

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST KIRBY RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

West Kirby

LEA area: West Kirby

Unique reference number: 105137

Principal: Gareth Williams

Lead inspector: George Derby

Dates of inspection: 12 - 15 January 2004

Inspection number: 263856

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:	Non-maintained special school
Age range of pupils:	5–18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	101
School address:	Meols Drive West Kirby Wirral Merseyside
Postcode:	CH48 5DH
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Appropriate authority:	The proprietor
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Wylie
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

West Kirby Residential School (WKRS) is a non-maintained special school for up to 105 pupils (boys and girls) who can attend on a day or residential basis (up to four nights per week). It is also a registered charity. It is a highly popular school with parents and there is currently a waiting list. The pupils have a wide range of difficulties, particularly severe communication disorders, autism and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A large number of the pupils have complex needs and the many local education authorities (LEAs) from which pupils come (for instance Wirral, Liverpool, Cheshire, Sefton, Flintshire and Wrexham) have found them the most difficult pupils to place; a high number have often not attended school for some time, prior to admission to WKRS, or have been excluded from mainstream school.

Pupils are admitted all year round. There are currently 101 pupils attending school (with others to be admitted soon) with only a small number of girls (14). Twenty-eight pupils are in residence (six are girls). Virtually all pupils are white. There are no pupils learning English as an additional language and only two are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below what it should be for the pupils' ages and many have learning difficulties or medical conditions. In addition, many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge because of their absence from previous schools.

The school has received many awards:

- Sportsmark 2002
- Healthy Schools (Bronze award) 2003
- School achievement award in 2001 and 2002
- Careers awards 2001 and 2003

There has been considerable investment in improving the accommodation. Building work has resulted in a new teaching block and sports 'barn' and alterations are currently taking place to create a new hall, which will include a drama facility.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25349	George Derby	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology
3652	Colin Herbert	Lay inspector	
20444	David Hughes	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Post-16 provision
10099	Sue Lewis	Team inspector	English French Geography History Special educational needs
28197	John Novak	Team inspector	Physical education Residential provision
22408	Alan Watson	Team inspector	Music Religious education Personal, social and health education /citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an excellent school. The standards pupils achieve are very high. As a result of its excellent ethos, it very successfully transforms pupils' attitudes to work and life and their disposition to learn. Its emphasis on their personal development is exceptional and means that pupils' personal achievement is very good. The determination by the principal for the highest standards and the influence he has on the school's work are major determining factors in the school's high level of effectiveness. Leadership and management are excellent; there is very good teamwork by all staff and very strong support by governors and directors. Pupils achieve highly because of the challenges set them and the expectation that they will reach their individual personal and academic targets. Their achievements are also high because of the very interesting ways activities are planned and the very good teaching, which involves and engages the pupils. Although the costs to educate a child at WRKS are higher than for special schools in local education authorities, this is a school which takes pupils who are unable to be placed in their local area and the outcomes for these pupils are exceptional. As a result, it provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- It very highly supports all aspects of pupils' development, meets their special educational needs exceptionally well and helps them to reach high academic standards.
- Pupils achieve very well in English, French and science and in their personal development; achievement in most other subjects inspected is good and often with very good features.
- The quality of teaching is very good; the encouragement given to pupils, the management of pupils' behaviour and the use of support staff in lessons are excellent.
- Pupils' needs are supported very well by a very wide range of professionals, including the speech and language therapist, physiotherapist and educational psychologist.
- The school provides very wide-ranging opportunities during lessons and out of school to support pupils' learning, which considerably stimulate pupils' interest.
- Links between the educational provision and residential setting are very good.
- Pupils' relationships with one another and the way the school promotes respect, understanding of right and wrong and support for living in a community are excellent.
- The school's commitment to ensuring all groups of pupils are fully included in all activities is very high; much personal support enables this to be successful.
- The excellent links with the community and the work related opportunities for the oldest students have a positive effect on pupils' personal skills and understanding of citizenship.

Improvement since the school was inspected in 1999 has been excellent overall. Leadership and management have very significantly improved. Staff numbers (and quality) have vastly increased and the curriculum now meets the needs of all pupils very well. Co-ordinators have very clearly defined roles. Performance management systems are very strong. High quality accommodation, which includes an exceptional sports hall, has been built, and more is planned.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 6	very good	very good
Year 9	very good	very good
Year 11	very good	very good
Year 13	very good	very good

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

The standards pupils achieve are excellent. The exceptionally high quality of care that staff have for pupils, the determination to meet their special educational needs through careful planning, and the very good teaching are the main reasons why pupils' academic achievements are high for all groups across the school. Many achieved very little prior to being admitted to WKRS. It is the combination of exceptional personal achievement together with their good and very good academic progress which results in such a high level of achievement overall. Achievement in pupils' personal skills and development is exceptional because of the very wide range of ways pupils have to learn.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Pupils, despite their previous histories, have a very keen interest in their lessons and behave very well. Attendance is good; punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good, as is the quality of teaching. Lessons are planned very well taking full account of the special educational needs of pupils and providing work which is very well matched to these. Staff manage pupils exceptionally well, give them high levels of encouragement and expect a great deal from them; they get a great deal back from the pupils in return. Pupils work very hard and productively, doing their best to raise their game. Learning support assistants know the pupils very well and provide excellent support. Other aspects, such as the very good curriculum with its opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, the exceptional quality of care for pupils, the excellent contribution of the community and very good links with parents, very strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress. The time taken for pupils to walk from one classroom to another (due to the layout of the building) sometimes reduces the amount of time they have in a lesson.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent and the work of the governing body is very good. The principal's and governors' determination for high standards and to ensure all pupils are as fully included in school and community life as possible is highly successful. Communication in this complex organisation is excellent. Governors are exceptionally supportive and challenge the work of the school very well. They compare the school's performance as far as they can with similar type schools and are highly successful in attaining best value in what is achieved. The principal has a very strong vision for the future of the school and has high quality planning to support this. Co-ordinators' subject plans could be sharper, however. Financial planning and management are excellent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents praise the school's work effusively. Pupils like their lessons and activities very much, although many identified pupils' behaviour and bullying as an issue. Inspectors found relationships excellent, although there are incidents from time to time because of pupils' special educational needs. In addition, some pupils perceive minor infringements as bullying. Any actual bullying or harassment is dealt with very effectively by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant improvements needed. The report indicates some less significant areas for improvement (such as the time taken to get to lessons, some aspects of assessment and the use of ICT across parts of the curriculum).

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' academic achievements are very good. These are good in Years 3 to 11. They are good with very good features in the Post-16 department, which takes students who are not yet ready for a full college placement or the world of work. Standards in all subjects are below what they should be for the pupils' ages, although for some individual pupils across the school these are nearer to those expected for the pupils' ages. GCSE and other awards generally meet the wide range of need and challenge more effectively the higher-attaining pupils. However, given the considerable strides made in their personal development, the standards pupils achieve overall are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's climate for learning very strongly promotes pupils' achievements; staff considerably value pupils' efforts and this spurs them on to work very hard and to want to achieve highly.
- Pupils achieve very well because of the very good attention to their personal learning needs and the high quality support they receive.
- All pupils achieve similarly; lower-attaining pupils and those with additional needs get considerable support, which aids their achievement.
- Achievement in English, science, French and personal, social and health education (PSHE) across the school is very good; in other subjects it is good, often with very good features.

Commentary

1. The school's climate for learning is excellent and fully supports pupils' personal and academic achievement. Very good teaching leads to very good learning, and the very broad range of learning opportunities means that the impact of learning on pupils' achievements is fully realised overall. In physical education, however, pupils' achievements are only satisfactory (even though the teaching is good). This is because the sports facility is relatively new and pupils have some catching up to do, having been previously taught in limited accommodation which restricted the programme.
2. Pupils achieve excellently in relation to the school's main aims and targets connected with their personal development. Many pupils who enter the school have considerably low self-esteem and severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and have achieved little academically owing to the complexities of their communication difficulties. The celebration of their efforts in a 'can do' culture and the very effective way pupils are taught to communicate enable them to value their own efforts and achievements and those of others. The school is particularly successful in giving pupils confidence in expressing themselves and in working together with others. Often standards are below those attained by most pupils of a similar age. In some subjects, however, pupils attain levels that are in line with or above national expectations and these are reflected in the individual attainments of pupils in national examinations.
3. The achievement in the main part of the school is very strong. The very good curriculum provides a wide range of challenging, stimulating activities that are underpinned by a very good knowledge of the pupils' needs. A high level of awareness of the needs of pupils and the ways in which their engagement with learning can be encouraged and their communication facilitated results in programmes that are very well tailored. In addition, there is a very strong partnership with the support staff, residential staff, the speech and language therapist and the educational psychologist which support pupils' achievements very well.

