more opportunity to

work with, for example, resistant materials. A few examples of resistant materials work is evident such as the 'Making Houses' project with the oldest pupils and students, but generally this area is under- developed. In the one lesson seen, which was not food technology, Year 3 pupils were making pop- up books. The teacher made good use of information and communication technology and pupils were given good opportunities to choose the feature of their project. As a result pupils' achievement and progress were satisfactory and they showed pleasure in the results of their efforts even though their skills were very limited.

93. The other two design and technology lessons observed were with post-16 students. In a very well taught lesson at a local college, students were taught basic cooking techniques with a strong emphasis on skills and knowledge, for example, health, safety and hygiene and the proper use of kitchen implements such as knives. A strong feature of this lesson was the good response the students made to the 'adult' expectations and environment of the college, the very good relationships between college staff, school staff and students and the end product of the lesson which was a shepherds' pie lunch of good quality. In the other lesson, the same students working at school used the skills learned at college to reinforce their personal development and independence. They chose meals, identified ingredients and visited the local supermarket to make purchases. They were given money and good teaching reinforced the need to choose carefully and stay within the agreed budget. They carefully prepared the meals using appropriate techniques, for example, washing, chopping and slicing vegetables and salad, preparing baked potatoes and cooking oven meals. The end result was very good. All the students ate together in an adult, mature and pleasant environment, where they demonstrated their very good personal skills asking for the salad to be passed, for example, and enquiring of each other whether the meal was enjoyable. Throughout this lesson very good teaching and the support from teaching assistants had a very positive impact on the student's personal skills and on their social development.

94. Improvement in the subject and its management is satisfactory and although the resources for food technology in the post-16 department are good, throughout the rest of the school there is little dedicated accommodation for the teaching of the subject either with resistant materials or food technology.

Music

Provision overall is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for pupils to enjoy and join in with performances by visiting musicians.
- The majority of resources are percussion instruments.

Commentary

95. Although only one formal lesson was observed, judging from pupils' work, photographic evidence and the co-coordinator's file, progress has been sustained since the last inspection. Music is used throughout the curriculum in physical education, assemblies and is particularly effectively used with those ASD pupils where it enhances their learning environment.

96. Children with complex needs are encouraged to develop turn-taking skills in group music sessions by responding physically to the music, for example, patting their knees and stamping their feet. Singing is used by most teachers to enhance pupils' learning, for example, a rhyming song expanded secondary pupils' vocabulary with words such as watermelon and pachyderm. By the end of their secondary years lower achievers can play percussion instruments with different degrees of loudness, imitate in response to adults and some can respond to cue cards and words given by a conductor. Post-16 pupils can participate in simple musical performances and experiment with composition using different sounds and instruments.

97. Learning is enhanced by outside musicians as evidenced by a theme day where two guitarists from Boulevard Django performed for the school. The whole-school evaluation indicated that it was an enjoyable experience for the pupils who clapped and cheered. Post-16 pupils have attended a variety of musical performances such as a Moving Sound Workshop and the local arts centre to watch local secondary pupils perform. A Russian accordionist has also given a recital at the school with other live performances including Belly Dancing and a 'Big Sing' in St Mary Magdalene church. In the lesson observed, there was evidence of good planning, exploration of a range of rhythms and a high level of pupil interaction.

98. The Music curriculum is planned using the 5 levels A-E of the school scheme of work based on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stage 1 and 2 and P-scales. The areas covered in the curriculum are performing, composing and appraising. The music folder reports that pupils are achieving the targets set in music. There appears to be little monitoring or evaluation of the curriculum delivered or what is being taught, although the scheme of work is comprehensive.

99. Resources are mainly percussive, the co-coordinator has purchased more of the same including Boom Whackers, Chime Bars, Tambourines and assorted compact discs. There was no evidence of the use of information and communication technology to support the subject and pupils' learning.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are presented in imaginative ways that make good links to other areas of learning.
- Teachers and support staff have high expectations.
- All pupils are fully included and are encouraged to make choices.
- Activities positively contribute to pupils' personal development; pupils display confidence, have high self-esteem and work hard with sustained concentration.

