

# INSPECTION REPORT

## MILTON SCHOOL

Mexborough

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106969

Headteacher: Mr Martin Fittes

Lead inspector: Charles Hackett

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 265184

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Special   |
| School category:             | Community   |
| Age range of pupils:         | 4 -16   |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed   |
| Number on roll:              | 111   |
| School address:              | Storey Street<br>Swinton<br>Mexborough<br>South Yorkshire |
| Postcode:                    | S64 8QG   |
| Telephone number:            | 01709 570246  |
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| Appropriate authority:       | Governing body  |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mrs C Fines   |
| Date of previous inspection: | 14 <sup>th</sup> June 1999                                |

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Milton is currently a school for boys and girls aged from 4 to 16, who have moderate or complex learning difficulties, such as autistic spectrum disorders. The school's population, though, is changing and all pupils now being admitted have complex learning difficulties and from this year no pupils in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 will be admitted. The attainment of pupils on entry is well below the national average and all have statements of special educational need. Pupils come from all over the borough and the area attracts additional national funding for being an economically deprived region. The school has 111 pupils, most are white and of an English background; there are currently 5 pupils of British Asian or mixed race origin. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. In the last 18 months there have been a considerable number of staff changes and these have included the appointment of a new headteacher, deputy and other senior staff.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                   |                | Subject responsibilities  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| 21081                          | Charles Hackett   | Lead inspector | Information and communication technology, modern foreign language, physical education                   |
| 32676                          | Nick Power        | Lay inspector  |   |
| 18461                          | Vanessa Wilkinson | Team inspector | English, Foundation Stage   |
| 21822                          | Helen Maskew      | Team inspector | Science, geography, history, religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship |
| 30071                          | John Pearson      | Team inspector | Mathematics, art and design, design and technology, music   |

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## A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Milton is a **good** school with **very good** features. The school is adapting well to the differing special needs of the pupils it now admits. Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school and as a result pupils, irrespective of their special needs, make good progress. Leadership and management are effective and the school provides good value for money.

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

- The procedures to introduce pupils to the school are very effective and the preparation pupils receive for life after leaving school is very good.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher is ensuring that the school understands its new role and is seeking to provide the best it can for all its pupils.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and the care and support staff provide is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school and the standards of their behaviour are very good.
- Considerable data has been collected on pupils' achievements but there are limited measures to evaluate this and use the information gained.
- Although pupils make good progress in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education lessons, there is not a consistent plan to monitor how these aspects are taught throughout the curriculum.
- The school provides pupils with good cultural experiences but does not give sufficient attention to preparing pupils to live in a multi-cultural society.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Pupils' progress is now checked regularly and the management of the youngest pupils is good. Science and design and technology have been improved and pupils can now take examinations before they leave school. Governors are more involved and the school development plan is a much more detailed and useful document.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' overall achievements are **good**. They are very good in the development of their communication skills, religious education, physical education and their personal development, particularly in their first two and last two years in school. All pupils make good progress with their reading and primary pupils also make good progress with their writing. However, the progress of other pupils with their writing is only satisfactory. In mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (including citizenship) progress is good. There are strengths in the development of pupils' skills in using computers and other forms of technology (ICT) but overall their progress is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is **good** overall. The development of pupils' social skills and moral understanding are strengths in the work of the school. Although pupils' spiritual and cultural development are good overall there is inconsistency in how these are covered in different classes. Preparing pupils to live in a multi-cultural society is given only limited attention. Pupils'

attitudes to school and the overall quality of their behaviour are very good. Although, a few pupils distort the final figures, overall pupils' attendance and their punctuality are satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Staff show a real commitment to provide the best they can for pupils. Teaching and learning are consistently **good** throughout the school; teachers have clearly benefited from support provided by senior staff and outside consultants. In religious education and physical education teaching is very good. Teaching and learning in individual lessons in ICT are good but the teaching of ICT whilst pupils learn other subjects, although satisfactory, is inconsistent. This is a similar picture for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; a few teachers make good links to these in their teaching but this is not planned for consistently in the teaching of all subjects. Individual personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons are often good but there is again a need to bring about more consistency in how these are taught, particularly in the secondary department. Methods to assess and record pupils' progress are good; there are very detailed records kept of pupils' achievements. These though are not evaluated sufficiently to give the school information on any future action they might take to improve pupils' progress even further.

The curriculum is good. It is particularly effective for pupils when they first join the school in Years 1 and 2 and for the oldest pupils with moderate learning difficulties in preparing them to leave school. The quality of care and support for pupils is good. Staff know pupils well and their relationships with them are very positive and supportive. Links with other schools and colleges are very good and play an important role in extending pupils' educational opportunities. Links with parents are good and there are also effective links with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very effective and his vision for the school's development is ensuring that the school is changing and extending its skills to meet the differing special needs of the pupils now being admitted. Other senior staff, including the deputy headteacher, play important parts in maintaining a safe environment and a purposeful learning atmosphere. Governance is good. Governors are fully involved in the school and minutes of their meetings show they monitor its work closely.