4. A high level of personal support, especially from learning support assistants and from the support services on site, means that most pupils with additional needs achieve similarly to other pupils. The support for such pupils has been greatly improved since the last inspection and provision overall strengthened. Planning for pupils' many additional needs is now at the forefront of staff's minds. In addition, the close liaison between teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator results in targets which are fully taken account of in lessons and known by pupils. Support assistants are used very well in class and for support on an individual basis. They know the pupils' needs very well and carry forward strategies that they learned and developed for working with pupils into lessons.
5. Through the very successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, pupils are taught reading and writing experiences in a systematic way. The school is exceptionally good at turning around pupils' attitudes to literacy. Pupils know that their teachers have high expectations of them, but rise to them because they know the teachers will support them to make progress. All children have targets that they are working towards in English and almost all know what they are. They are very keen to improve their English levels because they know that this will help them in all other aspects of their work and life. Pupils make very good and sometimes excellent progress from their starting points in all aspects of English, and particularly so in reading. The school's primary department has made a very strong response to the National Literacy Strategy. This, in addition to systematic support for literacy and very interesting and extremely well taught lessons, motivates and supports the youngest pupils very well. Writing is particularly well supported and pupils really try their best; for example, when they offer ideas for story development in group lessons and then go to write them down. Teachers are excellent motivators of children. This is a significant 'about turn' for many children, previously disenchanted with school work and their own capabilities.
6. Achievement in science and PSHE is very good and in many other subjects is good with very good features. This is often because of very good quality of teaching, together with the very well constructed programmes, which helps the pupils to achieve considerably. Challenging work, which is well planned, contributes to pupils' achievements. In PSHE, it is the very wide range of opportunities, in addition to the taught programme, which enable this to happen. The impact of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been positive and the school has embraced the principles well. This has resulted in good achievement by pupils. Occasionally, activities and materials provided are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' needs, however. Overall, the rise in pupils' achievements since the last inspection has been very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitude of pupils to school and to their learning is very good. Their behaviour is also very good. The provision for moral development and for the enhancement of pupils' understanding of the need to live in a harmonious community is excellent and the provision for spiritual and cultural development is very good. There has been an improvement in many of these aspects of school life since the last inspection. Pupils' attendance is good and their punctuality to school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour are the result of very interesting activities and the continual and unobtrusive way that all members of the staff encourage and expect the highest standards.
- The opportunities for moral development and the way pupils are helped to understand about living in a community are excellent.
- The opportunities and encouragement that pupils of all ages are given to take responsibility are very good.
- The quality of relationships and racial harmony that exists in school is excellent.

Commentary

7. The school works hard to ensure that its pupils attend school on a regular basis and attendance rates are good. The increased rate of authorised absence over the last academic year was due to the large number of pupils and students who had taken advantage of the wide ranging work experience and college opportunities and the way their attendance is now recorded. The punctuality of pupils to school can be influenced by occasional school transport delays but is generally good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.0	School data	1.0

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

8. From the moment they arrive in school the pupils have smiles on their faces and enjoy meeting up with their friends. They respond to their lessons with a high degree of enthusiasm and are very proud to talk about their school. A very high proportion of those parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that their children enjoyed school. The reason for the very good behaviour in and around school is that the pupils rise to the very high expectations of all adults, their excellent continual emphasis on pupils' moral development and the very strong ethos of school life. When pupils and students go on visits into the community, to such places as the local swimming pool, their behaviour is excellent on the minibus and in the pool. These very high standards are also maintained in the residential accommodation, where all pupils and students act in a very mature and sensible way.
9. The excellent relationships between all members of the school community are the result of the very strong ethos that permeates the whole of school life and mutual respect between everyone. West Kirby Residential School is one large happy community. No unsociable or racist behaviour was seen during the inspection, nor has any been reported in recent months. The impact of these very high quality relationships is that all pupils are included in all school activities. The very high quality relationships extend into the residential area where pupils and students are happy to welcome visitors to such events as breakfast where they demonstrate very good manners and courtesy to each other.
10. The excellent opportunities for pupils to gain personally from the experiences provided result in very strong provision for self-knowledge, spiritual awareness and cultural development and excellent provision for moral development and living together responsibly in the school community. These are particularly promoted through assemblies, personal, social, health and citizenship lessons and the local community. Both pupils and students are given great encouragement and support to make their own choices, to give their views about the school and to reflect on their likes and dislikes. All adults listen carefully to their views and each contribution is valued. For example, in the School Council there were very mature and articulate discussions about a variety of issues such as the residential accommodation, sports facilities and uniforms. All the representatives demonstrated excellent speaking and listening skills and they all respected each other's views. The school has also developed overseas cultural links to enhance the learning of pupils and overseas visits are enjoyed by all that go on them. All these opportunities have an excellent impact on the development of pupils, as they become more self-assured and confident.
11. There are currently no exclusions from school. However, during the last academic year eight boys received a total of sixteen days fixed term exclusions. This is part of the school's behaviour policy and was effective in dealing with the particular issues which occurred.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
99	16	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good with excellent features. There are exceptional strengths in the care provided. The very good links with parents and excellent links with the community highly contribute to their children's education and personal development. The quality of the teaching and learning is very good and its positive effects are enhanced by the very good curriculum provided.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is very good and pupils are learning very well. The assessment of the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding and the progress they make is good. The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very well developed expertise to deliver consistently high standards of teaching.
- There is exceptional encouragement given to pupils, which helps them to be very motivated in lessons and to learn very well.
- Teachers' and assistants' excellent insistence on high standards of behaviour and high expectations lead to high achievements in pupils.
- Teachers plan lessons very well with clear objectives which are shared with pupils.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in lessons; they plan very well for their particular special educational needs and carefully consider the best ways in which they learn.
- The way in which pupils are guided to understand what they need to do to improve is very good.

Commentary

12. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Almost all lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good, with only a few being judged at the lower level of satisfactory. No lessons were seen where the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning in the Post-16 department is good with very good features.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 76 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (3%)	35 (46%)	33 (43%)	6(8%)	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.

13. Teachers in the school have a high level of subject knowledge and they, and the fully committed learning support assistants and residential support staff, understand the special educational needs and difficulties of the pupils very well. The school provides a very strong and effective staff team, who provide exceptional encouragement for pupils to participate in the learning process. Lessons hold the pupils' interest so well that, often for the first time, pupils want to learn and succeed. These aspects, built on the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Staff insist on high levels of positive behaviour. The climate for learning that has been established is very positive and encourages pupils to work together. This promotes good collaborative working, something than pupils often find hard.
14. There are often particularly strong introductions, for instance in science and French, where a wide variety of ways are used, responding to the pupils' styles of learning. The use of the interactive white board

considerably enlivens science teaching and learning and provides a 'powerful' way of attracting pupils' attention. The exceptional skill in the way this is done results in learning that is very strong.

15. Lessons are very well planned with clear aims and objectives shared with pupils. In some lessons, the time allocated to the lesson is 'short' when the time taken for pupils to travel from one end of the building to the other is taken into account. Consequently, teachers cannot fit in what they have planned for the lesson. Pupils can be left "hanging in the air" without having an opportunity to consolidate their learning at the end of the session, because the lesson has run out of time.
16. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and provide for individual pupils to understand and deal with their own individual difficulties. They plan very well for the pupils' various needs and match work very strongly to these; for example, by allowing "time out" when pupils find the stress of communication in a large group too overwhelming or by presenting work which will give them encouragement because the activities are within their capability but with enough level of challenge.
17. Teachers and support staff use questioning very well to ensure learning and ease pupils into participating in activities which have at times worried them. Teachers value the use of praise to promote learning and take great pains to ensure that all boys and girls are included in what the school has to offer.
18. All subject teachers use their knowledge and skills very effectively to encourage and support learning. Consequently, in no subject is the teaching less than good and in many subjects, for example, English, teaching is very good. Lessons are presented in a confident and enjoyable way that ensures pupils' interest.
19. The management of teaching and learning is very good and managers now regularly monitor the quality of teaching and teachers' planning.
20. At the time of the last inspection, the use of assessment was unsatisfactory. There has been a marked improvement, particularly in the way pupils are helped to understand what they need to do to improve.
21. The school measures individual performance against the level descriptors of the National Curriculum and by using an extensive raft of standardised examinations and tests including the national tests at Year 6 and Year 9. The approach to assessment generates very good numerical data for the main or core subjects of the curriculum, which are electronically presented as tables that show individual progress over time. Although these data are used to prescribe the next stage in learning in broad terms, to group pupils or to provide individual support for teaching, for example, pupils' progress over the short term in subjects is not always sufficiently responded to. For instance, it is very strong in some subjects, such as English, science and French, although less so in ICT and religious education (although satisfactory) and other non core subjects. The use of assessments to inform teaching is strongest in the primary department, where it is often very good.
22. Additional data on pupils' development is collected by way of the review of their Individual Education Plans and their Statements of Special Educational Needs. These data and further information collected by individual teachers and subject leaders lead to specific learning and behaviour targets set for individuals in care plans and IEPs. A significant strength is the attention and guidance given to pupils to help them reach their targets. The details of these, and the approaches recommended, are carried from lesson to lesson. They are rigorously tracked by teachers, assistants and residential care staff. Support staff make a very significant contribution in their implementation and pupils make very good progress towards these targets.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities, which are extremely well planned to meet the diverse needs of all the pupils and ensure that pupils can build on what they have learned previously. The wider opportunities to enrich pupils' learning are also very good. Overall, the resources to meet the needs of its pupils are good. The quality of accommodation is good overall.