Commentary

100. Pupils make good progress in physical education. The subject has continued to develop its range of opportunities since the last inspection and it plays an important part in every pupil's programme of personal and physical development. Pupils continue to improve in their general physical skills, including their fine co-ordination skills, movement and posture.

101. Basic physical abilities and body management, such as running, jumping, climbing and balancing are reinforced through physical development sessions and gymnastic activities. Younger pupils move rhythmically to music, learn body part names, run, walk and learn to appreciate direction and space. Importantly, from an early age pupils are encouraged to make choices and to take an active part in their own learning. Good use is made of the PECS system of symbols and pictures to reinforce communication and pupil choice.

102. Pupils continue to increase their skills in jumping, climbing, sliding and balancing all under the safe supervision of enthusiastic and supportive staff. Good use is made of the school hall despite its being too small for older pupils, large groups and a thoroughfare of movement to other classrooms. Older pupils demonstrate good progression in their gymnastic skills and begin to successfully link their movements into sequences which they take great pleasure in performing to the group. For a number of pupils, physical education may include and involve therapeutic interventions. For example, effective physiotherapy and/or hydrotherapy that meets an individual's need.

103. Students with mobility difficulties are not excluded from some very imaginative experiences. A group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties enthusiastically engaged in an indoor

skittles session which was also an example where their numeracy skills were reinforced when counting the number of skittles knocked over.

104. The school effectively utilises outside support and instruction to add to pupils' experiences. For example, a young and very enthusiastic dance instructor took a large group of older pupils through a range of dance sequences to popular music, culminating in their practice of the YMCA dance routine that they were to perform at the forthcoming school fete. During this session, many pupils demonstrated very good listening and attention skills and made good progress in their dance and sequence movements. They also had great fun. The school football team has a very high profile and pupils are proud to represent their school. Importantly, such activities positively support pupils' personal and social development and their confidence and self-esteem.

105. Pupils' achievements and progress in swimming are very good. Very good support is given to less able pupils by teachers and teaching assistants who go into the pool and provide close assistance, inspire confidence, help pupils to relax, to experience buoyancy and begin to move independently. All health and safety matters are effectively met and appropriate attention is given to aspects of personal and social education in terms of dressing and undressing.

106. Teaching and learning are good overall. Occasionally teaching is very good. It is best when all pupils are engaged in challenging activities and not waiting unduly for their turn at a short activity that they can easily do. Planning is generally good and relationships are excellent with excellent communication which is often supported by signing. Class management is very good and teachers and teaching assistants work effectively as a team. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they demonstrate their commitment to improvement and thoroughly enjoy their sessions.

107. The subject is well managed. Pupil progress is effectively recorded by photographs, videos, certificates of achievement and review reports. A wide range of appropriate resources, including multi-sensory resources, are very well used to support learning. The school hall is inadequate for large numbers or for older pupils, but is effectively utilised. Overall, physical education makes an important contribution to the curriculum and to pupils' overall mental and physical growth.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-coordinator has produced a comprehensive programme of relevant topics that pupils study as they move through the school.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' personal, social and health awareness are embedded in the curriculum.
- Opportunities to develop independence skills are used in the numerous visits/outings which the pupils undertake.

Commentary

108. The school appropriately places great emphasis on pupils' personal and social development. This is evident in many of the activities carried out during the day. These activities are planned to enable pupils' to meet their personal targets, for example, by making choices about which items to pack on a residential visit for more able pupils or by eye-pointing to decide which activities they want to do in the afternoon using photos, objects and symbols for the pupils with complex needs. All pupils achieve accredited modules for PSHCE when they leave school. This encompasses a variety of topics for the personal, social and health strands of the scheme of work. When required, personal care is carried out with respect and dignity, pupils are always told what is to happen and where they are going to be moved to.

