

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **DURHAM TRINITY SCHOOL**

Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114349

Headteacher: Miss J. A. Connolly

Lead inspector: Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003

Inspection number: 262557

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:	172
School address:	Flambard Premises Aykley Heads Durham
Postcode:	DH1 5TS
Telephone number:	0191 3864612
Fax number:	0191 3839477
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J. K. Hudson
Date of previous inspection:	22.11.1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Durham Trinity is a school for boys and girls aged 2 to 19 with moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties or communication difficulties, which include autistic spectrum disorders. Of the 172 currently on roll, five are in the nursery and reception years and there are twenty post-16 students. The majority of these students are taught within the school's Further Education Unit but a small number are in a specialist class for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. When they join the school, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. They all have statements of special educational needs. There are 40 with moderate and 75 with severe learning difficulties. 21 have profound and multiple learning difficulties, three have emotional and behavioural difficulties and there are 33 with autistic spectrum disorders. Twelve of the pupils are visually impaired. The pupils with severe autistic disorders are taught in specialist classes, as are the ones with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Only three pupils are not white and there are four in community care. Although pupils' socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are below average. The school is based on three sites. Bek is for primary aged pupils and Flambard and Kirkham for secondary aged pupils. Kirkham also has the provision for post-16 students. Bek is situated two miles away from Flambard and Kirkham. Flambard and Kirkham are close together but separated by a busy road. The school has achieved the Sportsmark, Activemark Gold, Artsmark Silver, Healthy Schools Award and School Achievement Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
29452	Chris Emerson	Team inspector	Mathematics History Personal, social, health and citizenship education Special educational needs
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science Modern foreign language Post-16 provision
14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Art and design
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	English Geography Physical education
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Trinity is a **good** school with many very good features. Pupils achieve well and the post-16 students achieve very well. Pupils' personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. It provides very good value for money.

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

- The headteacher's leadership provides a very clear sense of direction and ensures that the work of all staff is focused on raising pupils' achievement.
- Outstanding partnerships with other schools, colleges and the community have a significant impact on pupils' personal development and achievement.
- Pupils want to learn and they try very hard, because the curriculum is very rich and interesting.
- The school educational and physical needs of all pupils are met equally well, regardless of their individual learning difficulties.
- The information collected about pupils' achievement is not easy to manage and use, because of the different systems in place.
- The achievements of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not fully recognised by the examinations for which they enter.
- The curriculum and teaching provided for post-16 students are very good.
- The school works very hard to ensure that pupils are happy, safe and secure, so they can benefit from lessons and activities.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection. There have been many developments but achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 with severe learning difficulties has improved especially well. In a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, good improvement has been made. Teaching has improved well, as have pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

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

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are also very good. They are very keen to

learn and be involved in all activities. Attendance is very good. Pupils are usually absent only when they are ill.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and consequently pupils learn well. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils to make sure that lessons meet the particular needs of each one. However, it is more difficult for senior staff to make comparisons between the achievements of different groups of pupils, because a number of assessment systems are in operation. Lessons are interesting, so pupils are very keen to learn. Occasionally, planning is less good and pupils are not all kept fully occupied or lessons end in a rush. Teaching assistants make very important contributions to pupils' learning and work alongside teachers to encourage pupils to do their best.

The curriculum successfully provides well planned and relevant opportunities for all pupils. It is especially effective in the case of post-16 students, contributing to their very good achievement. Older pupils and post-16 students are successful in a range of examination courses. However, these do not reflect fully the achievements of the most able Years 10 and 11 pupils. Very high quality activities are organised to enrich the curriculum. These are supported very well by the school's excellent links with other schools, colleges and the community. The accommodation for secondary aged pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the post-16 students is not good enough. Pupils are cared for very well and this helps them become confident learners.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is well led. The headteacher and deputies make sure that the school continues to develop and move forward. Management is also good. The school is very well aware of its strengths and has clear plans for the areas that need improving – for example, how assessment systems are to be simplified. Governance is good. Governors are very keen to support the school and they keep themselves well informed about developments. Statutory requirements are met.

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

By far the majority of those responding to the inspection questionnaire (45 per cent of parents) have very positive opinions about the school. However, the parents of nine pupils would like to be consulted more by the school and eight have concerns about homework. The current arrangements for both of these are satisfactory.

Pupils' views are very positive. They especially enjoy sporting activities. Post-16 students appreciate the more adult environment of the Further Education Unit and like raising funds for less fortunate people.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Carry out its plans to streamline assessment procedures and provide more manageable data about pupils' achievements.
- Increase the number of subject specific examination courses, so that the achievements of higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are fully acknowledged.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is **good**.

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

- All pupils achieve equally well, whatever their learning difficulties.
- Post-16 students achieve very well.
- Achievement is very good in communicating, speaking and listening, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successful in a variety of examination courses. However, these don't fully recognise pupils' achievements in every subject.
- A small number of pupils achieve so well that they are transferred to mainstream schools.
- School leavers very often move on to college.

#### **Commentary**

1. When pupils' particular difficulties are taken into account, their achievements and their success in meeting their personal targets are similar. This is because the school takes great care to match the curriculum and teaching methods to their individual needs. For instance, although a number of the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are taught in classes with pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties, those with severe autistic spectrum disorders are provided with a specialised environment and a modified curriculum. Staff are skilled at using alternative communication systems, such as cards with symbols, to help these pupils to communicate. Because their time is highly structured and their classrooms are decorated to keep the level of distraction low, they feel secure and learn well. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have access to a rich sensory curriculum that enables them to explore and make sense of the world around them. They make good progress in using switches to communicate and to make choices. A teaching area has been specially adapted to provide good working conditions for primary aged pupils with visual impairment. This enables them to use their vision effectively – for example, when working on the computer. Boys and girls, pupils in community care and the tiny number from minority ethnic groups achieve equally well, because the school insists that all pupils are given opportunities that do not disadvantage them.
2. Although the accommodation is less than satisfactory for secondary aged pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the post-16 students, the school does its very best to compensate for this by using alternative facilities wherever possible. As a result, the achievements of these pupils are equivalent to those of others. The post-16 students achieve particularly well, because the curriculum and teaching they receive are very good. The students with severe learning difficulties are successful in a range of examination courses, including 'Towards Independence', Further Education awards and City and Guilds Preliminary Cookery. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties take part in Transition Challenge. Responding to the inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents indicated that they consider that their children are making good progress.
3. The children in the nursery and reception years achieve well in the areas of their learning. They do especially well in communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional development and physical development. This is because they have plenty of opportunities to develop and practise the necessary skills and they are taught very well. This pattern is similar in Years 1 to 11, where achievement is good in reading and writing, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, religious education, design and technology and music. It is very good in communicating, speaking and listening, personal, social, health and citizenship education and physical education. Again, a combination of teachers' expertise and a



very wide variety of relevant experiences combine to enable pupils to be very successful in these areas.