Main strengths and weakness

- The curriculum is very broad and balanced and highly reflects the aims of the school.
- Curriculum development is very good; the school has set very high expectations of itself to provide a demanding and successful curriculum, but recognises the pressures of time on some subjects.

- The number, experience and expertise of all staff to meet the wide range needs of the pupils are very good and result in the provision of very good learning opportunities for pupils.
- Overall accommodation and learning resources are good; accommodation for Post-16 pupils, although satisfactory, is not as good as the rest of the school's provision.

Commentary

23. The school provides a very rich and relevant curriculum which motivates the pupils. It develops in them an eagerness to learn through the very interesting range of activities provided. The school constantly keeps what the pupils are learning under review and is always looking for new ideas, courses and programmes to ensure that they maximise their potential. Plans to extend the vocational curriculum are already in hand, together with a building programme designed to provide improved design and technology, construction and motor maintenance workshops. Academic award bearing courses are chosen to provide senior pupils with opportunities to compete on a level with other pupils in mainstream schools. This is particularly successful and there is a wide range which caters for pupils' skills and talents. These are not all 'academic'; the photography GCSE course, for example, is very popular with pupils, who often excel in this.
24. The pupils are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. For older pupils there is a relevant programme of vocational opportunities in school and college. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum and statutory requirements are fully met. In English and mathematics there have been very good responses to National Strategies in Years 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 9 and very strong GCSE and Entry Level programmes in Years 10 and 11. The way the work is tackled by pupils and taught by staff has a very positive impact on pupils' achievements. The modern foreign languages curriculum is very effective and appropriately planned to meet the individual pupils' special educational needs.
25. Because the school provides such a very broad range of activities, there are some time constraints on the curriculum which impact on what pupils can learn. This is well recognised by the school with constant checks on the balance of activities kept by the school. The provision for science is very strong, although only single GCSE science can be offered in Years 10 and 11. The lesson time for the religious education syllabus in the secondary department is slightly below what it should be, although pupils gain additional time through the opportunities they receive outside lessons. High attaining pupils would certainly benefit from more time to broaden their knowledge and gain additional qualifications.
26. The curriculum is socially inclusive, with very good extra-curricular activities that enable pupils to enrich their experience beyond lessons. Pupils with additional special educational needs have these fully met through modifications to the programmes made by the teachers, who know the pupils very well.
27. Lessons are very well planned and relate very well to medium and long-term planning, with careful attention to ensuring that pupils make progress by building on what they have learned before. All staff work hard to ensure that all pupils, including those with the most complex needs, are fully included in a wide range of learning experiences which are relevant to the pupils' all round development. This is not just focused on school activities but includes outside visits, residential holidays and involvement in the community. The school has well developed programmes for senior pupils (aged 14 to 19 years). Senior pupils benefit from strong links with local colleges and work experience in the community.
28. The curriculum is considerably enriched through a good range of visits, drama, art and musical activities. For example, up to 50 pupils were recently involved in a production of *Grease* and a similar number are currently preparing for a performance of *Joseph*. The pupils benefit from special visitors to the school, including the fire service, police service, Red Cross and Christian drugs counsellors. The curriculum is all inclusive, giving all pupils equality of access and opportunity. The support for pupils' self-esteem is excellent. They know that they are valued members of the community learning how to behave and respond to others through the practical experiences offered.
29. The opportunities that pupils have to learn outside their lessons are very good. These are excellent for residential pupils and good for day pupils. The school tries very hard to ensure that day pupils have as full a programme as possible given the time they are in school. The pupils have many excursions into the community, to residential centres and foreign adventure holidays, all having a very positive impact upon

their learning. Reading, holiday and homework clubs also make an important contribution to the pupils' learning.

30. There are a good number of well qualified staff, who provide the pupils with very good learning opportunities. The teachers are well supported by learning support assistants who are experienced and very well trained and make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning. A very effective programme of continuing professional development enables all staff to improve their effectiveness through a comprehensive training programme. New teachers and students are effectively supported through a six week induction programme.
31. The accommodation has been very well adapted to meet the needs of the pupils; some parts are of exceptional quality (the Sports Barn and new teaching block for science, humanities and PSHE); other parts are planned to be re-furnished. The accommodation for Post 16 students is 'self-contained' and gives students a 'separate' sense of identity and ethos which is properly afforded to students. However, this area is cramped and has only had minor improvements since the previous inspection. In art, drama, ICT, textiles, music and photography, resources are 'basic' but have adequate accommodation. Each department of the school and every subject is well funded. Effective co-ordination of the subjects results in sufficient resources and materials to support the pupils' learning.

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is good with very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of a wide range of work experiences ensures that the individual strengths, needs and wishes of the pupils are met.
- The programme of study is comprehensive and addresses areas of particular importance to the pupils' development.
- Links with other agencies are effective in ensuring a close match between provision and individual pupil needs.
- The resources, including a specialist room, are good and provide appropriately for the subject.

Commentary

32. Careers education, linked to the programme for PSHE, is provided for pupils from Year 8 onwards. This broad programme ensures appropriate progression in pupils' development and allows areas of particular need, for example working as a team, to be addressed. Currently, there are no opportunities for pupils to obtain qualifications in vocational subjects. However, the co-ordinator has undertaken professional development related to the implementation of vocational awards and is reviewing timetabling arrangements to allow an appropriate programme to be established.
33. The considerable work experience programme allows pupils to gain an insight into the world of work. The range of opportunities on offer enables a good match between placement and pupils' strengths, interests and needs. For example, a pupil with a particular interest in animals has been working in a local pet shop. The network of Connexions personal advisers is used effectively to develop both work and college placements within the pupils' home area where appropriate. Placements are very well organised, arranged and supported to ensure a positive experience for pupils. For those who may have difficulty working outside the school, an internal placement is arranged. Pupils feel well prepared for their placement and feel able to function confidently from the outset. All work placements are reviewed with the pupils on completion to ensure that they have been able to gain from the experience.
34. Resources for the provision of work-related learning are good. The room used to deliver lessons is not set out in classroom format. This creates an appropriate environment and induces a sense of change from the rest of the school. An area has been created to allow private interviews and meetings with, for example, Connexions personal advisers. Pupils have access to computers with appropriate software and a wide range of written material to support informed decisions regarding their future careers.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes excellent care of the emotional and physical needs of its pupils and it provides them with high quality support and advice. The school has excellent procedures in place to listen to and to act on the views of its pupils. There has been an improvement in these aspects of school life since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The procedures for health and safety and risk assessment are excellent.
- The procedures that are in place for child protection and liaison with outside agencies to support pupils are excellent; internal support from the school's own therapists and psychology staff is very good.
- The opportunities that the school provides to listen to and act on the views of its pupils are excellent.

Commentary

35. Excellent procedures exist to promote health and safety in school and, as a result, the whole ethos of the school is one of providing the highest standard of care for its pupils and students. This aspect of school life is underpinned by the excellent quality of trusting relationships that exist between all members of the school community and the very thorough knowledge that all adults have of their pupils and students.
36. Excellent risk assessments are in place for all school activities as part of the very comprehensive and high quality standards for health and safety. The governing body has a very clear understanding of its responsibilities for this aspect of school life and it carries out regular inspections and monitoring of statistics. Adults provide excellent care when pupils and students go on visits into the community. For example, on a visit to the local swimming pool every opportunity was taken to reinforce the importance of safety on the minibus. As a result, all pupils were very aware of the need to wear seat belts and to act in a responsible way throughout the journey. Additionally, very high levels of care are provided for all pupils and students who reside at the school. For example, fire drills are held during the evening and night to ensure that all residents are aware of the procedures to follow.
37. The school maintains excellent procedures for child protection and all staff are aware of what is expected of them. Similarly, high quality procedures are in place for the nursing care of pupils and those who

provide specialist therapy or support, such as the school physiotherapist and speech and language therapist. The school's psychologist has a particularly important role in examining pupils' performance and in helping pupils deal with their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Care plans enable the residential staff as well as pupils themselves to monitor how well they are doing in relation to their targets. The way the school emphasises pupils' responsibility for their own actions is a very strong feature of the way it transforms pupils' attitudes.

38. Pupils are able to make their views known on school affairs through the School Council, pupil surveys and by entering any comments in appropriate books. One of the particular strengths of all adults in school is the way that they value any contribution from pupils and listen to what is being said. The level of trust shown between pupils and adult staff is excellent. As a result, a very open and mature atmosphere exists where pupils feel able to let their views be known on a variety of subjects.
39. Parents expressed very positive views about this aspect of school life and described the school as "providing a strong level of care and understanding of the particular needs of their children". Another parent described the care as "brilliant".

