

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN VIANNEY SCHOOL

Stockport and Stretford

LEA area: Stockport and Trafford

Unique reference number: 106167

Headteacher (Lower School): Mr M. O'Donoghue

Headteacher (Upper School): Mr J. Cusick

Acting headteacher of Upper School at the time of inspection:
Mrs J. Wright

Lead inspector: Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st January 2004

Inspection number: 263632

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	5 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	140
Upper School address:	Rye Bank Road Firswood Stretford Manchester
Postcode:	M16 0EX
Telephone number:	0161 8817843
Fax number:	0161 8816948
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Lochery
Date of previous inspection:	5 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St John Vianney is a non-maintained Catholic school for boys and girls aged five to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. It is non profit-making. Most pupils' fees are paid by the Manchester, Stockport or Trafford local education authorities, but there are also small numbers from Tameside, Salford and Cheshire. The school is located on two sites. The Lower School, for pupils aged five to 11, is in Stockport and the Upper School, which caters for those aged 11 to 16, is seven miles away in the Stretford area of Trafford. Each site has a headteacher. At present, 140 pupils attend the school – 47 at the Lower School and 93 at the Upper School. There are 47 girls and 93 boys. All the pupils have statements of special educational need, specifying moderate learning difficulties. The pupils in the Lower School have more complex needs than those at the time of the previous inspection. Currently, when they join the Lower School, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. Five of these pupils have autistic spectrum disorders, in addition to moderate learning difficulties. Fourteen others display behaviour that challenges, with three of these having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and four more showing indications of autistic spectrum disorders. Most pupils move to the Upper School at the end of Year 6, to be joined by others who have not been successful in mainstream education. Pupils in the Upper School tend to have less significant learning difficulties and their attainment on entry is generally below average. Three have autistic spectrum disorders and six have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A significant number of others also exhibit challenging behaviour, two of these having their emotional and behavioural difficulties recognised in their statements. The majority of pupils are white but five are of mixed heritage. Two others are Indian, one Pakistani and three are black. One child is a refugee from Kosovo, for whom English is an additional language. Although pupils' socio-economic circumstances are varied, in the main they are well below average. Nine are in public care. The school has achieved the Sportsmark, Healthy Schools Award and the School Achievement Award. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher of the Upper School was absent owing to ill-health and the deputy headteacher was acting headteacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design, special educational needs
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, modern foreign language, physical education
27409	Susan Hunt	Team inspector	English, geography, English as an additional language
21822	Helen Maskew	Team inspector	Personal, social, health and citizenship education, history, music
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Ltd

102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
GL52 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS	18
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St John Vianney is a **good** school with many very good features. Pupils achieve well and their personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils get on especially well in English, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- The school very successfully helps to prepare pupils to be good citizens and for their lives after they have left school.
- The governors provide a very effective link between the Lower and Upper Schools and ensure that pupils are provided with a good education.
- Staff require more training to help them meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils with complex difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorders.
- The school takes very great care to ensure that pupils are safe, secure and happy.
- Teachers provide a very wide variety of activities to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school works very closely with parents, other schools and the community.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils now achieve more, with less variation between subjects and age groups. Improvement has been especially good in the Lower School overall and in information and communication technology in the Upper School, but all of the key subjects have improved well. Pupils' attitudes and personal development have improved and so has attendance in the Upper School.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 achieve well, as do those in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in speaking and listening, writing, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education. In reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology, achievement is good. Girls and boys, including the small numbers from minority ethnic groups, achieve equally well, regardless of their special educational needs. For example, in the main, those with autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour get on as well as the pupils whose needs are less complex. In Year 11, pupils are successful in a growing range of examinations, up to and including GCSE in several subjects.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are also very good. They mostly behave well, although a small minority find this very difficult, owing to their special educational needs. Attendance is satisfactory overall and very good in the Lower School. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to learn how to cope in different social situations and are encouraged to help and respect others, in and out of school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teachers work hard to make lessons relevant to all pupils. However, very occasionally, the needs of those with autistic spectrum disorders are not met entirely. As a result, in a minority of lessons they learn less well. Teachers collect valuable information about how well pupils have learned, but have to spend more time than necessary in order to make use of this, because they don't store it in computer files. Lessons are planned carefully and include interesting and relevant activities, which encourage pupils to try hard.

The curriculum is well organised and effective, meeting pupils' changing needs as they move up through the school. For instance, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a good mixture of National Curriculum subjects and work related courses. There are very many activities provided to enrich the curriculum and make learning enjoyable. These are supported by very strong links with parents, other schools and the community. Pupils are cared for very well and they are provided with very good support at times that they could find difficult to cope with – such as when they move from Lower to Upper School.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is well led with the headteachers making sure that each part of the school moves forward and shares the same high aspirations for all pupils. Management is also good. The school is well aware of its strengths and what needs to be developed further – for example, teachers' ability to meet the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Governance is very good. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities very conscientiously and ensure that all aspects of the school are very well known to them. They use the fees paid by local education authorities very efficiently, for the benefit of the pupils concerned.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, they find the school highly approachable and consider that their children are treated very fairly.

Pupils' views are very positive. They like their teachers and lessons and they feel cared for.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Ensure that all staff continue to receive training and advice in order to help them consistently and effectively meet the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

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

- Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening, writing, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Girls and boys achieve equally well, regardless of their special educational needs or ethnic heritage.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successful in a variety of examination courses.
- The very good achievements of a few pupils enable them to move on to mainstream schools.