4. The school ensures that, regardless of their special educational needs, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow examination courses. For instance, Year 10 pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties are successful in a youth award scheme at Bronze level, moving on to tackle the Silver Challenge Award in Year 11, whilst pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties work towards Transition Challenge. However, science is the only subject in which pupils are given the opportunity to gain a certificate that is specific to it. Year 11 pupils achieve Entry level certificates at Levels 1, 2 or 3 and the higher attaining pupils are currently working towards GCSE. The school has correctly identified that many of its pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties would be quite capable of following similar courses in other subjects, which would recognise more accurately their achievements.
5. The school is successful in identifying pupils who have progressed so well that they could cope with mainstream education. For example, last summer, two pupils – one with severe learning difficulties and the other with autistic spectrum disorder – moved on to mainstream primary schools. There is similar movement within Durham Trinity itself – for example, pupils moving from the specialist autistic spectrum classes to others for those with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Those who leave school at the end of Year 11 or during the post-16 years generally further their education by attending one of several local colleges. In all these transfers, pupils are supported very well by the school's excellent links with mainstream schools and colleges. They get accustomed to working in different locations and mixing with people they don't know well. As a result, they are confident to tackle new and challenging experiences.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils want to learn and be involved in all aspects of school life.
- They are seldom absent unless they are ill.
- Pupils' personal development is supported very well through many different activities and lessons.
- They are very willing to help others through charitable ventures.
- Pupils' very good behaviour is encouraged by the excellent opportunities for them to develop a sense of morality.

### **Commentary**

6. Pupils enjoy all the opportunities they have for learning. They generally pay close attention to their teachers, because they are interested in what is being taught. In an English lesson, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in Years 2 to 6, were very well motivated by the resources used to dramatise the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. As a result, they remembered many details and were able to sequence events in the correct order, to retell the tale. As they move up through the school, pupils become increasingly mature in their responses. For instance, pupils in Year 11 with moderate or severe learning difficulties worked very hard in a science lesson to prepare them for an end of unit test. Whilst appreciating the teacher's humour, and volunteering jokes of their own, they nevertheless took the test very seriously, appreciating its importance and striving to do as well as possible. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties co-operate with staff and often make considerable efforts – for example, to communicate their needs or responses.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0
National data	8.7	National data	1.5

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

- The very high levels of attendance represent a real achievement for pupils and their parents, especially as a number of parents bring their children to school each day. Systems for monitoring attendance are very well organised and quickly highlight where there may be individual problems. Any lateness is virtually always because of transport delays caused, for example, by roadworks.
- Examples of ways in which pupils' personal development is promoted abound throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to be enterprising – for example, through Team Enterprise lessons in Years 10 and 11 – and to contribute to charities. At the time of the inspection, post-16 students were making soup, to raise funds for a Lepra' initiative. Pupils are prepared very effectively for their lives beyond school. For instance, Year 11 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties have opportunities to bathe and change a real baby, in a lesson to promote care and responsibility for others. One pupil, who worked on a placement as a caretaker at a local college, was praised as 'polite, hard working and carrying out all his duties to the highest standard'. Pupils across the school benefit socially from educational opportunities in other schools. For instance, pupils in Years 5 and 6 with moderate or severe learning difficulties visit a local primary school, working in pairs and groups with mainstream pupils.
- Staff encourage pupils to respect the faiths of other cultures. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in Years 7 to 10 have contributed to a class book about Divali, with photographs of themselves in Indian dress, enjoying a party to celebrate the festival. The local culture is also promoted very effectively: lower attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11 have weekly lessons in a course about the history of mining. These are supported very well by community links and the school's own collection of historic resources. Parents feel overwhelmingly that the school encourages their children to become mature and independent and that the school provides a good range of activities for their children. They are pleased that their children enjoy them so much.

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	178	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

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

- Pupils have a strong appreciation of what is right and wrong. The wide range of sporting activities contributes to this, by encouraging them to accept a fair decision or participate in a

team, abiding by rules. Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour management principles, during lessons and throughout the school day, and pupils know that they can turn to staff for a fair adjudication in a dispute. During a visit to an agricultural college, Year 10 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties were required to go into pens of calves to help weigh each animal and note down various aspects of their health. The ability to listen to instructions and be well behaved was crucial to the well being of the animals, and every pupil was patient, waited their turn and was respectful to the college staff, resulting in a safe, ordered process and lesson. Although two pupils have had fixed term exclusions during the last year, this is a significant improvement on previous years. Owing to the pupils' exceptionally challenging special educational needs, staff in the class for secondary aged pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are frequently subjected to physical attacks. These are managed very well indeed, so other pupils' learning is not disrupted.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall and very good for post-16 students.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make sure that lessons meet the needs of all pupils.
- A great deal of information is collected about pupils' achievement, but this is not easily managed and utilised.
- Lessons are usually planned carefully so pupils' interest is maintained. However, the very best use is not always made of the available time.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to pupils' learning.
- Teachers establish an atmosphere in lessons that encourages pupils to work hard and learn well.
- Lessons occasionally finish abruptly.

### Commentary

11. Even though classes are usually made up of pupils with broadly similar learning difficulties, in practice, pupils' individual needs are very wide ranging. However, teachers are very skilled at using their knowledge of pupils to match the tasks to the particular needs of each one. This is often especially evident in English and mathematics lessons, when pupils' individual targets provide a very helpful basis for teachers' planning. For instance, in an English lesson for secondary aged pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders, a variety of activities were provided for each one. These built systematically on what pupils had learned previously and provided just the right amount of challenge – they had to co-operate and make an effort, but the demands were not beyond the pupils' capabilities and were rooted in activities and routines that have been very well established. Consequently, a higher attaining pupil made very good progress in reading, by interpreting pictures and symbols of objects 'in', 'on' and 'under' other objects, to produce a three-word phrase. A lower attaining pupil achieved equally well as he worked with a teaching assistant to repeatedly exchange a symbol card for model cars. These he put at the top of a long tube, watching them emerge at the other end, developing his ability to communicate and interact with another person.

12. Teachers usually make the most of lesson time, by choosing activities and resources that motivate pupils to learn. They maintain this momentum by structuring the lesson so pupils do not have a chance to get bored with a task. For instance, new tasks are introduced or pupils work with a different group of classmates. During a religious education lesson, pupils in Year 5 with

moderate or severe learning difficulties revised what they had already learned about Hinduism, by handling and discussing artefacts such as diva lamps, bells and statues of gods. The teacher spotted that they were beginning to wriggle, so moved them from the floor to chairs, to listen to a story about Ganesh, the elephant god. They then decorated and assembled paper models of elephants, before finally answering questions about their new learning. In a few lessons, teachers are not so well organised. As a result, pupils are left unoccupied for too long – for example, waiting their turn to be involved – or activities are not particularly interesting. On these occasions, the pace of learning slows down and pupils’ achievement is satisfactory, rather than good or very good. Similarly, teachers very infrequently misjudge the timing of lessons, so there is no opportunity at the end for them to check what has been learned and let pupils know how they are getting on.

13. In the vast majority of lessons, teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, working in partnership with the teacher. For example, in a City and Guilds cookery lesson with Year 12 students with severe learning difficulties, the teaching assistant shared the teacher's determination that each student should be as independent as possible. They both used questions very effectively to prompt students to think hard about what they were doing and make decisions for themselves. As a result, each of the students produced a snack and a hot drink, working safely and hygienically and developing skills important for their future lives.
14. Teachers are almost invariably enthusiastic during lessons, eliciting similar attitudes from pupils. High expectations are very evident, but teachers and teaching assistants take full advantage of opportunities to boost pupils’ self-esteem – for example, by praising them for trying. Consequently, pupils are prepared to tackle tasks that might seem difficult, confident that their efforts will be appreciated. For example, in a design and technology resistant materials lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11 with moderate or severe learning difficulties, the teacher pointed out that designers learn from their mistakes, which help them to improve. This successfully encouraged pupils to try very hard and focus on their designing task, without clamouring to move on to the making stage.
15. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved. The parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were unanimous in their opinion that teaching is good. However, one in ten had some concerns about the homework provided. Pupils are given regular opportunities to take home reading activities and a variety of other tasks are set, especially for older, higher attaining pupils. The arrangements are quite satisfactory, but the school is happy to discuss them with parents and consider their requests.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	40 (40%)	49 (49%)	10 (10%)	0	0	0

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

16. The school has quite properly identified its methods of measuring and recording how well pupils are achieving as areas for review and further development. A number of initiatives are being put in place to improve and streamline this aspect of the school's work – for example, the consistent application of a nationally recognised system for measuring the achievement of pupils not attaining within National Curriculum levels. There are clear plans to ensure that assessment procedures provide concise evidence of each pupil's progress, in order to enable the school to easily analyse the achievements of individuals and groups, set accurate targets, and make comparisons within school and with pupils in similar schools.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. Despite significant weaknesses, the accommodation and resources are **good** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is good at modifying the curriculum to suit all pupils, whatever their ages or particular special educational needs.
- The accommodation for secondary age pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is unsatisfactory. The accommodation for students with severe learning difficulties in the Further Education Unit is also unsatisfactory.
- There is a very good programme to support pupils' personal and social development.
- A very wide range of interesting and motivating activities enriches learning for all pupils.