Residential provision

Provision for residential care is good and has some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between both care staff and pupils and care staff and teachers are excellent and the very strong communication and high level of planning enables pupils' needs to be fully met.
- Care plans and IEPs are very clearly related to one another and support an effective '24 hour' curriculum.
- The accommodation is well maintained and the bedroom, bathroom and toileting facilities are good; provision for independent dining within the residential unit is limited.
- Data on incidents are maintained effectively and used to inform practice
- The school is responding positively to issues identified in the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) inspection.

Commentary

40. Links between the educational provision and the residential setting are very good. Communication between the two is effective in ensuring continuity of care. The head of care or deputy head of care attends all school morning briefings and provides a detailed report on key issues related to individual children and young people. This provides school staff with a clear understanding of any personal issues that might impact on learning during the school day. Learning support assistants allocated to specific teaching groups are also effective in enabling the transfer of important information between the school and care staff.
41. Care plans and IEPs form a complementary whole to ensure that there is a consistent approach to meeting individual needs. This enables children to understand and contribute to the achievement of their targets. Similar systems, in which children and young people earn points for appropriate behaviour, operate in both education and care sectors. Children and young people can exchange their points for activities or rewards. This clearly demonstrates to the children and young people that, while the settings operate separately, expectations are consistent.
42. Resident pupils are encouraged to participate in an exceptionally wide range of post-school activities. School work is emphasised, with an effective homework session early in the evening, in which all residents complete any work set during the day. Some group activities are available, such as swimming and shopping. Other activities allow individual residents to follow particular areas of interest; for example, one pupil who is a keen musician is a member of a local band and attends their practice sessions. Other residents are members of a local Red Cross group and attend regular training sessions off-site. Staff have given careful thought to the level of responsibility awarded to individual pupils. This allows residents to take responsibility for their own social development and supports them in becoming more independent. Senior residents have a weekly meeting to discuss the next week's choice of activities, which range from trips out to local leisure facilities to simple cooking in the unit kitchen. The opportunities provided in residence considerably enhance pupils' personal and social development.

43. Residents are housed in four units on the upper floor of the main school building. Groups are defined by age and gender, with senior, intermediate and junior boys' units and one unit for girls. Provision overall is good, with single occupancy rooms, which individuals are able to personalise. There is appropriate provision for leisure activities such as electronic and other small games, reading and television. Toilet and washing facilities within each unit are of a good standard and there are sufficient within each unit to ensure that residents are afforded appropriate privacy. The facilities for eating within each of the units are limited. As a result, residents eat all meals, with the exception of a very light breakfast, in the school dining room. Evening mealtimes are, therefore, somewhat 'institutionalised', with residents collecting their meals individually from a large servery before finding a seat, and returning their plates to a designated area when finished.
44. The school has implemented a system which allows them to manage data on pupils' behaviour very effectively. Information regarding incidents and handling is entered into a secure database which can be interrogated to provide accurate reports in graph and table form related to individual pupils, teachers and dates. The information is used to inform planning for pupils in residence and training for staff.
45. The school was inspected for the first time by the NCSC in November 2002. The issues identified as requiring improvement are being appropriately addressed within the timescale set. The school was required to implement a number of recommendations, mostly of an administrative nature, largely as a result of the need to take account of the new legislation. Much positive work was seen, especially the care practices in relation to welfare and the extensive range of activities provided. The level of planning in residence and the way the school listens to parents were commended.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has maintained the very good partnership with its parents and carers. The quality of links that the school has developed with the community has improved and is now excellent. The quality of links that have been developed with other schools and colleges is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant strength of the very good links with parents and carers is the very good information that is provided for them and the way that parents respond to support all the various activities in school.
- The excellent partnership with the local community significantly enhances pupils' personal skills and understanding of the world around them.
- The very good partnership developed with other local schools and colleges provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to be involved in mainstream education.

Commentary

46. The school has maintained the very high quality relationships with its parents and carers that were in place at the last inspection. Parents hold the school in very high esteem and provide very good support for all activities. In particular, the hard-working Friends Association raises approximately £3000 a year from its fund-raising activities. The information provided for parents is very good. Newsletters and the school magazine are very informative and the home/school diary system is used very effectively to ensure a two-way dialogue between teachers and parents. Additionally, the very high quality of information produced for the Annual Reviews of the Statements of Special Educational Need and the annual reports on progress provide parents and carers with a very good picture of their child's progress and of the targets that are set.
47. The school has now developed excellent links with its community, which is an improvement since the last inspection. These links include a large number of individuals, trusts and businesses who all contributed so magnificently to the recent roof appeal, raising almost £400,000 in a year. Excellent opportunities are also provided for pupils and students to integrate into the world outside school by using local shops, youth clubs and organisations such as the Red Cross.
48. Very strong links that promote inclusion are arranged for older pupils to complete work experience or learn with children in mainstream schools by spending time in lessons in these schools. Additionally, Post-16

students join colleges local to their homes to further their studies. All these experiences have an excellent impact on the learning and development of personal and social skills. Opportunities to make visits to European countries also provide an excellent opportunity to understand other cultures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The leadership of the principal is outstanding and the communication between senior staff and all departments of the school (including education, residence and support services) is of the highest quality. The leadership of other key staff is very good. Governance is very strong; the directors and the governors have a very good oversight of the work of the school and the way they challenge and support the school is exceptional.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The support for the school's development, and the principal's clarity of vision are excellent.
- The work of the governing body is very good and the way they act as critical friends to support, analyse and evaluate is excellent.
- The work of staff and pupils is monitored very well and patterns and trends are responded to in order to ensure the best quality teaching and pupils' progress.
- The senior management team are very effective in their work and complement each other's skills well.
- Staff morale is exceptionally high and the climate for learning is excellent.
- Financial planning is excellent.

Commentary

49. There has been considerable improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. At that time, leadership was satisfactory but there were many weaknesses in the management of the school. Pupils' progress was largely satisfactory and teaching sound, although some of it was unsatisfactory. All these areas have been completely transformed owing to the tenacity and determination of the principal, who has very high standards and commitment to the school and its pupils.
50. The school is a vibrant learning environment built on a foundation of very good relationships between staff and pupils, and an excellent commitment to high achievement. Senior staff inspire pupils and other staff with their exceptionally high level of determination and enthusiasm.
51. This is a school which has a deservedly high reputation with its parents and where staff, governors and the principal constantly strive for improvement. They regularly evaluate how well they have done and whether they could have done things better. Their findings are accurate and they take effective steps to improve where there are weaknesses. The staff's motivation and commitment to improvement are excellent and raise pupils' achievement.
52. Planning for school improvement is very good. The school plan is highly detailed, thorough and exceptionally evaluative, readily leading to adjustments in practice as needed. Clear priorities are discussed and full collaboration takes place to ensure that the right things are being focused upon. The targets and actions are reviewed regularly and modifications made as necessary. This makes for very smooth planning because the progress towards targets is monitored continuously. Subject leaders' plans could follow the same high quality approach, although their priorities are accurate and reviews of their work good. Success criteria and costing would considerably enhance these documents.
53. The excellent leadership by the principal stems from a clear vision and sense of purpose for the school's work and a determination to make the school's provision the best. The principal and governors clearly have the needs of pupils at heart and always strive for the best for them. The need to include pupils in all activities is very much at the heart of the school's values, as well as to share expertise with establishments, especially in mainstream schools, special schools and colleges.
54. The school's commitment to pupils' achieving the best they can is very high, and is well articulated in the clear aims that identify the core values of the school which are understood and have been contributed to by the senior management team, staff and governors.
55. The principal has very successfully brought the school through a period of much change, while improving standards and quality of education. Much of the school building has been completely remodelled, with considerable parts of it newly built. Sensitive design, informed by the school, and taking the needs of pupils properly into account, has resulted in a highly successful environment which supports pupils' learning very well indeed. There is still some work to be done on access for disabled people and in remodelling in certain areas (design and technology and art) but this has already been planned and grant requested.
56. The principal and governors highly value the staff. They view their investment in staff skills, knowledge and expertise as crucial in ensuring pupils are taught as well as possible. The school has recognised the very important role learning support assistants need to play at WKRS and this and the high quality training provided have resulted in very effective support by learning support assistants and a very strong contribution made to pupils' learning in lessons.