Commentary

1. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is good in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. In speaking and listening, writing, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education, it is very good. The school has identified that pupils – especially those in Years 1 to 6 – have particular problems in listening carefully and speaking clearly. As a result, these skills have been targets in the school improvement plans and teachers have actively and successfully promoted them during lessons in all subjects. Teachers similarly place great emphasis on encouraging pupils to write independently. They provide lots of carefully structured and interesting opportunities, especially within English lessons, and these have given pupils confidence to attempt to record their ideas and knowledge. In physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education, a similar combination of teachers' expertise and a wide variety of relevant experiences combine to enable pupils to be very successful in these areas. In mathematics, science and information and communication technology, pupils are taught well and their achievements reflect this. In these subjects, together with English and physical education, pupils now achieve better than at the time of the previous inspection. There has been particular progress made in the Lower School and in information and communication technology in the Upper School, linked respectively to improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
2. When pupils' particular difficulties are taken into account, their achievements are similar. This is because the school is so aware of each pupil as an individual and lessons are tailored to meet their needs. For instance, the pupils whose behaviour is challenging achieve well. There is no evidence that the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are achieving less well. However, during individual lessons, their learning is occasionally less effective than that of other pupils, because the approaches used do not consistently meet their needs. Boys and girls, pupils in public care and the small numbers from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well overall, because the school ensures that all pupils are provided with opportunities that do not disadvantage them. On the contrary, because assessment information indicated that Year 11 girls were performing less well in mathematics, they are now taught in a separate class, to give them every chance to succeed.
3. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow examination courses. At the end of 2003, Year 11 pupils were successful in GCSE examinations in mathematics, art and design and technology, and in Entry level courses in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education. Additionally, pupils gain National Vocational Qualifications and youth award scheme certificates. Last year, the school's target for GCSE passes was very challenging – 15 per cent were to gain two passes. In the event, a success rate of 12 per cent was achieved. The percentage of pupils gaining one or more pass was significantly higher than average for a school

of this type. The current trend is for pupils to enter for examinations in increasing numbers of subjects.

- The school is successful in identifying pupils who have progressed so well that they could cope in mainstream schools. Two pupils have transferred from the Upper School to mainstream secondary schools during each of the past three years. However, occasionally they are not able to cope in their new school, invariably owing to social or behavioural difficulties, rather than lack of academic ability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils show very caring and supportive attitudes towards each other.
- They are provided with a very good range of opportunities to make choices and take responsibility for themselves.
- Occasionally, pupils are noisy and inattentive during lessons.
- Provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is particularly good and supports their personal development.
- Pupils attend very well in the Lower School but attendance in the Upper School is below the expected level.

Commentary

- Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes to school, other pupils and the staff. Older pupils support younger ones with their reading and pupils often spontaneously help those with additional needs in their classes. These attitudes help pupils of all abilities to learn well. In addition to timetabled lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education, pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to make decisions and learn to be as independent as possible. For example, during 'snack time', pupils in Years 2 and 3, including several with autistic spectrum disorders or behavioural difficulties, consider how well they have achieved their personal targets and set themselves new ones. They support each other in a very mature manner, giving evidence – 'I saw him sharing' – or suggesting new areas for improvement – 'Eat his crusts.' In the Upper School, the breakfast club enables pupils to socialise in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, with minimal staff intervention. This prepares them well for the day's learning activities. These older pupils make good contributions to the school council. The elected representatives bring a range of concerns to the meetings, and show their maturity by offering sensible solutions at the same time. For example, during the inspection, pupils suggested that when it was not possible for football to be played on the grass, an area of the playground could be coned off for the players, as a safety measure.

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	130	8	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0

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

6. While the majority of pupils behave well during lessons, a small number find it difficult to control their behaviour, as a result of their special educational needs or their natural exuberance. Overall, the school's policies and procedures are effective in encouraging a calm atmosphere. The reward systems provide good incentives for the majority of pupils to co-operate with staff and each other. The number of exclusions is high for this type and size of school but involves a very small number of older pupils. The main reason for the exclusions is bullying. Pupils know that adults will support them if they report any problems and that the school takes such complaints seriously. There are very good supportive systems in place for pupils to re-establish themselves into the life of the school when they return from exclusion.
7. The school pays very good attention to pupils' moral development. For example, younger pupils are encouraged to act selflessly by contributing to local charities and to discuss relationships. Classroom rules are based on principles of kindness and courtesy, taking turns and respect for each other. Staff provide very good role models, well supported by the Christian ethos of the school. The school provides a range of activities whereby pupils enhance their social skills both within and outside school. Older pupils in college and on vocational placements work alongside those from other schools, learning to socialise within the wider community. Younger pupils are involved in school social events, visits to enrich their curriculum and they welcome visitors to school. Parents feel very strongly that their children are encouraged to become more mature and responsible. Opportunities for cultural and multi-cultural development are also very good. Pupils take part in a variety of experiences which help them to appreciate other faiths and a range of cultures, as well as celebrating their own. These are particularly strong in the creative arts and religious education and there are good examples of multi-cultural displays in classrooms. Spiritual development is provided for well. Rooms are set aside for individual prayer and there are opportunities throughout the day for pupils to pray together.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	2.4
National data	8.2	National data	2.1

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

8. The rates of attendance differ in the Upper and Lower Schools. Attendance in the Lower School is very good and is better than other similar schools but in the Upper School it is just below the national average for a school of this type. Last year's rise in unauthorised absence was centred on a few pupils in Year 9 and Year 11. Although most pupils at both schools arrive in time for the start of the school day, occasionally pupils are delayed by problems caused by traffic. Not all of these late arrivals are recorded in the Lower School registers, although they are in those of the Upper School.

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**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers try hard to include all pupils in lessons and activities. On rare occasions, the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are not fully met.
- There are good systems to assess how well pupils are learning and achieving. However, it is difficult for the school to analyse the information collected, because it is not stored electronically.
- Teachers' plans for lessons are usually based on their knowledge of what pupils have already learned, although occasionally the work is not matched accurately to their needs.
- Behaviour that challenges is managed well overall. However, approaches are not always effective.
- The very good relationships between staff and pupils contribute strongly to learning and achievement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13 (27%)	25 (52%)	10 (21%)	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.