### Commentary

17. The curriculum is well planned and organised to meet pupils' learning needs. For example, the specially written sensory curriculum, which is taught to classes of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, is effective in helping these pupils to achieve well. Alternative communication systems, such as cards with symbols, enable pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to participate fully in lessons. Carefully planned strategies and specialist resources and accommodation support well the learning of pupils with visual impairment. Similarly, the curriculum is adapted to take account of pupils' changing needs as they move up through the school. For instance, the children in the nursery and reception years and the youngest pupils experience a curriculum based on the required areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. The curriculum for post-16 students with severe learning difficulties is particularly effective and enables students to achieve very well.
18. The very successful programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education is provided in all years and for all pupils, irrespective of their learning difficulties. For post-16 students with severe learning difficulties, the programme for personal and social development is also very good. Implementation of this programme, however, is restricted because the accommodation in the Further Education Unit is not big enough for the numbers on roll or for the development of students' social, independence, recreational and home-based living skills.
19. The rest of the school's accommodation is variable, but satisfactory overall. The Bek (primary years) site is good, with classrooms and facilities bright and appealing. On the Flambard and Kirkham sites, the quality of the accommodation for secondary aged pupils and post-16 students is variable. For design and technology it is very good, with well-equipped workshops for both resistant materials and food. However, the assembly hall also has to serve as dining room and gymnasium. There are no specialist rooms for art or music and no space for a separate library, so one has been created in a classroom. The classroom for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is cramped and prevents them having opportunities for frequent physical activity, despite the very good efforts made by staff. The school is well aware of these deficiencies and is working with the local education authority in an effort to resolve them. Concerns about the inadequacies of the accommodation were also expressed by parents, at the meeting with inspectors prior to the inspection.
20. The exciting activities, which motivate pupils to learn, include a weekly options programme for all secondary aged pupils. Pupils learn to make choices, and mix with like-minded pupils of different ages and abilities. The activities cover physical education, arts and crafts, drama, role play and self-expression, musical appreciation and school choir. Home-based activities include body and hair care, cookery, and gardening. There is a computer club, board games, walking and local journeys. Pupils also run a community café, learning to prepare hot and cold snacks, serve the public and handle money. The school has also achieved national awards for the very high quality of its arts and sporting programmes. There is a wide range of sporting opportunities including

football, athletics, cricket, volleyball, trampolining and swimming, with very good use made of leisure and sports centres and swimming baths. Specialist coaches visit and contribute to the sporting programme and the school is represented at local and regional sporting events. The arts programme is very full, especially for secondary aged pupils. Music, dance, drama and art all feature very strongly, and pupils visit art galleries and theatres and work with other schools to present music and drama productions.

### Care, guidance and support

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection arrangements are very clearly defined and are strengthened by multi-disciplinary meetings that take place in school.
- Whole school health and safety procedures are very well organised and the school pursues health and safety issues vigorously. However, there are traffic concerns on the road between the two sites for secondary aged pupils.
- Staff know each pupil very well and provide very effective support when they need help.
- Pupils' views are not sought out formally although there are good informal systems in place.

### Commentary

22. Very clear procedures are in place for the protection of pupils; three senior staff share responsibility for child protection arrangements. All three have attended training courses on child protection awareness and referral procedures and have passed their knowledge on to the rest of the staff. The school has very close links to all the social services and health care professional teams in the area and regularly hosts meetings where there are concerns about pupils and their families. The arrival and departure of school transport is generally well organised. However, the road between the Flambard and Kirkham sites is not always under the direct scrutiny of a member of staff when pupils are leaving. The speed of passing traffic, and eagerness of some taxis and mini-buses to leave school promptly, could jeopardise pupils' safety. The school continues to pursue traffic calming measures in vain. When meeting the personal care needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, staff move and support them with efficiency and confidence and high regard for their privacy and dignity. For example, after lunch, where pupils are unable to access playground provision themselves, staff make sure that they are moved out of their wheelchairs and given the opportunity to be free of restrictions for a period of time.

23. Staff genuinely care about their pupils and the tutorial system works well as a time when they can find out about if a pupil is having problems and if anything can be done to help them. Pupils say that staff help them with their work and let them know the areas that they need to improve. Staff are also available at break times to talk to pupils, and those who work with the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders are very sensitive to their needs and acutely aware of any change of mood or sign of distress. Parents feel strongly that arrangements for children starting school are good and help them to settle in quickly. There are similarly effective procedures to prepare pupils and students for leaving school, including careers advice and guidance and support from Connexions advisers.

24. The formal personal, social and health education provision includes regular opportunities for pupils to sit together and discuss their views and any issues that are concerning them. Secondary aged pupils have good opportunities to make choices about the subjects and courses they follow. Currently, a drawback to pupils' involvement in school decisions is the lack of any formal opportunity for their views to be sought. However, there are plans in place to remedy this, as part of the school's commitment to its Healthy Schools award.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents. The school has **excellent** links with other schools and colleges and with the local community.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with community are a huge strength of the school and help it to offer pupils an extremely broad set of experiences.
- Outstanding partnerships with local schools and colleges are very effective in supporting pupils' achievement and their movement to the next stage of their education.
- Information provided to parents is detailed.
- A few parents do not consider that their own views are sought frequently enough.

### Commentary

25. The number of volunteers in the school and the diversity of community involvement are staggering. Together, they provide pupils with knowledge of the surrounding area that can be extremely useful to them in later life and an initial contact with organisations that could be crucial to them for support. Work experience placements rely heavily on the co-operation of local employers who in turn are delighted with the opportunities the partnership gives them for their own staff's personal development. A bowling club reported that, 'The visits of your pupils are very important to us, and we eagerly await their return.' Residential visits, such as the annual French trip, are integrally linked with voluntary help, both in Durham and France. Many lessons, and hence pupils' achievement, are supported by visitors who share their expertise, experience and enthusiasm. Talk of 'the community' disguises the fact that many of the school's partnerships are with the international community, with pupils benefiting from its involvement with schools in Russia, Australia, China, Hungary and Finland, through the Comenius and Socrates projects.

26. Links to local schools and colleges are exceptionally good. For many years, the school has established and sought out opportunities for pupils to work alongside others in mainstream schools. These partnerships with other schools and colleges have a far-reaching impact on pupils' personal development and achievement. 'Student Community Action', based in Durham University, states that the link with Trinity is 'one of the most popular projects amongst our volunteers, and arguably, the project that inspires the most loyalty from them.'