57. The governing body is a very 'professional' and effective group of people, who have a highly detailed knowledge of the school's work and who considerably support the leadership and management of the school. The skill each governor brings ensures a very good range of expertise and an intimate knowledge of the school's work. The finance committee ensures that that every penny counts and is spent wisely.
58. Governors are not afraid to challenge the principal or staff, for instance, who regularly present reviews of their work in the subjects and the standards reached by pupils. Moreover, they see it as central to their role to support, but also to be a 'critical' friend. Their own expertise enables this to happen in such a way that it significantly contributes to the work of the school.
59. The senior management team support the work of the school and principal very well. Their responsibilities are clearly defined and they are very well deployed to undertake their tasks, so that daily running of the school and communication between departments is excellent. The school office and support services administration is managed in a highly efficient way and their operation, like the running of the school, is very 'smooth'.
60. There is a regular programme of monitoring by the senior management team and subject co-ordinators, and new staff, or staff in training, are supported very well.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,477,766	Balance from previous year	421,491
Total expenditure	2,237,456	Balance carried forward to the next	240,310
Expenditure per pupil	23,552		

61. Planning and management of finances is excellent. The school is well placed to support capital building projects and to resource and fund the school's priorities for development each year. The large surpluses accrued are for such purposes and are in line with the financial regulations imposed by the Charity Commission. The amount spent on staffing and learning resources within the school is very good. New technologies and financial resources have been effectively used to the pupils' advantage with significant spending in ICT, science, the library and the behaviour support unit. The directors, governors and head of support services ensure that finances are used prudently by effectively applying the principles of challenge, comparison, consultation and competition. The school's income and expenditure are very carefully monitored with regular, detailed financial statements. The school provides excellent value for money.

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

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **very good** and has some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are very good overall, particularly in reading, in their attitudes to reading and writing and in their self-expression.
- Very strong targeted support for speaking and listening, reading and spelling, including phonological awareness, means that individual pupils who have particular difficulties in these areas make very strong progress.
- Very good use of an educational psychologist and SALT ensures pupils have strong, integrated and co-ordinated support that meets their priority learning needs.
- Teaching is very good overall and sometimes excellent, although there is room for more systematic support and teaching of handwriting and for the use of ICT to support learning even further.

Commentary

62. As a result of pupils' special educational needs, standards in English at Years 6, 9 and 11 are below those of other pupils of similar ages. However, throughout the school there are examples of pupils who achieve as well or even higher than the levels expected for children of their age, and pupils regularly gain good grades within GCSE English. Many pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment in relation to English because of their particular needs or long absences from school, or because they have very specific speech and language or literacy difficulties. Many have poor self-esteem in relation to their abilities. The school is exceptionally good at turning around pupils' attitudes to their reading and writing. Pupils know that their teachers have high expectations of them, but rise to them because they know staff will support them to make progress. Pupils throughout the school speak positively about their English experiences, their progress and how their teachers have helped them. All children have targets that they are working towards in English and almost all know what they are. They are very keen to improve their English levels because they know that this will help them in all other aspects of their work and life. Several determinedly retake GCSE English, for example, in the school's Post-16 department, hoping to improve from a grade D to a grade C.
63. Pupils make very good and sometimes excellent progress from their starting points in all aspects of English, and particularly so in reading. The school's primary department has made a very strong response to the National Literacy Strategy. This, in addition to systematic support for literacy and very interesting and extremely well taught lessons, motivates and supports the youngest pupils very well. Writing is particularly well supported and pupils really try their best, for example, when they offer ideas for story development in group lessons and then go to write them down. Teachers are excellent motivators of children and ensure that they have an increasingly 'can do' and 'have a go' attitude to their work. This is a significant 'about turn' for many children, previously disenchanted with school work and their own capabilities.
64. Similarly, very strong schemes of work have been devised for pupils in the secondary department and in Post-16 for those who retake the GCSE course. These, plus the high expertise of the teachers, ensure that these pupils are challenged and stretched very well in their English work and that all pupils, whatever their level, background or need, are included in all lessons and make very good progress. A very good range of literature is studied and the discussion work is particularly strong, not only in supporting pupils' understanding of key English concepts, but also in often allowing them to discuss issues such as those to do with social awareness or morality. This ensures that pupils move on in areas relating to their special educational needs very well, and that the subject makes a very strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

65. Teaching is very good throughout the school and has excellent features. A particular strength of lessons for all ages is the quality of discussion work and the ways in which teachers support pupils' more confident and more thoughtful self-expression. This meets the needs of their English and their special educational needs very well and teachers are very skilled at ensuring that all contribute to this and that pupils learn to listen more effectively to the views of others. The school is very good at using the pupils' talents to support individuals and inspire others. For example, one pupil's exceptional poetry talent has led to a poetry focus as she settled into the school, with some exceptional work as a result.
66. Very good use of drama and role-play in lessons supports achievement even more. In addition, the school produces some excellent musical and drama performances, of which the staff and pupils are rightly proud, but which also support pupils' understanding of theatre, English concepts and of their own and others' capabilities very well indeed.
67. In the secondary department, dividing pupils into 'sets' enables pupils' needs to be more effectively met and yet for aspirations to remain very high. Time is used very well indeed and rarely is a moment lost, although sometimes work has to be rushed or is not finished because the lesson time available is relatively short, particularly where writing is involved. Homework is used very well to further support pupils' progress and their independent skills in English and they are well supported by parents and care staff in this. However, although ICT is used very well as a teaching tool in the primary department and in individual sessions for pupils with additional special educational needs, it could be used even more throughout the school to support pupils' learning and the writing of the lowest achievers in particular. Some pupils make limited progress in their handwriting skills and the presentation of their work would improve considerably if writing were more systematically taught or other ways of writing, such as can be provided through ICT, were used. A further excellent initiative has been the development of the library and employment of a librarian who runs book clubs and lunchtime library sessions as well as other holiday initiatives. This means that the library is very well used by staff and pupils as a teaching and learning resource.
68. Teachers plan very well together and there are very careful records kept of progress to check that pupils are making sufficient progress over time. This means that any pupil with particular difficulties is identified quickly and the school's very strong additional special educational needs provision supports pupils further. The very good work with the speech and language therapists and the educational psychologist means that pupils' difficulties are identified and supportive programmes, such as those which support listening, sound perception and literacy difficulties (phonological awareness) are put into place. These work very well and are valued highly by pupils. Such specialists and the English/primary staff work and plan very well together so that everyone involved understands the child's needs and so that planning for lessons takes account of them.
69. English is extremely well led by an expert and highly committed co-ordinator, in conjunction with very able staff from other departments of the school. This is a highly effective committed team, who have put together high quality learning experiences for pupils of all ages. Improvement since the last inspection, taking into account the improved support for pupils' literacy needs, is very good.

Literacy across the curriculum

70. There is strong support for language and literacy provided in other subjects and in the broader curriculum of school life, such as the production of *WKRS News*. In Year 7 history, for example, pupils use dictionaries to find out the meanings of key historical terms relevant to castles. In other subjects such as geography they research topics on the Internet and record their findings in notes, tables and other forms. The non-fiction texts studied are often linked to pupils' PSHE, citizenship or themes being studied and teachers support pupils' reading and writing very well. In French, pupils learn not only the French spelling and ways of writing specific words, but sometimes the English spelling too. In some subjects, occasionally, a worksheet does not take sufficient account of the reading and writing levels of pupils, but learning support assistants ensure that pupils know what to do. Displays around classroom walls and 'writer of the month' competitions mean that putting their literacy to use is part of everyday school and Post 16 life. Work is marked and comments helpful to pupils and students, but sometimes the marking could be more clearly tied in to pupils' literacy targets as well as the specific objectives of the lesson concerned.

French

Provision in French is **very good**. It has some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in French is very close to the expected levels for pupils' ages, because of the very good teaching and the strongly motivating learning opportunities provided.
- Pupils make very good and sometimes excellent progress, particularly in speaking and listening; reading and writing in French are promoted very well.
- There is very strong support for pupils who have additional learning needs through the use of support staff and the careful planning of lessons, but more use could be made of ICT to support their writing and reading in French.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to French, which contributes very strongly to their personal, social and cultural growth and to other aspects such as listening and self-esteem.

Commentary

71. The school teaches French to all secondary aged pupils. French is very well led and managed by a specialist teacher who has a high degree of expertise both in this subject and in English. Her knowledge of different ways of supporting language learning and her enthusiasm and ambition for the subject mean that all pupils, including those with the greatest need, do very well in French and try very hard. A rich and carefully planned programme builds on a commercially available scheme and systematically develops pupils' confidence in using and understanding French.
72. In Years 7 and 8 pupils learn a range of simple French constructions and vocabulary in their spoken and written forms; in Year 9 pupils exchange simple information about school likes and dislikes, food, drinks, animals and hobbies in French. The highest attainers read and write simple sentences and answer questions quickly and without prompting in relation to these. Other pupils use adult help and other children's models very well. By Year 11, the highest attainers are predicted levels of C or above in GCSE examinations; others will take an Entry Level course and all show very good achievement over time. Through a range of motivating games and adult modelling pupils in Years 7 to 11 develop their spoken French skills very well and sometimes exceptionally for their level of special educational need. They also progress very well in their reading and writing skills in French as evidenced in contributions to school newsletters, although more use could be made of ICT to enable the lowest attainers to write in French more independently and to practise vocabulary.
73. Teaching and learning are very good in French because of the expert teaching, the team-work with support staff and the very good use of available resources and time. Pupils' progress is monitored and assessed very well and the information gained is used very effectively to inform programmes. Homework is also used very well and some children regularly opt to do extra homework, because of their enthusiasm for the subject. There is careful thought given to how all pupils can be included in all lessons and learning support assistants are used very well, on

the whole, to support this practice. The lessons are particularly supportive for those pupils with attention and listening difficulties, who try very hard indeed to listen carefully to their teacher's models. French makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal and social growth and interest in others. The many collaborative games played support pupils' co-operation with each other as well as with the teacher. Most pupils celebrate each other's successes and there is healthy rivalry as it is revealed just how much homework pupils complete. Videos, audio tapes and the annual school residential visit support pupils' progress even more and their interest in French culture and life. Pupils are proud of the French they have learned and some say that they are surprised how much they can remember. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lesson planning and schemes of work have improved with the introduction of a lesson structure based on the format of the National Numeracy Strategy.
- Overall the teaching is good with very good features.
- Recording and assessment of pupils' progress are good, although there remains a need for further refinement within the system to ensure assessment informs future learning.
- Opportunities for pupils with additional needs to enhance their learning by the use of more concrete materials is underdeveloped.