9. Parents feel very strongly that their children are treated fairly. Indeed, teachers value every pupil equally, regardless of their background or special educational needs. This is seen clearly in the way they take account of their differences, when planning and teaching lessons. For instance, in addition to regularly organising different activities for particular groups of pupils, teachers are very careful to make sure that each pupil has an opportunity to contribute to discussions or answer questions. In the most effective lessons, they tailor questions to suit individuals – for example, offering more clues and less choice for those who find it hard to recall information or marshal their ideas. In many lessons, girls are in the minority and teachers ensure that the boys do not dominate during discussions. As a rule, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders learn as well as the other pupils, because teachers have learned how best to handle them. However, particularly in the Lower School, use is not always made of approaches and resources that are recognised to help pupils with this condition to learn well. For example, teachers do not limit the vocabulary they use. The school is fully aware that more training is required by staff on both sites, in order to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met consistently well. Parents have very positive views about the quality of teaching.
10. Teachers have developed effective ways of recording what each pupil knows, understands and can do, in order to show how well they are making progress. They regularly make very good use of the information they have collected. For example, in a class for pupils in Years 4 and 5, the teacher evaluates each mathematics lesson very carefully, indicating clearly what each pupil has learned or found difficult, and taking this into account when planning the next steps forward. In the Upper School, older pupils know how well they are progressing, through the use of 'progress review' booklets. In mathematics and English, they regularly sit down with their teachers to review their targets and discuss their achievements. The school does analyse

assessment data but, because it is mostly recorded in handwritten form, this is time-consuming and cumbersome and it is difficult for the school to evaluate and compare how well different groups of pupils are achieving. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence of the school making effective use of its information – for example, the decision to provide a modified curriculum for lower attaining pupils in Years 4 to 6.

11. Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons carefully and are particularly clear about what they want pupils to learn. In the most effective lessons, there are varying expectations for different groups of pupils or individuals who are working at higher or lower levels and teachers provide them with tasks and resources that provide them with just the right amount of challenge. For example, in a busy English lesson for average and lower attaining pupils in Year 6, the highest attainers used a computer program to improve their spelling. Working entirely independently, they attempted to type from memory a list of words with the same spelling pattern – for example, ending in ‘ch’ – going back to look at the word again or listening to a recorded voice repeat the word. For each pupil, the teacher had accurately set the degree of difficulty and the program rewarded and motivated them. As a result, they tried very hard and made visibly good progress in a short space of time. In lessons where learning is satisfactory, rather than good or very good, teachers tend to rely on their ability to prompt pupils to respond differently to the same basic task. For instance, they give extra help to those who are struggling or provide more work for any who finish early. Occasionally, these strategies are unsuccessful and pupils find themselves trying to do work that is too hard or coasting through the lesson without much effort. In addition to slowing down the rate at which they learn, pupils are liable to misbehave in these circumstances.
12. For the most part, teachers manage pupils effectively, so lessons proceed smoothly and pupils are able to concentrate and learn well. For example, they set out the classroom carefully and decide where each pupil will sit, stepping in quickly to quell any signs of silliness or inattention before they spread. Pupils are kept busy, by changing activities at intervals, preventing boredom or restlessness. Occasionally, teachers are not emphatic enough in their dealings with pupils, allowing individuals too much leeway. For instance, if calling out or distracting others are not nipped in the bud, they escalate, diverting the teacher’s time and energy away from helping pupils to achieve. Again, in a few cases, pupils are allowed to be too noisy when working and this makes it harder for the class to concentrate.
13. Pupils are often motivated to behave well and try hard because they want to please their teachers and the teaching assistants. All staff show clearly their respect for pupils and their keenness for them to do well. They bear in mind pupils’ ages and relate to them accordingly. For example, in an art lesson for pupils in Year 8, the work – using different media to record reflective surfaces – was entirely relevant to secondary aged pupils and the teacher made very clear her high expectations for pupils’ achievement and behaviour. As they worked at their drawings, the teacher helped them to improve by praising and criticising their results. Because the atmosphere in the class demonstrated mutual support and a desire to get the best from everyone, pupils were happy to accept advice and try hard to improve. Teachers throughout the school take very great care to choose resources and topics that are similar to what pupils would encounter in mainstream schools, so that they are relevant to pupils’ interests as well as their ages. This approach very successfully motivates them to work hard and learn. Teachers ensure that pupils feel secure during lessons and, as a consequence, they are willing to have a go at work that might seem hard, knowing that their efforts will be appreciated.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. The accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum covers a good range of subjects and courses and is well developed and organised to meet pupils' learning needs.
- Learning opportunities are well planned overall to support pupils who have particular special educational needs, but teachers are not always able to deal effectively with the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Vocational education and training helps to prepare pupils very well for leaving school.
- A very wide range of interesting and motivating activities add to the work covered in lessons.
- Year 11 pupils have opportunities to enter for a good range of external examinations.
- The school is well staffed and provides good facilities to help pupils to achieve.