27. There are regular newsletters to parents about the life of the school and Annual Review meetings and reports provide good information about pupils' achievements. Daily comments from staff are written in school planners, where parents have asked for them. Although parents are represented on the governing body, the school has not yet established an effective way of regularly seeking out parents' views formally. The school has worked hard to set up meetings with parents on an informal basis, such as coffee mornings, but has not had a big response. The Parents and Friends Association is active in running social and fundraising events and currently the Christmas Disco is oversubscribed.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership and high aspirations of the headteacher lead to a very clear sense of purpose within the school.

- Very accurate evaluation of many aspects of the school's performance results in highly effective planning for improvement. However, information about pupils' achievement is not easily analysed and used by senior staff.
- Performance management brings good improvement to teaching and identifies priorities for the very good professional development of staff, although induction arrangements need formalising.
- Very effective financial management and administration support helps the school achieve its priorities.
- Governors are very supportive and well informed.

## Commentary

28. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's development in future years. This is based on high aspirations for the academic success of pupils. She demonstrates very strongly her determination that all pupils will achieve as well as they possibly can, in the setting that best suits their needs, following the most effective curriculum. This approach motivates and influences both staff and pupils and has led directly to good improvement since the previous inspection. The headteacher is outward looking and involved in national and international developments related to school improvements. Other staff support her well and share in her vision for the school. The deputy headteachers have clearly defined roles and the senior management team works together very effectively in providing leadership across all of the sites. They offer very good role models for pupils and other staff, in the efficient and effective way they carry out their responsibilities. Subject leadership is variable, but is good overall. Most subjects are led jointly by teachers of both primary and secondary aged pupils. This enables them to more easily maintain oversight of teaching, achievement and the curriculum.
29. There is a comprehensive improvement plan built on the action plans of subject leaders as well as those for whole school developments. This leads to very good strategic planning to help the school achieve its aims. Good progress is being made on the areas in the plan – such as workforce reform, where the school is helping support staff to find more opportunities to undertake administrative tasks. The very good self-evaluation undertaken by the school means that the school is very aware of its strengths and areas for development. As a consequence, many of the issues raised by this inspection have already been identified and feature in the school improvement planning – for example, refining assessment systems. Currently, the lack of consistent information about pupils' achievement over time, using a nationally recognised scale, inhibits the school's ability to compare its performance with that of others or analyse how well different groups of pupils are getting on. For instance, the headteacher is able to quickly gather information about individual pupils, such as those in community care. However, though possible, it is significantly less easy to demonstrate that these pupils are achieving as well as others with similar special educational needs, hence the plans to make the procedures more efficient.
30. The formal arrangements for teachers' performance management are well established. These are having a significant impact on improving teaching and the consistency of certain areas such as curriculum management; a good improvement from the previous inspection. Very appropriate targets are set and the training needs of staff are identified. These lead directly to the very good professional development opportunities for staff, which include observations in schools overseas. There are effective procedures for introducing and settling in new staff but at present they are not set out formally.
31. This large and complex school runs very smoothly, because everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities and senior staff maintain a very clear overview, moving frequently between sites. Financial processes are very well organised and responsibilities are clearly defined. Financial planning is carefully considered. The budget underspend from last year has been very effectively utilised in supporting staffing and planning to improve accommodation. The administration of the school works very effectively across the different sites. Overall, the leadership and management of the school provide a very good climate in the school to support learning, with a consistent emphasis on raising achievement.



32. Governors contribute well to discussions about the shape and direction of the school and understand how it is developing. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. The headteacher provides very comprehensive reports at governing body meetings, which offer opportunities for governors to check how the school is performing as well as information on which they can both challenge and support the management team. In addition, governors find out about the school at first hand – for example, through links with subject leaders. Discussions with the staff help governors develop their appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is a good improvement from the previous inspection.

**Barriers to raising achievement**

Deficiencies in the accommodation at the Kirkham site make it more difficult for staff to provide opportunities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and post-16 students.

**Financial information**

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1682341
Total expenditure	1587358
Expenditure per pupil	8818

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	121601
Balance carried forward to the next	94982

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

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

The provision is **good**.

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

- Children achieve particularly well in developing communication skills, in their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development.
- Teachers plan well for the wide range of children's needs, identifying detailed targets for them to achieve.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to support children's achievement.

#### **Commentary**

33. There are five children in the Foundation Stage, taught in three different classes according to their special needs. It is not possible to compare children's achievement with that at the time of the previous inspection, as the Foundation Stage was not reported on. However, the curriculum was judged to be good at that time and this quality has been maintained. As only a few lessons were observed in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, judgements were not made about these areas of learning.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Commentary**

34. Children achieve very well in this area, because teachers, teaching assistants and therapists work together very well to help them develop the attitudes and skills they need to become confident learners. Activities in lessons help them develop social skills – such as working together, taking turns and experiencing the wider community. Children with autistic spectrum disorders regularly go with their class to visit the café in a neighbouring hospital. They are shown how to be alert to danger when crossing roads and take part in a pleasant social occasion as they use symbol cards to choose food and drink. This weekly lesson makes an excellent contribution to children's personal and social development and communication skills. In their different classes, the needs of all children are catered for very well. For example, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties have clear plans to specify the arrangements to support them at lunchtime. On occasions, children with different special educational needs are given opportunities to work together – for example, in music lessons for those with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. They are encouraged to interact with each other, as when they sing 'Find a Friend.'

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

#### **Commentary**

35. Teachers' planning is very thorough, with children's individual targets at the heart of each lesson. Children are encouraged to use a wide range of methods of communication, matched very closely to their particular needs. For instance, children with profound and multiple learning

difficulties are expected to reach out and hit large switches in order to operate recorded voices, so they can join in telling the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar.' Those with severe learning difficulties learn to use signs to supplement their limited speech – for example, when answering questions about a 'Postman Pat' story or joining in with 'Sing a Rainbow.' There is very good use of a picture exchange communication system for those pupils who need it, as well as additional communication aids where required.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Commentary**

36. Children receive plenty of well planned opportunities to develop mathematical skills and knowledge. For example, in one lesson, children with profound and multiple learning difficulties practised counting and learned more about size, through the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears.' A good range of resources encouraged children to try hard as they followed the story and used large switches to communicate and join in. Children with autistic spectrum disorders learn to persevere with tasks as they complete jigsaws in the shape of numbers, matched well to their ability. Because of their special educational needs, lessons with this group are most successful when children work individually rather than as part of a group. This approach works very well in the class for children with severe learning difficulties, where children are presented with a choice of relevant activities – such as water play or matching shapes – and then extracted for intensive periods of work with the teacher, reflecting very accurately their individual targets.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Commentary**

37. The curriculum provides plenty of varied opportunities for children to explore the world around them and be creative. For example, in a very good music lesson, children with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties thoroughly enjoyed choosing symbols and beating a drum loudly or softly, according to the instruction. They laughed and squealed with delight as the drum approached them, but the teacher managed their excitement very well, calming them down so they could concentrate and learn. Children use computers and other technology in a range of activities. For instance, those with severe learning difficulties are given support to use a mouse, building on their existing ability to use a rollerball to move around the pages of a program about Kipper.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Commentary**

38. Children have very good opportunities to explore their physical capabilities as they undertake a range of physical activities appropriate to their needs. For example, those with autistic spectrum disorders use a climbing frame and a trampoline. They are given good instructions to reach up and pull as they climb and to time the drop, bounce and tuck on the trampoline. As a result of the teacher's encouragement and clear instructions and advice, children develop their confidence and competence. Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties are encouraged to make the most of their physical skills. They develop their ability to grasp and pull – for example, squeezing a foam ball. In the lesson observed, teamwork between staff was a particular strength, with teaching assistants making a very strong contribution to children's learning and achievement. All children have weekly swimming lessons, benefiting from specialist instruction and the on site pool.