Commentary

74. Pupils' attainments are generally below those of pupils of similar ages, although a few individual pupils attain at levels commensurate with national norms or even above these. Pupils achieve well, however, in relation to their previous knowledge. Teachers throughout the school use the three part structure of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) very well to plan their lessons. This, together with clearer planning of the curriculum, has had a positive effect in raising standards and has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection from satisfactory to good or better. Teaching quality has improved well and during this inspection, unlike the previous one, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Planning is supported by detailed records of pupils' progress against the level descriptors of the National Curriculum and by a bank of annual tests and award bearing courses and examinations. This system, although identifying the next step in learning, is not always sufficiently detailed or refined to inform teachers of the next learning target in the development of mathematical understanding of individual pupils. Nevertheless, this is an improvement since the last inspection and the school is continuing to develop links between attainment and future learning.
75. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff challenge pupils and ensure that all can access the work, although in some lessons greater use could be made of a wider range of concrete materials to enhance and support learning for lower-attaining pupils, in particular. Teachers plan their lessons well, providing for the individual differences, knowledge and skills of pupils. Work matches their needs well. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always make good use of the time allocated; double lessons are too long to sustain the interest of some pupils and short lessons sometimes provide insufficient time for a resume or consolidation of learning. The use of ICT within mathematics is well established and teachers use computers and interactive whiteboards to great effect. The management of pupils' behaviour is very good and teachers well understand the individual special needs and difficulties of pupils and both compensate for and meet these needs well.
76. Pupils enjoy their work, working co-operatively and productively together, often in pairs, supporting each other and exchanging knowledge and ideas. They are keen to learn and enjoy their work, often for the first time in this subject. Pupils display a wide range of strategies in solving problems and can explain their workings suggesting a variety of methods to arrive at the correct answers. Generally, written work is well presented and pupils can translate materials in books to written format without having to over rely excessively on worksheets.

77. Since the last inspection the leadership in the subject has improved dramatically and far from being unsatisfactory it is now good. The relatively recently appointed co-ordinator provides clear leadership and monitors the teaching of the subject. This improvement has had a marked effect on both teaching and learning and on the achievements of pupils. Plans are well in hand for the development of the subject to improve further the assessment of pupils so that there is even better provision for the planning of individual programmes of work for individual pupils based on their previous achievements. The mathematics department, with its close co-operation between teachers and key stage leaders, has moved forward well since the last inspection and has become a vibrant influence in the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. The use of mathematics in other subjects is well established. For example, pupils use mathematics in ICT in the recording of data and in design and technology when they use measurements and weighing to aid their constructions, as well as during "life skills" courses when shopping and planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's commitment to science is outstanding and facilities and resources provided to ensure pupils make the best possible progress are excellent.
- High quality teaching and support by learning support assistants result in pupils who are highly motivated and who want to excel in science.
- The subject is very well co-ordinated; staff in the primary and secondary departments work very closely to ensure that the pupils' transfer from Year 6 to Year 7 is smooth.

Commentary

79. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school. Some pupils' achievements are excellent. This is because the programme of work is comprehensive and it is very well put together and pupils are able to build considerably on what they have already learned. In addition, the high quality of teaching (which has excellent features) inspires and motivates pupils so that they want to learn. As a result, they try their hardest, even though for a few, staying in the lesson when there are unusual things happening, such as 'reactions' and 'smells', initially upsets them. Resources are excellent and used to great effect in lesson. The teacher, however, although highly dedicated, mostly has to prepare these.
80. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are mainly below the level expected for their ages and many have had little opportunity to learn science before attending WKRS because of their particular emotional and behavioural difficulties. On entry to school standards are often low. However, by the time they are at the end of Year 11 they gain grades in GCSE mostly around grade C; one pupil in 2003 gained a B but others also gained F. They take the single GCSE award only. This is because of the constraints on time, although some higher attainers would benefit from the greater challenge of the double award. In addition, some pupils at the end of Year 6 and Year 9 taking the national tests often attain levels above that expected for their age. All this represents very good progress and achievement. Pupils' skills in investigation are particularly strong and they thoroughly enjoy planning and carrying out their experiments. Some need support to plan their ideas and to interpret results; this too is very effectively done, with staff sensitively helping the pupils but not giving them too much guidance when they need to work more independently. All staff have a good knowledge of pupils' personal targets, so can provide support in the direction in which it is needed.
81. The introductions to lessons in the secondary department are excellent. They give pupils a very good opportunity to revise what they know and to develop new ideas in preparation for the practical part of the lessons. The use of the interactive white board, where the teacher has compiled a multi-media sequence or, in some cases, has designed the software herself, is outstanding and compels pupils to learn. Pupils who are involved in responding to written questions in front of the class during this part of the lesson frequently ask for more opportunities to do this. The teachers' expert knowledge in all three aspects of science is a considerable strength and her liaison and planning with staff means that they are fully aware of their role in lessons. The quality of questioning and exploration of pupils' ideas, and the way that staff

respond to any misunderstandings or confusions, results in help which addresses this very effectively. For instance, in determining the angle of reflection pupils were effectively guided in ensuring that they had traced the light beam correctly and knew how to measure using a protractor. Staff are really successful in knowing how to reduce pupils' anxiety and in giving them the right encouragement. There are many similar features to teaching in the primary department. This, too, is very good. The work with pupils is highly thorough and very well matched to their needs. An investigation in Year 5 into insulation was particularly well done when the determined questioning by the teacher led to pupils thinking very hard about which material would be the best to keep things cool. In both departments, scientific vocabulary is strongly emphasised, although this is not always in a written form for pupils to see.

82. Although there is no overall co-ordinator for the subject, there being one for the primary department and one who leads secondary development (who is the only teacher of the subject), there is very good liaison, which ensures continuity of the programme. Transition from primary to secondary is effectively planned, with pupils in Year 6 spending some time in the outstanding science laboratory, effectively prepared for the format of secondary department lessons. Overall, the leadership and management of the subject, the evaluation of pupils' progress, subject development and the improvements based on these are very good. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good** with some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils learn well and gain much confidence from the way staff support them with work which builds on what they already know in small steps.
- Although pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points, a few pupils could do even better.
- The subject is well resourced and the keeping abreast of technology as well as of new ways of teaching helps the subject to be well planned in the long-term.
- Resources are good but software and the environment in which pupils learn could be improved.

Commentary

83. Pupils make good progress in ICT and achieve well. Some achieve very well. The school's commitment to the subject is high and additional support by a consultant, in liaison with the subject leader, is considerably helping to provide a very clear direction. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.
84. The subject is well resourced and ICT is confidently and competently used by pupils in learning ICT skills as well as across a range of subjects. Although standards for their age are slightly below what they should be, by the time pupils are at the end of Year 11, those who have taken GCSE have gained grades around grade D; this is good achievement. However, some higher-attaining pupils could do even better if higher level work, which stretched and challenged them even more, were provided. Many pupils show a real flair for using ICT and persevere even when ideas become quite complex. It is their determination to get things right and the teacher's personal support and encouragement which spur them on.
85. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers and support staff are knowledgeable and the training they have had has had a real benefit for the pupils. A significant strength is the very careful step-by-step approach which gives pupils the confidence they are doing the right things, for instance in inserting the correct formulae in their spreadsheets. Some more able pupils, however, could take bigger leaps so that they tackle more complex work, instead of gaining extra time to do what they want on the computer when they have finished, such as 'surf the Internet'. There is good use of the interactive white board for demonstrations. Introductions assess pupils' previous knowledge well but there is a missed opportunity to involve pupils more at this stage, so they fully understand what they are to do and learn. Instead the teacher mainly tells them and, because some sequences are quite complex, pupils then need help at the computer to carry these out. This has the effect of slowing the lesson pace because the high quality guidance is then given to pupils, often, one by one. Good support materials are provided to guide pupils, but they could become independent even more quickly if introductions were stronger.
86. The ICT room is adequate for the purpose, although it lacks ventilation and monitors are too high for the youngest pupils. For pupils in Years 3 and 4 the software is not always sufficiently matched to their age or stage of learning and screen displays are sometimes too complex.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. Good use is generally made of computers to support learning in other subjects. The Internet is used well for research and pupils in residence make good use of ICT for homework. There are a few gaps, such as use in music and religious education, although in science, for instance, it is excellently used. There are some missed opportunities to support pupils with their writing, especially those with special educational needs.