Commentary

14. The amount of time allocated for teaching each week is good. This enables the school to provide a wide-ranging and effective curriculum for all pupils. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a good balance of vocational and academic studies. Interesting curriculum developments are tailored to pupils' learning needs. In the Upper School, a 'reading buddies' programme pairs good and weaker readers together before school, promoting reading skills, responsibility, independence and social development. In the Lower School, the 'alternative curriculum' enables the lowest attaining pupils in Years 4 to 6 to develop, for a few hours each week, their communication, personal, emotional, social, creative and physical skills, and their knowledge and understanding of the world, by drawing on programmes of work developed nationally for younger children. This 'alternative curriculum' is a new development since September 2003. Its effectiveness has not yet been evaluated by the senior management team. The programme to support pupils' personal and social development is wide-ranging and very successful. Planned class discussions, tutorial time, personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons, and a youth award scheme in Years 10 and 11, all make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
15. There are good procedures in place to support pupils with additional special educational needs, such as speech and language difficulties. Pupils who need therapies receive a good level of input and this is enhanced by good liaison between therapists and teachers. Consequently, these pupils achieve well. At present, staff are usually able to provide suitable programmes for pupils with complex difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorder. However, as increasing numbers of these pupils join the school, there is a need to ensure that all staff receive suitable training and guidance so that they can support them well.
16. There is a very comprehensive vocational education and training programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This is led, planned and managed very effectively to respond to pupils' individual needs. In an innovative development with a mainstream school, lower attaining Year 10 pupils from St John Vianney School, who need support on work experience, are paired with pupils from a mainstream school for the two weeks of the placement. Pupils develop skills in retail, hairdressing, childcare and joinery, for example. Not enough time, however, has been allocated for pupils to develop the skills they need to travel independently – for example, to their work placements.
17. Teachers plan an extensive range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. Pupils visit museums, art galleries, country parks and historic houses, farms, and the theatre. These visits enrich pupils' knowledge of science, history, music and the arts very well. For two days in November, Upper School pupils enjoy a wide range of multi-cultural activities, most recently focusing on Irish, Celtic and African traditions. An anti-bullying group visits the Upper School to promote awareness through music, drama, dance and art. In the Lower School all pupils participate in the Christmas production and the community police visit to work with the pupils. By the end of Year 6, all pupils are given the opportunity to join a residential activity and there are further such visits in the Upper School. The Upper School has achieved national recognition, with the Sportsmark award, for the high quality of its provision for sport. For example, boys and

girls take part in football, netball, athletics, basketball, badminton, weight training, orienteering and swimming, through a combination of lessons, lunchtime and after school clubs, and residential visits. Very good use is made of visiting specialist coaches – for instance, to promote girls' football and netball skills. In the Lower School there are good sporting links with a local primary school and with other special schools.

18. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement in the number of examination courses taught in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils are entered for GCSE in art, design and technology and mathematics. All pupils follow examination courses to Entry level in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education and study a youth award scheme in Years 10 and 11. Through the vocational training programme, higher attaining pupils achieve NVQ level 1, in retail, for example.
19. The number of teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum is good. Quite often, additional teachers are provided to ensure that teacher pupil levels remain low in lessons despite the high class sizes in some year groups. The competency of staff to teach the curriculum is good as a result of the school's effective use of performance management procedures to promote professional development. Both sites are spacious and offer good classroom accommodation. There are good specialist teaching areas in the Upper School. The separate gymnasium provides good accommodation for indoor physical education, but the lack of playing fields continues to make it harder for staff to provide outdoor activities. The school makes sure that each subject has the learning resources required to meet the pupils' needs.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are aware of how to proceed where there are child protection issues.
- A very high priority is placed on health and safety arrangements in school and when pupils are out and about in the community.
- Staff know each pupil very well and provide very effective support when they need help.
- Pupils' opinions are valued and they appreciate what their school offers them.

Commentary

20. The response to any child protection issues is very well organised on both sites. Responsibility for co-ordinating any concerns is shared amongst trained staff, and there is a very clear flow of referral procedures. The school frequently arranges training sessions for staff, so that they are familiar with new guidelines on child protection issues. However, none of the staff have been trained in approved methods of restraining pupils who are out of control.
21. Very comprehensive health and safety procedures are in place to check on the safety of the school's environment and deal with accidents or illness. All staff have undertaken training in first aid. Risk assessments are made for all outside visits and great attention is paid to the safety of pupils when they are out of school – for example, on a walk alongside a canal. All work experience placements are also risk assessed. The school is responsive to the views of pupils on the health and safety of their environment – for instance, acting quickly on issues raised by the school council about hygiene in the Upper School girls' toilets.
22. The staff have a detailed awareness of the needs of the pupils, the particular methods being employed to meet them, and how pupils respond to the opportunities presented to them. This knowledge results in the very good support and guidance pupils receive throughout the school

day, helping them to make very good progress in their personal development and achieve well. For example, the school has produced a very effective package of ways to support the smooth transition of Year 6 pupils to the Upper School, so that they settle down quickly without a break in their learning. Similar care is taken to prepare pupils for leaving school or transferring to mainstream schools. Very strong, well established links have been formed with the Connexions service, providing careers advice and curriculum support for Years 9, 10 and 11 pupils. This is especially effective in supporting pupils' transition to college courses. The Connexions adviser works exclusively with pupils who attend the school and liaises with Connexions services linked to pupils' home areas, thus providing very consistent support for pupils and parents. Parents are very impressed with the steps taken to support pupils when they join the school.

23. Pupils are very positive in their views about the school and feel they are listened to and taken seriously. Pupils in the Lower School are particularly appreciative of the trusting relationships they have with the staff and know that they can safely express their concerns during the time set aside for class discussions. In the Upper School, the school council provides a very good forum for taking into account pupils' views concerning the running of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **very good** links with parents, other schools and colleges and the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes very good efforts to involve parents in their children's learning.
- Plenty of very useful information is provided for parents.
- Links with the community support the curriculum and pupils' learning very well.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to mix with those in other schools.

Commentary

24. The school has an established history of consulting parents about their views on the effectiveness of its partnership with them and then acting on their responses, where this is practical. Parents get regular newsletters and notice of school events and are very pleased at the ease with which they can approach the school with any concerns they may have. If parents cannot attend school productions or get to annual review meetings because of transport or care difficulties, staff will try their best to find solutions.
25. Annual written reports about pupils' progress are very detailed and demonstrate clearly how well they are learning and achieving. Parents feel very well informed. Those attending annual review meetings get ample time to read a copy of the report before the meeting. This enables them to consider their responses to the issues. Where parents have a specific request to make – for instance, about the curriculum – the school tries its best to meet their needs.
26. Very strong links between the Upper School and the local community support a wide range of work placement opportunities for pupils. At the meeting with inspectors, one parent commented that she was very impressed with the innovation and co-operation of the school in enabling her daughter to take part in a very specific college course and work placement. A number of parents actively provide, or help to find, work experience opportunities for pupils. In the Lower School particularly, volunteers from the local community provide valuable support during lessons – for instance, regularly listening to pupils as they read.
27. Very effective links are in place with a range of schools in the area, a number of which have supported re-integration opportunities for pupils. Year 9 pupils from a local mainstream school come in regularly to hear Year 7 pupils read and its Year 10 pupils form supportive links with those of the same age from St John Vianney. Year 11 pupils participate in another mentoring scheme, linked to careers adviser trainees at a regional university. The school has very good sporting links with a range of schools across a wide swathe of the community as well as friendly,