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

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

*Sixteen lessons were seen in English. French is the modern foreign language taught to pupils in Years 7 to 11. Only one lesson was seen, so judgements have not been made about French.*

#### **French**

39. Achievement was good in the lesson observed, because pupils were well taught. The co-ordinator is very committed to forging links with the community to support learning in French. Pupils benefit from hearing French spoken by two visitors from the local university who attend on a regular basis to support in French lessons. Each year, a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils attend a residential visit to France, developing their language skills and their knowledge of another culture.

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- There have been good improvements in English since the previous inspection.
- Pupils achieve very well in communicating, speaking and listening, because they have many opportunities to develop and practise their skills.
- Achievement is equally good, regardless of pupils' special educational needs.
- The achievements of older and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently recognised by examinations in English.
- Recently introduced assessment procedures are not yet firmly embedded and practices are inconsistent.

#### **Commentary**

40. Since the previous inspection, standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly. There have been improvements too, as a result of training, in teachers' skills and confidence. Features of the National Literacy Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy have been adapted so there is greater consistency of teaching across the school. The arrangements for grouping secondary aged pupils of similar ability for literacy lessons have resulted in more relevant and challenging work and higher expectations. Information and communication technology is now used well to promote learning.
41. According to their particular special educational needs, pupils express their preferences through electronic communication aids, signs and gestures, by answering questions, and by taking part in discussions and drama. Exciting lessons and activities are often organised, to encourage pupils to communicate. For instance, pupils in Years 2 and 3 with severe learning difficulties were very interested in the owls brought in by a visitor. They responded eagerly to his questions and the most confident pupils asked questions of their own. Teachers and support staff are patient and encouraging with pupils who have difficulty in expressing themselves, and value all contributions. This helps to develop confidence and raises pupils' self-esteem. Good support from speech and language therapists and the use of signing, pictures and symbols, helps pupils with specific communication difficulties – for example, autistic spectrum disorders – to make equally good progress.
42. Teaching is always good and often very good. Work is carefully matched to pupils' levels of attainment and interests, with activities and strategies to suit the range of special needs. For example, in the special classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, activities are often individual, because many pupils find it difficult to learn as part of a group. Secondary aged pupils

worked very hard during one lesson, because the tasks were matched so closely to their stage of development. One Year 7 pupil used signs at appropriate points in a rhyming story, read by the teacher. He followed the words with his finger and tried hard to speak. His enjoyment was evident and the praise he received was well deserved. Again, carefully chosen activities and imaginative resources led pupils in Years 5 and 6 with profound and multiple learning difficulties, some with visual impairment, to achieve very well. The story, 'My Presents', provided rich opportunities for pupils to use all their senses as they investigated objects – for example, tearing off wrapping paper – with the help of an adult. They responded by making very good efforts – such as pointing with their eyes, following simple instructions or matching what they found in their parcel to the party blower the teacher was demonstrating. Although not all teachers are English specialists, they all display good knowledge of the subject. For example, lower attaining pupils are taught a range of strategies to help them develop and enjoy early reading skills. Annual reading tests show that higher attaining pupils make good progress and that this is maintained as they move through the school. Teachers place a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' phonic skills, teaching them how to tackle unfamiliar words and provide them with good opportunities to read during lessons.

43. As a result of this consistently high quality teaching, boys and girls and groups of pupils with different special education needs make the same good progress. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders show increasing understanding and control in many situations through improved listening and expression. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties derive meaning from looking at pictures, feeling and touching objects, and by listening to CD-ROMs, computer programs or adults reading aloud. Higher attaining pupils with severe or moderate learning difficulties write with clarity in an organised and imaginative way in handwriting that is fluent, joined and legible. Pupils' achievements in Years 10 and 11 are currently recognised through the ASDAN Silver and Bronze awards. The school is aware that a number of higher attaining pupils are capable of success in Entry level examinations.
44. The two enthusiastic co-ordinators provide effective leadership and management for the subject. They monitor the plans of other teachers, analyse test performances and support colleagues with ideas, resources and training. Their development planning provides a clear sense of direction for the subject. A variety of assessment procedures, although satisfactory overall, does not provide concise evidence to easily analyse and compare the achievements of individuals and groups. In addition, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always give advice to prompt further improvement. While the library for secondary aged pupils has a satisfactory range of fiction and non-fiction books, it is not well sited, being in a classroom. This restricts its use as a central resource.

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

45. Throughout the day, pupils are given lots of encouragement to practise communicating, by speaking or using other methods, and these support their achievement very well. The school provides good opportunities to promote pupils' literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in mathematics they learn the vocabulary associated with estimation, position and shape, in art they are asked to describe their work to the class, and in history they read about the life and work of Florence Nightingale and write about the plight of soldiers in the World Wars. However, literacy skills do not feature regularly in teachers' planning in other subjects and, therefore, are incidentally and not deliberately reinforced.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Thirteen lessons were seen.*

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure that the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities are met, leading to good achievement.
- Grouping pupils in Years 7 to 11 into classes for numeracy, according to their ability, is successful and enhances their achievement.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support to individual pupils so that all pupils benefit from lessons and achieve well.
- There is a lack of suitable examination courses for higher achieving pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Although teachers are thorough in assessing pupils' progress, because several systems for assessment are in operation it is not easy to analyse the progress of individuals or groups of pupils.

## Commentary

46. Teachers ensure that all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder, participate fully in lessons and learn well. For example, in a lesson for secondary aged pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, a parachute was used very effectively to stimulate pupils to count to ten. The teacher was meticulous in ensuring that all pupils had an opportunity to count under the parachute. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed this and made very good progress in tapping out or vocalising numbers. Teachers know pupils very well and are good at explaining concepts that pupils find difficult in a way that they can understand. An example of this was when Year 5 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties were taught about weight. Although pupils found the activities challenging, by the end of the lesson they had achieved a good understanding of 'heavier' and 'lighter', with a higher attaining pupil pointing out that the scales were balancing when the nineteenth brick was added.
47. Teachers and teaching assistants work together as an effective team. They are skilled at giving the right amount of support to individual pupils so that they achieve well and learn to work independently. Very good relationships are evident between staff and pupils and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils behave well and want to succeed. Because they enjoy lessons they are keen to participate in all activities and this enhances the progress they make. Although teachers are good at giving pupils feedback in lessons, there is variation in the way in which their work is marked. In some cases, marking is not sufficient to enable pupils to know how well they have done or to show whether they have made progress.
48. The subject is well led and managed by the two subject leaders and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The curriculum, guided by the National Numeracy Strategy, is well established across the school. Teachers use resources well to give pupils opportunities to apply mathematics in practical situations. For example, pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 7 to 9 use real money in number games to help them to recognise and learn the value of coins. Information and communication technology is used effectively in lessons to support pupils' learning. For example, during one lesson for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 1 to 5, a higher attaining pupil used a computer program to count three ducks. Teaching and planning of lessons are checked regularly to ensure that provision is good throughout the school. The establishment of 'ability' groupings for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is an effective strategy to promote their skills in numeracy and ensure that they follow a suitable curriculum.
49. Pupils are assessed thoroughly to measure their progress. However, at the present time several assessment systems are in use. This makes it harder to get an overview of pupils' progress across the school. The headteacher and subject leaders are aware of this, and plan to streamline systems to enable them to analyse evidence of progress more easily. The current examination courses for Year 11 pupils are not sufficiently challenging for higher ability pupils, whose achievements are high enough to obtain success at Entry level in mathematics. Links have been established with staff in mainstream schools in order to help to resolve this issue.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Mathematics is used satisfactorily in other subjects. For example, in geography, Year 6 pupils draw graphs to show the number of different kinds of shops in the local area. Pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities do counting activities linked to stories and songs such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' and 'Ten in a bed'. In design and technology lessons throughout the school, pupils regularly measure and weigh.