HUMANITIES

Commentary

88. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in **geography** and **history**. Only two lessons in history were observed, both in Year 7, and none in geography. The analyses of pupils' records in relation to both subjects and the sample of pupils' work indicate that they are achieving at least well. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 study geographical features of Alaska, Canada and North America and are able to effectively identify individual states. In history they study the native North Americans and compare life on the plains with other environments.

89. The pupils in Year 7 make very good progress in their understanding of medieval castles. They effectively link this to work they have completed on William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings. They are able to give the dates of major battles and events and use a vocabulary which includes such words as *garrison*, *fortress*, *siege*, *barricade* and *surrender*.
90. The school follows the Programmes of Study within the National Curriculum and planning is effectively based upon themes relating to geography and history. For example, Year 5 pupils, when learning about making a plan of the local area, effectively study where water can be found in West Kirby.
91. Teaching and learning were good and lessons seen had clear objectives. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and know their pupils well. They use a range of teaching styles to sustain the pupils' interest in lessons, based on their special educational needs and how best they learn. Work is appropriately matched to the pupils' needs and effectively supports their learning. The pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds and teachers' records include individual pupils' levels of attainment. This information is being well used for individual target setting and future curriculum planning.
92. Both subjects are well managed and led. The co-ordinator uses enthusiasm and imagination to fire the pupils' interest and for history has planned a broad range of interesting and engaging learning opportunities. Standards of achievement have improved since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education

The overall quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The programme for older pupils is strongly related to PSHE themes and ideas. Some older pupils could achieve more if they have increased allocations of time for religious studies.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The use of assessment and target setting to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum needs some improvement.

Commentary

93. Pupils and students achieve well in their study of issues related to ethics, crime and punishment, and religious values. Although progress is generally good overall, some groups only have a small amount of time to learn the subject and could achieve more if a greater amount of time were allocated.
94. In Year 11 the pupils' religious education is taught as part of humanities. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of issues such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and poverty in the developing world. For example, the war in Iraq was an effective focus for discussion on issues related to the 'just war'. Their understanding of religious aspects of the work is just satisfactory, although the emphasis on these is variable from the evidence of the pupils' written accounts. For example, Year 10 pupils effectively address the issues of how culture affects patterns of behaviour. This enhances their knowledge of culture but says little about religious influences.

95. In Year 9, the pupils achieve well in their understanding of the moral and ethical questions raised by crime and punishment and in religious contexts and how it is reported in newspapers. Year 8 pupils make good progress in their understanding of special places. Written work, entitled "My House", is of a good standard and deals effectively with relationships and social issues. Year 7 pupils make significant gains in their knowledge of the six main religions of the world and "What is God Like?" In Year 5, pupils achieve well and make good progress in their dramatic presentation of the 'four sites' in Buddhism. They make good progress in their understanding of the early life of Gautama.
96. Teaching is good and leads to clear and effective learning in lessons. Lessons are well planned and managed and follow guidance given in the revised Wirral Agreed Syllabus. Good use is made of exposition and questioning, where the high level of teachers' subject expertise and knowledge of individual pupils helps promote their understanding. A range of effective teaching styles sustains the pupils' interest. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed and significantly contribute to the pupils' learning. Stimulating table and wall displays make an important contribution to the pupils' learning. The pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds but marking and target setting need to be improved further to more effectively inform them of how well they are doing.
97. The subject is very well managed and accommodation and resources are adequate for current needs. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. There is some use of ICT but this could be used much more. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Commentary

98. The school provides a wide range of activities and experiences for pupils in both two and three dimensional **art** including ceramics and photography. As a consequence, pupils achieve well, producing pleasing results. Pupils draw and paint, produce models and artefacts in ceramics and understand and use the properties of light well in their photographic work. The school further provides enhanced artistic experiences by visits to see the work of substantial artists and designers, for example, during the proposed trip to Barcelona this year. Insufficient lessons were observed during the inspection to form a firm judgement about teaching or about overall provision, but from those lessons seen, together with pupils' finished work, the teaching is judged to be at least good.
99. Although the school has a dedicated art room and provides resources to cover a wide range of artistic functions, there remain some limitations. For example, the kiln is too small for the amount of work required of it. Pupils respond well to art and design and co-operate well with each other. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and provides a good range of courses including some that lead to external accreditation. Art within the school is now good and this represents a good improvement since the last inspection.
100. Only one lesson in **design and technology** was seen during the inspection and it is, therefore, not possible to reach a judgement with regard to the quality of teaching. However, the standards of the work seen indicate that the pupils' achievements are good. Pupils are able to follow a wide range of courses and activities in both resistant materials work and in food and textile technology. The school provides courses leading to GCSE examinations and pupils' achievements are of a high level, especially in textile technology.
101. Generally, pupils enjoy their work and in all branches of the subject understand the design methodology of design, prototype, modify and produce. They are proud of their work and celebrate this and the work of others. They can explain their work and ideas and understand the technology that produces it. The use of ICT in textile technology is very well developed. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator and the team of teachers and support staff who deliver the various aspects of the curriculum.
102. Accommodation and resources for the subject are good in food and textile technology but only satisfactory in the area of resistant materials. The workshop remains part of the art room and equipment is limited in range; for example, there is little or no facility for producing artefacts in metal. The school does, however, have very clear plans for the expansion of facilities in design and technology to allow for a wider range of activity including, for example, provision for car maintenance, construction, engineering and manufacture.

Music

The overall quality of provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Pupils' very good attitudes support good achievement.
- Cramped accommodation is a barrier to raising standards.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Assessment is not always used to inform the pupils of how well they are doing.
- The use of information and communication technology should be improved.

Commentary

103. Standards at Post-16 and by Year 11 are below those expected for pupils' ages, although some pupils attain standards which are much higher. In 2003 one pupil obtained grade C in the GCSE examination. However, overall they achieve well in relation to their starting points. Some pupils find the theory of music quite difficult and in Year 10, for instance, the pupils often struggle to read musical notation and evaluate their work accurately. More competent pupils have a satisfactory understanding of music from other places such as England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as of African and Andean music. They have good listening skills and are able to identify the tabla, sitar and drone bass in Indian music. They make good progress in their understanding of call and response music and are able to use such words as *rhythm*, *beat*, *improvisation*, *blend* and *mix* in their music vocabulary.
104. Standards by Year 6 are also below the national expectation. However, these pupils also achieve well in relation to their prior knowledge. Some pupils have a limited musical vocabulary and have had very little experience of musical skills prior to attending WKRS. Year 5 pupils, however, make good progress in their understanding of structure. They are able to identify drums, electric guitar and bass guitar. The pupils in Year 6 make good progress in listening to a range of music. They can maintain rhythm patterns but, because of limitations of accommodation, find working together difficult. Boys are often more willing to perform, answer questions and give musical opinions during lessons.
105. In all years the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lesson planning is detailed and follows guidance given by the National Curriculum. Teachers' planning shows clear objectives and these are displayed on the white board ensuring that the pupils are clear on what they are learning and doing and in what order. Lesson pace is good and the lively teaching helps to keep pupils interested and motivated. Lessons are well prepared and well managed, with learning support assistants effectively contributing to the pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy the subject and show positive attitudes. A strong feature is the teachers' very good encouragement of pupils. The pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds but, in some cases, this should be used more effectively to inform them of how well they are doing. Short focused activities are used to reinforce pupils' learning. Pupils work well together and this makes a very important contribution to their personal and social development. Much more use could be made of ICT for research and to compose. Lessons are fully inclusive so that all pupils are involved in each aspect of the lesson.
106. Leadership and management are very good at giving clear vision and direction for the subject. There is very good co-operation and communication between staff and a strong commitment to the pupils' musical awareness through such multi-arts events as *Grease* and *Joseph and His Technicoloured Dreamcoat*. There are no opportunities for peripatetic tuition although the co-ordinator plans to explore this. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources for gymnastics and sport are excellent; the major building project has significantly improved facilities.
- The wealth of local amenities is fully utilised to provide a very broad range of activities.

- All pupils receive in excess of two hours physical activity each week; this exceeds the national Physical Education, Sports Club and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy target for 5-16 year olds in England.
- The school works hard to ensure there is gender balance in activities; dance opportunities in the Years 7 to 9 need extending.