sociable links with neighbouring schools. These promote opportunities such as when pupils from a neighbouring primary school attended the dress rehearsal of the Lower School's Christmas production.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body has a very good knowledge of the school and it uses this very well to make decisions that promote improvement and lead to pupils achieving well.
- Financial management is very effective.
- Good subject leadership ensures that lessons are planned to match the learning needs of the pupils.
- The high quality of teaching and of the curriculum is maintained and improved by an effective programme of staff professional development.
- The school's future development is unclear because of the short-term view of planning held by the governing body and headteachers.

Commentary

28. The school has a very experienced group of governors who play a central role in decision making. The governing body carries out all of its statutory duties very efficiently. Through its meetings and close involvement with the headteachers, it is particularly effective in binding together and maintaining an overview of the two separate sites. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, partially as a result of the high quality information they receive from the headteachers. This information, which includes assessments that indicate how successfully the curriculum promotes pupils' achievement, comes from the school's good self-evaluation procedures. In addition to this, governors take very effective steps to find out things for themselves. They visit the school, talk to staff and pupils, examine samples of pupils' work, and then keep each other informed by reporting back at governing body meetings.
29. The governors make very good use of the information they receive in order to help them decide how to spend the school's money. A very firm control is kept on the school's finances and the finance committee is zealous in ensuring that money is spent wisely, for the benefit of the pupils. The school's annual priorities for improvement are agreed after thorough discussion of pupils' achievement in each subject. Governors support these priorities and the ongoing work of the school very well, by spending an amount per pupil that is high when compared with schools of a similar nature. They also very successfully maintain a sizeable contingency fund as a safeguard against unpredictable costs. Although the school's costs are comparatively high, they represent good value for money when taking into account the good achievements of the pupils. On a day-to-day basis, financial management is carried out very efficiently by a professional accountant employed by the governors. Funds allocated to projects in the school improvement plans are clearly identified and separated from routine expenditure.
30. Good leadership by the headteachers, the senior management team and the subject leaders ensures that the work of the school is carried out efficiently and that it continues to improve. Parents have great confidence in the leadership of the school. Since the previous inspection, there has been a good improvement in the leadership of the subjects. The leadership of all key subjects is now at least good and that of English and personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. A major factor in this improvement is the introduction of annual subject audits, where the teachers responsible formally check the achievements of pupils in their subjects and prepare plans to improve the provision in any areas where pupils achieve less well than expected.

31. Good achievement by the pupils is further maintained and improved by a strong commitment to the professional development of all staff. The key to this is a very good performance management scheme that includes virtually all of the staff. The good self-review process, together with lesson observations by senior staff, identifies individual levels of expertise. Good plans are made to resolve any areas for development. Also, each teacher's lesson plans are regularly checked and advice is given. The staff undertake a good range of courses and other opportunities in the areas they have identified. New staff receive a good level of support. For example, a newly qualified teacher is well supported by an induction programme purchased from a nearby local education authority, complemented by a mentor provided by the school. The opportunities to develop leadership skills provided for the deputy headteacher of the Upper School enabled her, with the help of the senior teachers, to take on the role of acting headteacher during the headteacher's absence. This ensured that, during the inspection, the staff were supported and the school continued to run smoothly.
32. The school makes good improvements each year, through the annual process of self-review, which identifies items for the improvement plans for Lower and Upper Schools. However, this pattern of development planning does not attempt to predict the needs of the school over several years and therefore infers that no major changes are expected. The school's present planning processes, though they do bring about good improvements to the status quo, provide a less effective mechanism for coping with potential large-scale changes – for example, such as might result from national and local initiatives regarding special education. Governors have views about how the school may respond to the changing nature of its pupil population but the improvement plans give no indication of how these changes will take place.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1193926	Balance from previous year	-22648
Total expenditure	1216574	Balance carried forward to the next	Not known
Expenditure per pupil	8276		

The governors maintain a sizeable sum in reserve for contingencies. This is not included in the above financial information. The school anticipates that this year's budget will balance. The uncertainty is because fees are paid termly, depending on the pupils on roll at the time.

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.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Eleven lessons were seen in English. French is the modern foreign language taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 and two lessons were seen. Judgements have not been made about French.

French

In both lessons seen, achievement was very good because pupils were taught very well by a specialist teacher, and they were very motivated to speak French. Most of each lesson was taught in French. Interesting activities and games held the pupils' interest and they were all actively involved in learning.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership is very good and has led to very good improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' speaking and listening and their writing skills are very good.
- The needs of pupils and their capabilities are thoroughly assessed and very well understood.
- In the Upper School, pupils have a clear knowledge of their own progress.
- Lessons are planned very thoroughly.

Commentary

33. Pupils of all abilities and ages achieve very well. This is in line with the quality of teaching and is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was broadly sound. This is largely due to the enthusiastic and hard working subject leaders who work so well as a team, despite being on sites so far apart. They have ensured that all teachers have focused on developing pupils' speaking and listening and writing skills, with considerable success. The subject leaders have recently introduced a unit of work shared between Year 6 and 7 pupils, to help the transition from Lower to Upper School. Pupils' achievement is very good overall in Years 10 and 11, a judgement that takes into account the 2003 examination results as well as how well current pupils are doing. Accreditation is in the form of Entry level examinations. Last year, all pupils achieved level 3, with a large number obtaining distinctions.
34. Speaking and listening are very good throughout the school. All pupils are very keen to engage visitors in conversation and lively and informative discussions take place within lessons. Pupils listen attentively to staff and are confident and eager to express their views. For example, during a lesson on 'Romeo and Juliet', a Year 11 pupil described how Juliet had 'died for the person she loved most in the world – Romeo'. There is now very good support from speech and language therapists, who plan and deliver joint literacy lessons with the teachers. During one of these sessions, Years 2 and 3 pupils, including several with behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders, laughed and talked about the pig's antics in their story. One pupil described Harry Morris, Father, Mother and Baby Pig very clearly and vividly. In this lesson, the speech and language therapist used symbols to praise pupils – for example, for their good listening. However, this and similar approaches are not used routinely by teachers throughout the school.