## SCIENCE

*Ten lessons were seen.*

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for pupils to gain public recognition for their achievements are significantly better in science than in other subjects. This is because pupils are entered for GCSE single science and Entry level science examinations.
- The recording and use of assessment information in science across the school are not developed and co-ordinated well enough. Teachers, therefore, do not have the information they need in order to report if a pupil is achieving well enough, or better or worse than expected.
- Pupils enjoy practical activities very much, and they work safely with equipment. This is because their attitudes and behaviour are very good and they are managed very well.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve very well because teachers use resources very effectively to develop their responses to sensory stimuli.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough to support learning in science.

### Commentary

51. Achievement by pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties in courses leading to Entry level science and to GCSE single science is good. This is because pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop the confidence and skill to work independently to complete their coursework investigations. Their success with coursework is made possible because they have access to consistently good specialist science teaching and support, plus good laboratory facilities.

52. It is difficult to track a pupil's progress from year to year because assessment records are not always dated, attainment levels are not used consistently, and reports to parents do not evaluate if the pupil has made enough progress since the last report. Altogether there are nineteen classes timetabled for science, spread over three school sites. Thirteen different teachers teach science. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory. However, the two subject leaders do not currently allocate sufficient time to enable them to keep track of the overall quality of assessment records and reports to parents, nor to use assessment information to review patterns of achievement and take action.

53. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in science have improved well since the previous inspection. They are now very good. This very positive response in science lessons, coupled with good quality primary and secondary science teaching, is resulting in good achievement in science across the school. In a Year 10 and 11 lesson, for example, pupils with severe learning difficulties very enthusiastically, and safely, make and test the strength of electromagnets by winding wire on to a large nail, attaching the wires into an electrical circuit, then counting the number of paper clips the magnet attracts. Pupils persevere even though they find the skill of predicting and explaining outcomes difficult. The work is challenging for them but this does not dampen their enthusiasm. This very positive attitude is typical of science lessons across the school.

54. The effectiveness of using sensory stimuli was demonstrated in a Year 1 lesson on materials and their properties, for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The teacher is very creative, using Christmas tree decorations, including oranges decorated with cloves, to encourage pupils to use their senses when dressing the Christmas tree. They all respond very positively. They feel, smell, listen and observe the many different materials used to make the decorations. For older pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, teaching is equally creative, using the ingredients for a trifle in order to extend pupils' sensory awareness of the properties of materials.
55. There has been some improvement in the use of computers to support learning in science, but not enough. Overall there is little evidence in pupils' work that computers play a significant part in science learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

*Seven lessons were seen.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils become confident in their use of computers because they have plenty of good quality opportunities for learning.
- Pupils in Year 11 benefit from lessons at a mainstream school.
- The range of both hardware and software has been extensively improved since the previous inspection and teachers make good use of the resources.
- The range of examination courses is not wide enough for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' learning is not always reinforced sufficiently at the end of lessons.

### **Commentary**

56. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Lesson plans indicate clearly what pupils are expected to learn and do and teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils, so that they understand what is to happen. The youngest pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties are helped to notice the link between the cursor and the mouse. For instance, higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a program to dress Teletubbies, by moving the clothes around the screen. They find this difficult, but are willing to persevere for many attempts, because they enjoy the experience, which is well chosen to appeal to their interests. Pupils quickly gain confidence, as a result of the good range of experiences provided in their regular information and communication technology lessons. For example, pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties use the Internet to find information, collect images from a bank and use the mouse to position them. By Year 7, many pupils are confident in logging on, finding and opening saved work, working with a word processing package and printing their completed work. Their expertise increases as they move up through the school and use other programs, such as spreadsheets. Very good relationships enable teachers and teaching assistants to move between pupils, offering advice and assistance that help them improve their understanding and skills. Occasionally, there is not enough variation in the tasks required of pupils of different abilities. This means that some higher attaining pupils complete them long before others.
57. Leadership and management are good. The subject leaders share a clear sense of purpose and have developed the school's resources, both hardware and software, well since the previous inspection. Most computers are now networked to a central server and a variety of switches and other control devices are available for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teachers are already using the recently purchased interactive white boards well. For example, at the start of the lesson, they demonstrate the activities that pupils are to do and at the end they display pupils' work, praise their achievements and explain the skills they used. Pupils enjoy seeing their work highlighted in this way and this builds their self-esteem. Many pupils with



profound and multiple learning difficulties routinely use information and communication technology to enable them to communicate. Teachers make sure that they develop the skills they need and achieve equally as well as others. In a lesson for secondary aged pupils, the work and resources were matched closely to pupils' needs – for example, using large switches to operate a computer program. Because the staff know pupils so well, they judge very accurately when to present the task – the moment when a pupil focuses on the screen. Again, pupils are relaxed and confident, prepared to co-operate and tolerate being helped to adopt the correct hand position in order to hit the switch. At the end of the best lessons, time is used effectively to review what has been completed and how well pupils have learned, where the next lesson will take them or how they might use the same skills in other subjects. However, this is not always the case and occasionally the lesson finishes abruptly and pupils move on hurriedly to the next lesson.

58. In Year 11, pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties thoroughly enjoy a weekly lesson taught by a specialist teacher in a mainstream school. They bring to this the skills they have learned at Trinity, plus a willingness and facility to learn more. Pupils from the mainstream school provide additional support and good role models, increasing the personal development opportunities provided by this very effective initiative. However, pupils do not currently have opportunities to enter for examinations that would demonstrate how well they are achieving.

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

59. Although there are several good examples of the use of information and communication technology in other subjects, the school recognises that these opportunities are not yet planned consistently. For example, an interactive white board was used to good effect in a Year 6 literacy lesson to enable the pupils to recognise first words and then read phrases from their 'big book'. In a Year 11 art lesson, pupils used different software packages to produce Christmas cards. In contrast, information and communication technology has yet to make a significant impact in subjects such as science, design and technology and religious education, although the respective subject leaders are looking for opportunities to develop this aspect.

## **HUMANITIES**

*Two lessons were seen in each of geography and history. Judgements were not made about these subjects. Seven religious education lessons were seen.*

### **History**

60. The curriculum ensures that pupils build up their knowledge of events in the recent and distant past as they move up through the school and teachers interpret this imaginatively. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher skilfully uses original furniture and equipment to make a 'Victorian' classroom. This enables the pupils to understand what life was like for children during the reign of Queen Victoria.

### **Geography**

61. It is evident from teachers' detailed planning that the work in geography is varied and interesting. For example, a Year 6 class appreciate the different types of food on sale in other parts of the world and the significance of the 'Fairtrade' mark; and a Year 9 class learn to assemble and interpret a pictorial representation of the school. These lessons involve pupils in gathering evidence from first-hand experiences – shopping and taking photographs – and require them to locate places on a map. A feature of both lessons was the effective deployment of teaching assistants in maintaining pupils on task, the inventive use of resources, and the regular reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make the subject relevant to all pupils, regardless of their special educational needs.
- Artefacts and audio-visual aids are used well to improve pupils' understanding and knowledge.
- The current examination courses do not sufficiently challenge higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for reflection are missed.