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

Parents are very positive about the work of the school. They stress how much staff care for their children and the progress their children make. They have a lot of confidence in the work of the headteacher. Pupils are also very positive about the school. They report that they like the school and the smiles on their faces when they arrive each morning confirms these comments and also give a very positive message from those pupils with very limited communication skills.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Plan more effectively how pupils' personal, social and health education and their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are being covered in the teaching of other subjects of the curriculum.
- Evaluate more fully the data collected on pupils' achievements.
- Improve the opportunities for helping pupils have a better understanding of living in a multi-cultural society.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils' overall achievement is **good**.

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

- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make good progress throughout the school, and in Years 10 and 11 these pupils make very good progress.
- Pupils with complex learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders, are making good progress, particularly in their first two years in school.
- Pupils' progress is best in the development of their communication skills and religious and physical education.
- Whilst pupils' overall progress in English is good, the development of their writing skills in the secondary part of the school is not given sufficient attention.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties benefit from the clear structure and organisation of the school, which allows them to succeed at a rate that matches their learning difficulties well. The level of care and attention given to them by staff enables them to make good progress in all curriculum areas. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11, where high quality staff support and the very appropriate curriculum ensures that they are well prepared for leaving school. The quality of their educational and personal development is illustrated by the completion of successful work experience placements for every pupil in the current Year 11. Pupils are working very well at completing their portfolios that record their experiences and all are in line to receive certification from their experiences. Pupils also make very good progress in working in a college setting and this helps them to be well prepared to move on to college. Records show that in recent years Year 11 pupils have been successful in achieving units of accreditation for entry-level awards in English, mathematics, science, ICT, French and food technology. Pupils have also achieved well in meeting the school's targets and the targets set for them as individuals.
2. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress as a result of the good support provided for them. This is very evident in their first two years in the school where the quality of teaching is very good and as a result pupils make immediate and rapid progress. A scrutiny of responses from parents of pupils at their first annual reviews shows that many parents comment on the very good progress their children are making, particularly in their communication and independence skills. The few pupils with autistic spectrum disorders now in the secondary part of the school are making the same good progress as other pupils, however, the school acknowledges that as the number of these pupils increases there will need to be a different focus to the current timetable and teaching arrangements. There is no difference in the achievements of boys and girls.
3. The school places an important emphasis on pupils being able to communicate effectively. This is apparent in the primary classes where instructions from staff are very clear and pupils respond and listen carefully to their teacher. Signing is used effectively. Older pupils benefit from being able to engage in discussions. During the inspection in a Year 11 lesson about rights and responsibilities within the workplace, pupils felt confident to make contributions and listen to the views of others and make use of these in forming their own opinions. Primary pupils make good progress with their reading and writing skills. Reading skills continue to be well developed in the secondary department but pupils' progress in writing is limited because there is not enough overall emphasis from staff to develop these skills whilst the pupils learn other subjects.



4. Pupils benefit from a well structured religious education programme and their very good progress is centred around their understanding of religious beliefs and a link to places of worship; a Year 9 visit during the inspection to a church developed this understanding very well. A very well structured physical education programme enables pupils to achieve very well in a wide range of activities. These include the youngest primary pupils making very good progress in dance, Year 8 pupils developing a range of cricketing skills and older pupils showing good techniques in playing short tennis. The presentation of the Sportsmark award for the second time demonstrates the school's commitment to this subject over a period of time.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work in lessons as the result of good teaching that stimulates their interest and encourages them to succeed.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good because they are set very clear guidelines.
- The school's strong emphasis on respecting the values of others promotes very good relationships.
- Both spiritual and cultural development are good, though opportunities are not consistently planned for each class and more attention is needed to preparing pupils to live in a multi-cultural society.

### **Commentary**

5. Pupils pay very good attention to their lessons and work very hard. Teachers encourage them by making it very clear what they are expected to do. Pupils respond very well to this and are confident to try and work hard. Writing tasks and objectives on the board in words or symbols proves effective for pupils who learn better through visual presentation and contributes to these pupils paying very good attention to their lessons. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning also result from the boost to their self-esteem that arises from tasks that present just enough, but not too much, challenge. This is particularly effective for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and is at its best in those lessons where pupils are enabled to work independently, or with minimal support, on tasks that are matched to their individual needs. In these lessons, pupils work very hard, concentrate very well and are pleased with their results.
6. Pupils behave very well. They are encouraged to be responsible for their own behaviour, within a set of clear and positive guidelines, and by use of clearly thought out strategies that teachers are beginning to use consistently throughout the school. In one class, for example, pupils who have difficulty controlling their actions keep their own behaviour records, and try hard to reduce the number of incidents. Very good, detailed behaviour plans are provided for those who need them. By involving pupils in managing their own behaviour, the school promotes their moral development very successfully by giving a clear indication of what is acceptable behaviour. This is supported by very clear school rules that indicate the behaviour that is required.
7. Very good help is provided for those pupils who experience behaviour difficulties. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, for example, are helped very well to cope with aspects of school that they find difficult. Care is taken to keep their classroom environment simple, so that it does not over-stimulate their senses; they are taught using visual material including signs and symbols and are helped through the potentially difficult transitions between different activities. The success of the school's approach is clearly seen by the excellent behaviour of pupils during a school visit, the relatively few lessons that are interrupted by poor behaviour and the fact that the school has not issued exclusions in the past year.