Consequently, pupils with significant autistic spectrum disorders do not always have suitable opportunities to develop communication skills.

35. Teachers throughout the school have worked hard to encourage pupils of all ages to write fluently. In the previous inspection report, there was criticism of the lack of opportunities for pupils to use computers for redrafting their work and presenting it in imaginative ways. There are now numerous examples of word processed work from as early as Year 2 up to very imaginative creative writing produced by pupils in Years 9 to 11. Reading is good throughout the school. Pupils are confident to read in class – for example, Year 8 pupils eagerly read out their descriptions of characters in ‘Oliver Twist’.
36. In Years 2 to 9, teachers follow the guidance of the National Literacy Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy, adapting these well to meet their pupils’ special needs. There are well organised procedures for assessing pupils’ learning and achievement. As a result, teachers are quite clear about what each pupil knows, understands and can do and the next step in their learning. Because systems are similar in both schools, information can easily be transferred from Lower to Upper School, helping staff to track how well pupils are achieving. In the Upper School, pupils are involved in assessing their own progress towards their literacy targets. This approach is very successful, enabling pupils to see how well they are learning and boosting their self-esteem. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils effectively when planning lessons, so the needs of all are usually met very well. They have very high expectations and often pitch the work so pupils have to work hard. However, they structure lessons carefully, so pupils’ learning builds up gradually, enabling them to cope with challenging tasks. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils first listened to a poem, then worked as a class to compose a poem, before tackling writing a poem of their own.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

37. Throughout the school, teachers of all subjects take very good advantage of opportunities to promote language and literacy and pupils respond very well to these. For example, in a science lesson, Year 7 pupils used the correct vocabulary when labelling diagrams of male and female sexual organs. On a history trip to Tatton Park, Year 5 pupils questioned the guides on the many reasons for the way servants and the family lived and worked in the great house. Looking at the magnificent chandelier in the dining room, one pupil commented ‘It is like stars on a dark night.’ Pupils show very good use of subject specific vocabulary and a mature awareness of the rules of conversation, this is one of the reasons their speaking and listening is so very good.

MATHEMATICS

Eight lessons were seen in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide very good feedback to pupils to enable them to be clear about their own progress.
- Pupils follow a good curriculum with an emphasis on functional mathematics for independent living.
- There are good procedures in place to support pupils when they transfer from the Lower to the Upper School.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and are confident to apply their numeracy skills in other lessons.
- Boys have achieved better than girls in GCSE examinations, but the school has since taken decisive action to remedy this.

Commentary

38. In both the Lower and the Upper School, teachers ensure that pupils maintain high standards in the presentation of their work. All work set is carefully marked with positive comments so that pupils are clear how well they have done and what they can do to improve. Consequently, pupils take great pride in their work and try hard. The 'progress review' booklets which have been introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 11 are very effective in helping pupils to set their own targets and evaluate the progress they have made. Teachers and support assistants are skilled at giving the right amount of support to individual pupils so that they achieve well and learn to work independently. They are good at asking pupils questions to ensure that they understand. This enables teachers to plan new work at the right level and measure pupils' progress in lessons. All pupils are assessed thoroughly on a regular basis. This means that teachers know how well pupils are doing and can group them accurately and ensure that they follow a suitable curriculum. However, because the information obtained from assessment is not stored on computers it is laborious for teachers to analyse it to see how particular groups of pupils are doing or to make comparisons with pupils in other schools.
39. All pupils follow a well planned curriculum which is based on the National Numeracy Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy. The numeracy lessons are effective in helping pupils to learn to carry out simple mental calculations. An example of this was in a Year 10 lesson where pupils took turns to round numbers to the nearest 10, 100 or 1000. In their final term of schooling, Year 11 pupils have good opportunities to learn independent living skills such as how to open and use a bank account. This prepares them well for life in the community. Pupils are encouraged to apply mathematics in practical ways. For example, Year 6 pupils have made a database giving information about themselves such as their eye colour and favourite television programme. They have made bar graphs using the data to show which is the most common eye colour and most popular television programme in the class. Because it is made interesting and relevant, pupils see the value of mathematics and really enjoy their lessons. Their enthusiasm was very evident in a Year 8 class when all the pupils were extremely eager to start a written exercise.
40. The subject co-ordinators from the Upper and Lower Schools work well together to ensure a smooth transfer from Year 6 into Year 7. For example, they have introduced a linked topic on 'length'. Pupils begin to work on the topic at the end of Year 6 and take their topic booklet with them to the Upper School to complete the project in Year 7. Because of the good leadership of the two subject co-ordinators there has been good improvement in provision for mathematics since the previous inspection. Resources have improved and pupils now have sufficient access to computers and are using them to support their learning in mathematics. Assessment procedures are better and teaching and achievement are now good throughout the school.
41. Pupils achieve well in mathematics in both the Lower and the Upper School, because they are taught well. When they begin school, younger pupils have very limited skills in using mathematics. However, they make good progress, so that by the time they reach Year 11 they can use and apply mathematics in a variety of situations. Most pupils achieve Entry level in their GCSE examinations with a few pupils achieving at Foundation level. The school has addressed the issue of boys achieving better than girls by establishing separate classes for boys and girls in Year 11. This is working well. In a Year 11 class for girls they were confident and relaxed and making good progress towards a module in their Entry level maths.