### Commentary

62. Lessons are generally well planned so that they meet the differing needs of the pupils. For example, for a lesson introducing the Christmas story to secondary aged pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorders, the teacher had selected a short video, with no spoken words. Most pupils were able to pay attention to this and several demonstrated their understanding – for instance, by miming knocking on a door as Mary and Joseph approached the inn. In many lessons, teachers create good opportunities for pupils to take part in discussions, drawing on their own experiences and contributing to their speaking and listening skills and personal development. In a primary class of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, pupils showed that they were extending their understanding of 'celebration' and could name and describe many of the different elements that are used to enliven the Christmas festive season.

63. Teachers often plan imaginative activities to support pupils' learning. For instance, lower attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders enjoyed taking part in a game, using 'dreidels' (spinners) they had made previously. The teacher reminded them that they were learning about the Jewish festival of Hannukah and helped pupils to appreciate the significance of the menorah candles that they lit. Teachers' determination to find practical ways for pupils to learn about religion is a significant strength of the subject. They work hard to enable pupils to understand the messages hidden within the stories in whichever religion they are studying. For example, during one lesson, pupils in Year 10 with moderate and severe learning difficulties compared parables in Sikhism with others in Christianity. Opportunities for pupils to talk and think about what they have learned are often omitted, which reduces the impact of the ending of lessons.

64. The subject leaders have successfully maintained the high standards described in the previous inspection report. Leadership and management are good, with checks made of teachers' planning and pupils' work. A weakness in the use of information and communication technology in lessons is recognised and improvement is being actively pursued. Although the current award scheme is an appropriate accreditation for many pupils in Years 10 and 11, the highest attainers do not yet have their achievement fully recognised through examinations.

## TECHNOLOGY

*Seven design and technology lessons were seen.*

### Design and technology

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils develop their making and evaluation skills well but, at present, their designing skills lag behind.
- The curriculum is wide ranging and well planned.
- The very good specialist accommodation for secondary aged pupils is used to the full.
- The current examination courses do not fully stretch all Year 10 and 11 pupils.

## **Commentary**

65. The emphasis teachers place on making and evaluating means that pupils are well motivated to complete their work to a good standard. This was particularly apparent in a lesson in which Year 10 and 11 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties were icing Christmas cakes and designing and making cake boxes. They discussed very maturely how the boxes could be held together, suggesting different fastenings that might be used. Because the teacher used questions very effectively, matching them well to meet pupils' differing needs, they were all able to reach a decision that led to boxes which looked attractive and were safe and secure – fit for their purpose. Teachers and teaching assistants give appropriate individual support to pupils, based on a clear knowledge of what they have already achieved and their capabilities. However, although pupils' making skills develop very well, the subject leaders are fully aware that, at present, less attention is paid to helping them design and plan their own work. For instance, in a lesson for pupils in Year 7 with moderate and severe learning difficulties, pupils all used the same parrot template to make a balancing toy. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are just beginning to learn how to produce plans for putting into practice their own answers to problems – such as designing a model land yacht.
66. All pupils are fully included in every aspect of the curriculum, which is modified to meet their particular needs. For instance, pupils in Years 1 and 2 with autistic spectrum disorders learn to make 'moving pictures', motivated by the teacher's use of photographs of themselves. Again, very relevant activities are planned for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. During one lesson, those in years 7 to 11 were involved in making jelly, choosing between colours and pressing a large switch to operate a kettle.
67. The subject is led and managed well, with clear plans for future developments and sound improvement since the previous inspection. The good curriculum gives pupils experience of a wide range of materials and techniques, through making a variety of products. The subject benefits from very good workshops for both resistant materials and food technology, used by secondary aged pupils. Because the principal teachers are subject specialists, the resources are used effectively, with very good attention paid to issues of health and safety. Because pupils are reminded consistently about how they should work in order to keep themselves safe, the subject contributes well to their personal development. However, the higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have opportunities to enter examinations in design and technology. Their achievements are not acknowledged fully through the youth award scheme.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

*Only two lessons were seen in art and design, so judgements were not made. Five music lessons were seen.*

### **Art and design**

68. The curriculum is good in both primary and secondary areas of the school, enabling pupils to experience a wide range of materials and techniques. Teachers' plans show that activities are carefully matched to pupils' needs and the results of pupils' work are well displayed throughout the school.

## Music

The provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy music lessons, because they are full of interest and variety.
- Teachers make sure that the needs of all pupils are met.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- A rich range of musical experiences is offered outside lessons.

### Commentary

69. Lessons are well planned to include many opportunities for pupils to make music. For example, in a very good lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8 with severe learning difficulties, they were involved from the very first moment, warming up by clapping, stamping and playing percussion instruments, keeping a pulse going. Pupils then enjoyed singing familiar – and less well known – songs, such as a 'Hello' song and 'Jingle Bells'. They sang with huge enthusiasm, showing great confidence, at ease with the staff. The teacher made the most of a wide variety of resources. For example, a cymbal was spun and pupils were encouraged to chant in time with its movement – 'Faster, faster'. Recorded and computer generated music, plus the teacher's guitar playing, enabled pupils to hear other performances and provided changes of pace, helping to maintain their interest. In this lesson, as in many others, the teaching assistant played a significant role, providing physical and moral support whilst encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible.
70. The curriculum and activities are well matched to the varying needs of all pupils. For example, with significant support, pupils in Years 5 and 6 also played bells, copying the rhythm of phrases such as 'Merry Christmas', as the teacher beat a drum. In lessons for those with similar needs in Years 7 to 11, the teacher combines to good effect his knowledge of the subject and of individual pupils. They are encouraged to make the most of whatever abilities they have – for example, moving their arms or feet or making sounds. By the end of one lesson, after much hard work, the more vocal pupils were able to join in a song, by making a joyful noise at the correct time, accompanied by enormous smiles.
71. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties choose whether or not to pursue music as a separate subject. However, music plays such a large part in school life that they all continue to benefit, in terms of their personal development. In the last year, visiting musicians have included percussionists, a South American trio, and double bass, guitar and singing soloists. Lower attaining pupils with severe learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11 take part in a college course which involves drama and music. During the inspection, they created music to illustrate aspects of Christmas stories – for example, holding a rainstick to imitate falling snow and touching a tambourine to mimic patting a snowman.
72. Leadership and management are satisfactorily overall, but good in the secondary years. A new subject leader has only recently taken responsibility for the primary years. The high standards reported previously have been successfully maintained.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

*Eight lessons were seen.*

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher and swimming instructor are highly skilled specialists.

- Pupils achieve very well across a range of activities.
- All pupils show a real appetite for, and enjoyment of, the subject.
- The subject is well resourced, led and managed.
- Accommodation for secondary aged pupils is barely adequate.