109. Pupils' individual curriculum plans include three targets linked to personal, social and life skills. This has an impact on raising standards in this subject. Post-16 students are taught how to travel independently. The life skills module includes safety, shopping, leisure, transport, domestic skills and citizenship. Pupils are encouraged to shop independently and experience different work environments through, for example, visits to a local company where crème fraiche and yoghurts are manufactured. There is evidence of differentiated learning where worksheets are used with symbols and the written word, such as 'I washed my /arms/pillow/face/grass' where the pupil had to circle the correct response. A secondary aged pupil was able to identify that she liked singing, dancing and text messaging her friends towards her OCR Module 3 for Personal Skills. A visit to a local cheese factory emphasised the need to keep clean in this work environment. A significant feature that strengthens teaching is the very good relationship between the staff and pupils. Pupils are well-managed which ensures they are kept busy, and, as a result, they make gains in learning. In all lessons, teachers and teaching assistants very effectively guide, monitor and encourage pupils.

110. The subject co-coordinator has produced a comprehensive overview of learning objectives linked to an expanded scheme of work in which citizenship is also incorporated. She is a member of the health and education steering group for the county which has a multi-professional dimension. The school was given a health award for her work on a portfolio of life-skills which is used by local mainstream schools to give them a benchmark regarding the use of P- scales.

111. A questionnaire has been used to elicit pupils' views on a variety of subjects including uniform, transport and school dinners. One of the strengths of the life skills program is the value placed on improving independent proficiency when going outside the school premises. On a visit to a local park, pupils with challenging behaviours were encouraged to try out various rides without adult supervision to develop a sense of independence. They were able to ask to go on favourite activities and given the choice of which pursuit to try out next.

112. Citizenship forms parts of the PSHCE curriculum and is contributing positively to pupils' very good personal development. Planning identifies units of work such as being part of a group to being aware that money has worth and value. Pupils are taught what behaviour is appropriate in public places and demonstrate it admirably on their many trips out of school. There were numerous examples of very good relationships with able-bodied pupils helping with wheelchair-bound pupils. Overall, there has been good progress since the last inspection.

Post- 16

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and achieve well in the courses they study.
- Students show very good signs of maturity and personal development.
- The arrangements for meeting the diverse needs of post-16 students is very good.
- The introduction of the (OCR) National Skills Profile and the Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) course is a major development which students are clearly benefiting from.
- On occasion, some activities offer insufficient challenge to some students.

Commentary

113. Students achieve well within their studies based around OCR and ALL accredited courses. These focus on literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, personal development and vocational skills. Lessons were observed with students who are part of the senior class in KS4 as well as the post-16 group during the course of the inspection. These lessons, scrutiny of students work, teachers' planning and college arrangements indicate that students achieve well against the targets set for them.

114. Students have very good opportunities to study outside the school setting, for example, at a local college for art and technology. Students enjoy their programmes of study and make good efforts to achieve well and please their teachers and support staff. For example, as part of their personal development programme students shopped and then prepared and served lunch in a very pleasant social setting. This lesson was a good example of how the students are expected to transfer their learning into a practical setting, for example, using money, the local environment and practical skills. In this particular activity very good teaching challenged students to use money appropriately within a budget, make choices and take responsibility.

115. All activities with the post-16 students are well planned, for example, a visit to a local supermarket cafeteria enabled students to demonstrate their personal skills in ordering and paying for food and fitting in well with the general public. Many opportunities are taken to use the local environment to develop students' skills and understanding, for example, during their work experience programme and an activity visiting the local public house to celebrate a student's birthday. Although very well organised and planned these out of school activities occasionally lack challenge, in that insufficient, purposeful work is demanded other than being in a social setting with the general public. The current introduction of the OCR course will go some way to improving the level of challenge within the activities the students are provided with.

116. Post-16 provision is very well led by the deputy headteacher. She has excellent relationships with the students who have complete confidence in her. Along with another colleague she is (rightly) exploring ways in which accredited courses and more challenging activities can be made available to students and at the same time develop inclusion activities with other schools and colleges.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

INSPECTION JUDGEMENT

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).