Mathematics across the curriculum

42. Mathematics is used well in other subjects and teachers try to include numeracy targets in lesson plans. A good example of pupils applying their numeracy skills was in a Year 9 science lesson, where they used stop watches to time their pulse before and after exercise over different time periods and drew a table to compare their results. Teachers emphasise numeracy wherever possible. This was evident when a group of Year 5 pupils baked scones during a visit to Tatton Park. They were encouraged to count the number of spoons of flour and watch to see when the weighing scales balanced.

SCIENCE

Seven lessons were seen in science.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in science, but their progress from year to year is difficult to track.
- They do best when they are actively involved in practical work.
- The pupils in Years 2 and 3 achieve a very good understanding of the properties of materials, but most other primary aged pupils do not achieve well in this aspect of science.
- In Year 11, pupils achieve well in the Entry level examination but the few pupils also studying GCSE single science do not have enough access to the science laboratory.

Commentary

43. Pupils' achievements in science are good in all years because they are taught well by enthusiastic staff and because plenty of practical activities are planned to hold their interest. Subject leaders in the Upper and Lower Schools do a good job leading and managing the science team. Pupils are challenged well and, in the Upper School, all have access to external examinations in Year 11. Most pupils achieve National Curriculum level 3 by Year 6 and most gain a certificate in the Entry level examination in science by Year 11. Very recently, a few higher attaining Year 11 pupils have begun to study for GCSE single science, with the first examination entries in summer 2004.
44. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching for the youngest pupils is much improved. During one lesson, pupils in Years 2 and 3 gained a very good understanding about types of materials like wood, metal and plastic because there were plenty of interesting activities, all very well planned and organised. Pupils were given lots of encouragement to find things out for themselves. They learned very effectively, for example, about magnetic materials, because they did their own investigations. Most primary pupils, however, do not learn enough about materials because insufficient lessons about this topic are planned. Teachers concentrate more on living things, light and electricity, for example. A class of older pupils in Years 5 and 6 repeated the work on materials done in Years 2 and 3, but this work was not challenging enough for the higher attaining pupils. The science co-ordinator already has plans to correct this imbalance in the primary science programme.
45. In Years 7 to 11, pupils learn to work independently to complete their coursework investigations. They respond very well to specialist science teaching, and they have access to a good, and much improved, laboratory. One Year 11 class includes a small number of pupils who are working towards GCSE. These pupils do not have enough lessons in this laboratory, limiting the range of science skills the girls and boys can develop and use on a regular basis. This problem occurs when the two Year 11 classes are timetabled at the same time.
46. A good range of methods of assessing pupils' achievements is used and many different records are completed. This is good improvement since the previous inspection. However, it is difficult for teachers to follow the progress of individual pupils from year to year, and for them to take action if progress is not as good as expected. By means of a 'progress review' system, pupils in the Upper School regularly set themselves targets for science. This is a good development. Pupils are, however, rarely given the individual guidance they need to help them reach these targets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Four lessons were seen in information and communication technology.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A well planned curriculum enables pupils to gain new skills and understanding as they move up through the school.
- The improving computer skills of staff are giving them more confidence to help pupils learn.
- Good leadership of the subject has led to good improvement since the previous inspection, but its management needs to be further improved.

Commentary

47. There is now a good curriculum in place that complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum. It includes lessons on using computers to control other devices and encompasses the use of technology other than computers. The work covered in the Lower and Upper Schools fits together well to provide a coherent structure upon which teachers can plan lessons for pupils of all ages and levels of attainment. The curriculum provides a good match to the pupils' needs. Courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications have been introduced successfully for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This all represents a good improvement since the previous inspection.
48. Pupils' attainments range from those, particularly in the Lower School, who need support to gain access to a computer, through to those who competently use quite advanced computing skills. However, they are all dependent upon the expertise of the staff to help them achieve further. Since the previous inspection, when the competency of staff with computers was barely satisfactory, there has been a good improvement in their skills and teaching is now good. This is mainly due to the school's good commitment to staff training and development, but also to the good leadership and encouragement provided by the subject's leaders. In lessons where staff are confident in their own skills, they help pupils to achieve new skills and understanding by providing very clear instructions and explanations and timely prompts to encourage them to work independently. In the minority of lessons where staff are not so confident, lessons are planned less well for the pupils who have the lowest attainments. Although the staff have committed a lot of time and effort to training and have done well to improve their computing skills, a lack of confidence with the new technology is still apparent from their limited use of computers to help with their day-to-day school tasks, such as planning, recording assessment data, worksheet production, etc. Therefore opportunities to motivate pupils to achieve, by demonstrating the benefits of information and communication technology and raising its status, are lost.
49. The present subject leaders have a good understanding of what still needs to be done. However, although the expertise of the staff has improved, the subject leaders do not have the opportunity to check and further improve its quality by observing and working alongside colleagues in their lessons. Also, while resources are now good compared with those at the time of the previous inspection, the software used by different teachers is not co-ordinated and is not all appropriate to the pupils' needs. As a result, the management of the subject is satisfactory, rather than good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

50. There is good use of information and communication technology in most subjects, to motivate, engage and teach pupils. It is an integral part of many lessons, using the computers that are in all classrooms. For lessons in the Lower School, particularly mathematics, science and English, the use of computers is made more effective when part of the class move to the computer room to complete some of their tasks. This use of computers could be improved if the software used was organised so pupils build consistently on their previous experiences.

HUMANITIES

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

Geography

51. There is clear evidence from teachers' detailed planning that work in geography is varied and interesting. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils enjoyed their work because the teacher supplied a wide range of artefacts from the local library, such as videos, books and maps on the Gambia. These enabled pupils to appreciate what life is like for people living there; one pupil remarking that 'When it rains, the roads get very muddy.'

History

52. Teachers ensure that pupils develop historical skills and knowledge as they move up through the school. Lessons and activities are stimulating, with resources used effectively. For example, a video helped Year 9 pupils to deepen their understanding of the links between health and housing during the 18th and 19th centuries. Again, pupils in Year 5 learned well during an afternoon at Tatton Park, where they acted out the roles of Victorian servants.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Two lessons were seen in design and technology. Judgements were not made about this subject.