Commentary

107. Resources for the delivery of physical education have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were a cause for concern. The sports barn provides an excellent environment in which pupils experience a wide range of physical activities, principally gymnastics and games. The weight training room, with multi-gym and fitness machinery, provides good anaerobic and aerobic exercise facilities. The school makes very effective use of local facilities such as the swimming pool, marina and countryside to extend the range of physical activities available to pupils.
108. The quality of teaching in physical education is good. Lessons are well planned, with appropriate resources used effectively. The deployment of learning support assistants significantly supports learning. The learning support assistants are well briefed and experienced and support learning objectives by encouraging pupil participation. Their enthusiastic involvement in lessons provides a good model and their verbal encouragement and positive feedback clearly motivate pupils. The safe learning environment enables pupils who, are not particularly skilled to participate with confidence as all levels of performance are equally valued by both staff and other pupils. One pupil in the primary department, who because of his physical attributes clearly experienced difficulty with gymnastics movement, was able to participate with the full support of his peers. A sense of fair play is apparent in the way pupils approach both individual and team based activities.
109. Pupils' achievement in physical education is satisfactory. The impact of the improved facilities has not yet had a full impact on their achievements overall. They work safely; for example, on the running machine, they are very aware of the need to deploy the safety mechanism and do not need to be reminded. In moving apparatus around, they are careful and considerate of others. Although pupils' skills and techniques are sound overall, some do not yet show enough precision, control and fluency or understanding of tactics and composition. This is in some part due to the emphasis placed on 'whole game' activities and, in the upper school, on the development of activities for leisure rather than activities for performance. There is little opportunity for pupils to demonstrate and observe effective skills within lessons. This means that they are unable to compare and comment on skills, techniques and ideas used in their own and others' work.

110. Although the programme that pupils follow is extensive overall, the school's dance opportunities in Years 7 to 9 are narrow for some pupils and there are no modern fitness sessions, nor use of music to improve the pupils' working environment. The gender imbalance has influenced the type of activities on offer to pupils. While girls participate enthusiastically in many activities, such as basketball, football and weight training, the significantly greater number of boys has limited the range of activities which are considered appropriate. Pictures and posters to enhance the learning environment do, however, reflect the participation of women in physical activity, which may help to both raise the aspirations of girls and also raise boys' awareness of female achievement in sport.
111. The department is well organised. The co-ordinator is a specialist teacher and maintains a high level of subject awareness through the local education authority network and attendance at appropriate professional development courses. Leadership and management are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Overall provision in PSHE is **very good**. It has some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very broad range of opportunities is created to promote PSHE and citizenship in the curriculum, across the school and in the community.
- The quality of teaching and support is good, with some very good features.
- The way that staff promote PSHE themes and ideas in other subjects is strong.
- Leadership and management of PSHE are very good.

Commentary

112. The school effectively achieves its aim of promoting pupils' personal development and it effectively meets the needs of the pupils very well. The planned programme of PSHE is significantly enhanced by the vast range of opportunities pupils are given during the school day and in residence. This adds much to their personal development, which, by the time they leave the school, is very good with excellent features. There is a clear policy statement for PSHE, which addresses pupils' personal social and health development as they proceed through the school. All pupils have one period each week for PSHE and this is an ideal time allocation to sustain the attention of the pupils on a focused topic. The curriculum is broad and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although standards overall are below those of pupils of similar ages, the pupils achieve well in PSHE and often very well and make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding of life skills, health and personal development. Achievement since the previous inspection has been maintained.
113. Within a Post-16 Life Skills programme pupils make good progress in their understanding of relationships between themselves and other people. This includes gaining very good experience in the adult world through work experience placements in local shops, offices and garages. Good links with neighbouring adult learning centres and colleges further develop their social links in the community. Pupils effectively develop their ICT skills as they access pictorial information about a range of jobs and professions and they are able to print the basic instructions required to fulfil a task. The quality of their written work is good. For example, they have completed a series of lessons entitled "Doing the Job" with appropriate comments about working in a shop, a café, and a stable, or having a paper round.
114. Older pupils are taught about sex and relationships in a sensitive and mature way. They gain an understanding of personal responsibility in their consideration of relationships. PSHE is taught in other subjects and features in the pupils' individual behaviour and social support programmes.
115. Younger pupils develop a good understanding of how they experience change. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the school nurse was able to involve the pupils in setting ground rules of confidentiality before introducing a series of lessons on sex and relationships. Good literacy skills are developed as pupils write their own fact file about themselves and effectively use such words as "mature" and "personal" in a correct context.

116. The teachers' planning of lessons is strong. Lessons have clear objectives and learning outcomes which, when presented to the pupils, give a clear focus to the lesson. A good understanding of each pupil's needs, together with a range of well-chosen teaching styles, helps to maintain interest for the duration of the lesson. For example, a Year 9 group examining issues of crime and punishment were disappointed when the lesson came to an end. Learning through role play and other teaching techniques is effectively used across the curriculum. For example, Year 9 pupils dramatise the roles of Sir Toby, Feste, Olivia and Malvolio from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The learning support assistants are well deployed and make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and social development.
117. One of the main features of the very good leadership and management is the high level of collaboration with staff across the school. As well as strong links with parents there are visits from the fire, police, medical personnel, Red Cross and Christian drugs relationship teams which make a significant contribution to the PSHE curriculum. The school has recently been presented with the Healthy Schools bronze award. Whole school PSHE days and residential visits, as well as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, complement the taught curriculum. More outside activities should be developed and pupils should be encouraged to be more involved in their own local communities. The School Council gives valuable experience to pupils when debating school issues in a democratic forum.

Citizenship

Commentary

118. It was possible to observe only two lessons in citizenship. However, parts of what pupils in Years 9 to 11 are taught are covered in many other subjects, and particularly in PSHE, religious education, history and geography, science, ICT and mathematics. For example, in literacy in Years 10 and 11 pupils make a detailed study of newspaper, radio and television coverage of the news. They effectively progress to design a page of a newspaper on a subject of their own choice. Pupils are encouraged in most lessons to offer opinions in a courteous manner and to respect the views of others. The pupils in Year 8, for example, effectively discuss issues related to democracy and government in relation to the European Union. Younger pupils in Year 5 view aspects of bullying on video and then discuss well who they could talk to if they were being bullied. The Post-16 programme also very strongly promotes citizenship.
119. The school has a clear policy on citizenship and attaches much importance to pupils' developing self-awareness. They effectively progress from an understanding of their immediate environment to that of the wider world and their relationships with other people. For example, pupils in Year 8, in considering issues of equal opportunities, examine gender issues in the work place to good effect. All pupils learn to effectively manage their personal care and their belongings. In addition, they effectively carry out responsibilities around the school. Pupils in residence fulfil additional responsibilities for their own care and well-being. The School Council clearly demonstrates the good lines of communication in the school and the ability of the pupils to come to democratic decisions after discussing issues which are important to them. Wall displays with the theme of citizenship effectively support the pupils' learning. The opportunities pupils have to go on visits outside of school and their work experience ensure they develop a growing sense of personal responsibility in a broader and challenging context. The subject is also very well resourced and managed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE POST-16 DEPARTMENT

Provision in the Post-16 department is **good**. It has some very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in the Post-16 department achieve well in a range of accredited courses.
- Accommodation for the students is just about adequate, although it is small and cramped.
- Teaching is good with very good features and students are approached in a mature and adult way.
- Very good use is made of the local environment to enhance learning.

Commentary

120. The attainment levels of students, overall, fall below those of the majority of young people of their age. Individual students, however, achieve well (and often very well) within the courses they undertake and take great pride in their achievements, some of which are high. The majority of students that remain in WKRS after the age of 16 follow a course of study leading to an accredited qualification in "life skills" and some are able to re-sit or revisit courses and examinations taken during their final year in school. Many are students who need extra time learning basic skills or wish to gain better examination results. A single teacher acts as tutor to the unit but students take some lessons in the main part of the school and are taught by specialist teachers. The unit is housed in a small, quiet area of the school with a small kitchen and dining room and a common room at the top of a narrow staircase. These areas are small and barely adequate and the multipurpose common room with a small computer suite does not provide for a suitable range of social and recreational spaces. There have been minor improvements in this area since the last inspection, although the plan for improvement had to be temporarily shelved because of other building priorities.
121. The curriculum, based on a published scheme of work leading to a recognised (Welsh) qualification, is broad and varied. Students follow the Welsh life skills courses and modules of study as well as a raft of other courses for example in art, music, mathematics and English together with periods of work experience and courses in colleges of further education in West Kirby or nearer their home towns.
122. The teaching is well planned and most activities in lessons are approached in ways that show considerable regard for the age of students. Relationships within the classroom are very good both within the peer group and with the teachers. The department discourages the use of non teaching support with these older students but the teacher provides good support to individual students where it is needed. However, support is given by other staff, for example, visiting speakers and the lecturing staff of local colleges. The school takes great care to ensure that students leave the unit well equipped for the outside world. No student leaves West Kirby without either a job or a place in a further educational setting.
123. The teacher in charge of the unit manages its work well. Provision for students in this department is good because of the high level of commitment and teaching skill given to students. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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 against individual targets and not national standards.