## Commentary

73. Teaching is always very good. Lessons are very well planned, organised and prepared. Relevant and challenging activities, often adapted and modified to match pupils' individual needs, build on prior learning and proceed at pace. Pupils and staff are changed into suitable kit, reflecting high expectations in the subject. Good attention is paid to warming up and cooling down activities so that pupils develop their understanding of fitness and health. Expert demonstrations and unambiguous instructions ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. Very good constructive feedback helps pupils improve their performance during lessons. Teaching assistants are well deployed and are clear about their role in improving access and promoting learning. Physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy and mobility programmes enable all pupils to participate fully in physical education and achieve very well.
74. As a result of this consistently high quality teaching, boys and girls and groups of pupils with different special educational needs, achieve equally well. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, relax and enjoy the feeling of freedom and buoyancy in the hydrotherapy pool, while more able pupils work hard to improve their water fitness and stroke techniques. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders combine a sequence of controlled bounces on the trampoline and climb up, over and through apparatus with growing confidence control and co-ordination. Those with severe and moderate learning difficulties develop their hand/eye co-ordination, stick skills and their understanding of the game of hockey.
75. Pupils' positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the subject contribute to their very good progress. They strive to improve their performance, behave co-operatively, and learn to work in pairs, small groups or teams. They learn to observe the conventions of fair play, honest competition and good sporting behaviour by taking part in a number of inter-school sports. Pupils are very proud of their achievements, which are accredited by national associations in gymnastics, trampolining, swimming and athletics. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 are working towards the Junior Sports Leader qualification. Sport England has recognised the school's achievements in sport with the award of Sports Mark (Secondary) and Active Mark Gold (Primary).
76. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic specialist. Because she and the swimming instructor lead all the physical education lessons, the quality of teaching and expectations are consistent. The curriculum is diverse and well planned. The school makes good use of its links with other schools, local community facilities and sporting associations to enhance the range of opportunities on offer. While work is imminent to improve changing facilities, gymnastics, dance and indoor games for secondary aged pupils take place in a multi-purpose hall, which is also used for assemblies and dinners. This not only restricts its use, but furniture and gymnastic equipment stored around the edges of the hall are potentially hazardous. The subject has made good improvements since the previous inspection on what was already effective provision.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

*Twelve lessons were seen. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.*

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with schools and the community support the development of pupils' personal and social skills very well.
- A very good programme of work has been introduced throughout the school.
- Very good leadership and management are provided by the two subject leaders.
- All pupils work towards achieving clear targets in personal and social development which are shared with staff and parents.

## Commentary

77. All pupils have many opportunities for personal and social development. The excellent links which have been established with schools in England and abroad help pupils to widen their view of the world and develop their self-confidence very well. For example, pupils look forward to receiving letters from the pen friends they have made in a school in Finland. Older pupils are helped to become responsible members of the local community through a variety of innovative and high quality projects. Year 11 pupils are currently working with their Euro Member of Parliament to produce a book on access for wheelchair users to facilities in Durham. The 'Kirkham Café', which is run by the secondary aged pupils and post-16 students, has won the 'Barclays New Futures' award. Pupils have very good opportunities to learn about health and safety and how to serve members of the public. The school is skilled in helping pupils to learn to take responsibility. An example of this was when pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in Years 1 and 2 were shown how to look for traffic when crossing minor roads during a visit to a cafe. Years 10 and 11 pupils are given considerable responsibility when they work in the school's branch of a high street bank.

78. The two subject leaders work very effectively together to ensure that provision for the subject is consistently effective in timetabled lessons throughout the school. They have introduced a very good programme of work to help pupils to become good citizens as well as to promote their personal and social development. Health education is taught very sensitively with support from the school nurse and includes a comprehensive programme of drugs education, sex education and healthy living. This enables pupils to cope very well with difficult issues. An example of this was when Year 10 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties showed considerable maturity and respect for each other during a sex education lesson. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award. The programme of work is carefully audited and teaching and planning is monitored to ensure that pupils can build on and extend their existing skills and knowledge. The good subject development plan has clear targets, for example, to establish a school council as a forum for pupils to be more involved in school planning. The subject has improved well since the previous inspection – for example, teaching is now very good throughout the school.

79. In their individual educational plans, pupils have targets for personal and social development which are well matched to their individual needs. These are shared with parents and also promoted through the tutorial system and pupils' home diaries. Where appropriate, pupils have plans with targets for aspects of their personal care, such as feeding. Teachers are very skilled at using whole class systems such as star charts and commendations to motivate pupils to work hard to improve their behaviour and social skills. Additionally, they ensure that all pupils are able to play a full part in lessons – for instance, through the use of symbols to aid communication – and achieve equally well.

## PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

*Fifteen lessons involving post-16 students were seen.*

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students with severe learning difficulties in the Further Education Unit, and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, achieve very well because teaching is very good and students work very hard.
- The programme for students in the Further Education Unit is very well developed, led and managed.
- Students are prepared very well for the next stage in their lives.
- Post-16 accommodation is unsatisfactory for students in the Further Education Unit and for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

## Commentary

80. Students with severe learning difficulties achieve a wide range of further education certificates including many 'Towards Independence' units, Level Up and Level 1 Challenge awards, and the City and Guilds preliminary cookery certificate. The latter is a demanding one year course in Year 12 for students in the Unit. The quality of teaching and support for students in the Unit is very good because staff have a very good understanding of the students' learning, physical and emotional needs. For their part, the students have a very positive attitude to school and their views of the school are very favourable.
81. The very small number of students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are very alert and responsive to the very effective sensory learning programme that has been developed to meet their individual learning needs. Students are given every opportunity develop responses to sensory stimuli through speech, signing, facial expression, movement and gestures, for example, because the quality of teaching and learning support is consistently very high. When relevant opportunities arise, these students are included in lessons and activities in the Further Education Unit – for instance, during creative arts sessions.
82. The post-16 programme in the Further Education Unit for students with severe learning difficulties has been very well developed over the years by a very committed and very effective co-ordinator. As a result students achieve very well. Students study courses in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, citizenship, independent living, humanities – including religious education – college link courses, shopping skills, personal health and fitness, and creative arts. Tutorial lessons are very effective in helping students to review their achievements and concerns. These lessons include time for reflection with time for students to think about their own work and lives and wider issues. Fund raising and support for disadvantaged people in the world contribute very well to students' personal development.
83. A strength of the teaching is that, whatever the subject or course, a consistent emphasis is given to making the work relevant to students' ages. They are treated as young adults and respond accordingly. For instance, a numeracy lesson dealt with budgeting for Christmas. Students were encouraged to improve their basic numeracy skills – for example, counting – in a context that was very topical and meaningful and supported the development of independent living skills. Students' achievement is enhanced further by the ability of teachers and teaching assistants to take advantage of opportunities that arise in other lessons – for example, during the weekly tutorial, where students total their 'credits' and 'concerns' and enter the outcomes in their planners
84. The guidance students receive on the best routes to take on leaving school is very good. They continue to have strong links with the Connexions service to prepare for the future. Vocational opportunities are well matched to their learning needs. The co-ordinator provides parents with largely very comprehensive and informative reports of their wide ranging achievements. Students' vocational achievements, however, are not given enough emphasis in reports to parents. Students in the Further Education Unit socialise with other young adults – for example from the local university, and at college – helping them to develop and practise their social and communication skills. University students support the Unit's very extensive weekly option

programme. This programme enables students to make choices from a wide range of activities including cooking, cinema, fund raising for charity, making train journeys, enterprise activities, picnics and visits to the beach in summer.

85. The accommodation in the Further Education Unit for students with severe learning difficulties is too small for the numbers on roll. There is not enough space to provide for the development of their social, recreational, independence and home-based living skills. Students are frequently taught out of the classroom base, elsewhere in school or off site, because space at the Unit is severely cramped. The accommodation for post-16 students with profound and multiple learning is also unsatisfactory. It is much too small for the easy movement of wheelchairs, and for the provision of a suitably soft area for relaxation and changes of position. Parents have also expressed their concern about the inadequacies of the accommodation for post-16 students.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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