53. Teaching was good in the lessons seen, both of them in the Upper School. Pupils use a range of materials and apply skills and techniques that they have learned in previous lessons. When using resistant materials they have strong ideas about the design for their finished product. Higher attaining Year 11 pupils are successful in GCSE examinations. In food technology, pupils have well developed practical skills and they also develop their ability to design, through a variety of interesting topics. Their work contributes to the youth award scheme. All aspects of the subject are highly valued and enjoyed by the pupils.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

One lesson was seen in art and design and two lessons in music. Judgements were not made about these subjects.

Art and design

54. Rich and colourful displays in both the Lower and Upper Schools show that pupils have good opportunities to try different techniques and work with a variety of materials, such as papier mache and clay. For example, pupils in Year 11 have designed repeat patterns and printed fabric with these, as part of their GCSE coursework. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 learn how to mix primary colours and have used this new skill to create bold paintings with stripes of overlapping colour. Art contributes well to pupils' cultural and multi-cultural development. An example of this is seen in the carefully crafted paintings which Year 6 pupils have produced in an 'African' style.

Music

55. Pupils in Years 2 to 9 are provided with regular opportunities to compose and perform music and to appreciate music made by others. For instance, in a lesson for pupils in Year 6, they listened to the 'March Militaire' by Tchaikovsky. They clearly enjoyed the music, spontaneously moving their feet and hands in time. Later, they sang and played percussion instruments, developing their ability to read simple notation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Four lessons were seen.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well, regardless of their special educational needs.
- Teachers are very skilful, especially in the Upper School.
- Strong links with other schools and with the community extend the physical education programme and compensate for the lack of a sports field in the Upper School.
- The national Sportsmark has been awarded to the Upper School in recognition of the many sporting activities provided for pupils.

Commentary

56. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 11, many achieve standards comparable with the national average and are successful in the Entry level examination. Planning is now at an early stage to develop a GCSE physical education course for the highest attaining pupils. Pupils' very good achievement is linked directly to the very high quality teaching they receive. In a gymnastics lesson, pupils in Years 2 and 3, including several with behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders, made very good progress because they are very enthusiastic and are taught very well. Each pupil composed a sequence of movements on a bench, and devised a method for jumping off and landing safely. Pupils learned by their own active involvement, and by observing others demonstrate their skills. The teacher took care to ensure that they did not waste time and successfully encouraged them to co-operate with each other and take responsibility for putting apparatus away. Pupils in the Lower School learn to swim well because they attend weekly swimming lessons at a local pool. They learn dance from a specialist dance instructor.

57. In the Upper School, pupils benefit from specialist teaching. For example, in a Year 10 badminton lesson, pupils coped with competition very well, higher attaining pupils positively thriving on it. Girls and boys were very positive about participating in the lesson. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties worked very well with other pupils and all accepted the rules of the game. They listened carefully to clear instructions and observed the teacher's skilful demonstrations of new techniques. They successfully put into practice their new knowledge – for example, the scoring system in badminton. Pupils were very well matched in pairs for a game of badminton, enabling all to be successful and gain in confidence and skill.

58. Leadership and management in physical education are good overall and very good in the Upper School. The subject leaders have ensured that the subject has developed well since the previous inspection. They have improved the methods they use for assessing progress across the breadth of the physical education programme. The Upper School has held the Sportsmark award for nearly six years. The subject leader has established very good links with the Greater Manchester Sports Partnership. This has led to pupils receiving support from a number of sporting coaches. Girls have received their own specialist coaching – for example, in football and netball. In addition to sport in physical education lessons, pupils in the Upper School attend lunchtime clubs for netball, football, basketball and rounders and an after school club for football. In the Lower School, links with a mainstream primary school and with other special schools enable pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, to work with and compete against pupils from other schools. These developments contribute very well to pupils' personal and social development as well as their physical development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Three 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

- Leadership and management are very good and ensure that the curriculum is very effective.
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the personal development needs of all the pupils.
- The assessment and marking of work does not always indicate what the pupil has achieved independently.
- Teachers take very good advantage of opportunities to teach the subject during daily routines and activities outside lessons.

Commentary

59. The school provides a very good personal, social and health educational programme, which includes the development of citizenship. The main reason for the success of the subject is its very effective leadership and management. Both subject leaders have adopted practical schemes of work, very relevant to the needs of all pupils, and designed to be integrated with other subjects. They maintain very good links with all staff to ensure the delivery of the subject is effective and have achieved a good improvement since the previous inspection. More time to meet with each other would help to ensure that planning across the whole school continues to be seamless.
60. Timetabled lessons are taught well. Teachers are very aware of what pupils of different ages need to learn. Work in lessons covers a wide range of topics. For example, younger pupils consider what makes a 'good friend', and what they can do to ensure they keep fit and healthy. Pupils in Year 9 look at problems connected with stereotyping and prejudice. They provide good examples of different types of both and suggest why stereotyping often leads to prejudice. It is not always clear from teachers' marking of pupils' work how much support they have been given, which makes it more difficult to establish how much they know and understand. The work of the Upper School pupils is recognised through a youth award scheme.
61. Pupils are encouraged to look for opportunities to help others in need, both within and outside the school. This plays an important part in preparing them for the responsibilities of citizenship. For example, older pupils in the Lower School look after new pupils when they arrive. They also support younger pupils by hearing them read. This increases their self-esteem very effectively. Pupils in the Upper School have increased their self-esteem and confidence since they have had the opportunity to become prefects. As a result they are now volunteering readily to raise money for local charities. They have visited a shelter for the homeless and raised money for that also. In the Lower School, time is set aside for class discussions about personal issues. The Upper School's council also provides very good opportunities for pupils to present their own ideas on school matters, confident that their concerns and suggestions will be listened to and acted on.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
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	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteachers	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

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