8. Pupils' very good social development is confirmed by the very good relationships they enjoy with each other, the staff and visitors to the school. Adults provide very good role models for the pupils and continuously reinforce, informally, an emphasis on respecting the feelings and values of others. Pupils are very friendly and co-operative in lessons, showing interest in each others' achievements and working together well in paired and small group activities. At lunchtimes, older pupils enjoy helping to serve meals to the younger children. During a visit to a churchyard, pupils show warmth and friendship to classmates who have had family bereavements recently.
9. The school's religious education curriculum provides good opportunities to develop an understanding of spirituality through studying the customs of people from different faiths and cultures. In other subjects, a multi-cultural perspective is taken to broaden the pupils' experiences, for example in a food technology lesson that studies the effect immigrants have upon the types of food available. However, overall there is not a clear plan for ensuring that pupils understand the implications of living in a multi-cultural society. There are good opportunities for pupils' cultural development as they learn about different places in the world, different times in history and study famous works of art and music. These opportunities, however, are dependent upon individual teachers and are not planned as part of a comprehensive approach to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
10. The school's attendance is about the same as that for other schools of this type nationally. The school has a number of good strategies to ensure that pupils endeavour to attend school. Good attendance is celebrated in assemblies, and the school and Education Welfare Officer follow up instances of poor attendance promptly. Although nearly all pupils arrive at school and lessons on time, the school's system for recording late arrivals is unclear.

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

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 6.4 | School data          | 3.3 |
| National data      | 8.2 | National data        | 2.1 |

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

**Teaching and learning**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good**. They are very good in the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills, physical and religious education. Assessment is also **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are consistently effective in all parts of the school but models of very good practice are not always shared throughout the school.
- Lessons have a clear structure, questions are used very effectively and pupils are successfully helped to recall and apply prior learning in new situations.
- Teachers are adapting their teaching methods well to accommodate the needs of an increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and have a positive effect on pupils' confidence to try new tasks.
- Pupils' understanding and skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology are not promoted consistently in the teaching of all staff.
- There are good systems to check and record pupils' achievements but the way this information is evaluated is not fully developed.

## Commentary

11. The consistently high quality of teaching throughout the school plays a key part in pupils achieving as well as they do. The introduction of national initiatives to improve teaching and the use of senior staff and outside consultants to monitor teaching has played an important part in developing effective teaching approaches throughout the school and in improving the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Individual teachers demonstrate particular impressive strengths, for example, regularly in Year 6 lessons there is a very good emphasis on helping pupils to understand their individual targets and on teaching them to take responsibility for their own and others' learning. However, strategies such as these are not always shared effectively with other staff as models of good practice. Subject co-ordinators do not have enough opportunities to observe lessons and identify these good ideas and this is reflected in the overall judgement that teaching is good rather than very good.
12. Almost all teachers provide a clear structure to their lessons with introductions which outline the lesson content and the lesson objectives. Because this information is shared with pupils and they know what they are learning about and what they are expected to achieve they settle quickly. Prior learning is discussed effectively with pupils and this enables them to recall and apply what they already know to the new experiences they have. For example, pupils in a Year 3 lesson were able to say confidently where the letter 'j' sat in the alphabet because they had talked about a previous lesson and remembered that it came between 'i' and 'k'. At the end of almost all lessons teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to talk about their work. This enables them to check pupils' understanding and provides a good opportunity for pupils to rehearse what they have learned. Questions are used very effectively by teachers to encourage pupils to participate in lessons. Pupils' very good communication skills and the confident way they take part in discussion is a reflection of the skilful way in which teachers use questions to encourage pupils to talk about their ideas, experiences and learning.
13. The teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is mostly good or very good. The best teaching accommodates the pupils' preference for a visual learning style and their difficulties processing oral instructions and information. Examples are symbol timetables, Makaton signing, pictures to support lesson introductions, picture/symbol task-lists, PECS for signalling transitions and giving choices. The use of PECS is very good and is embedded in classroom practice. Weaknesses in the teaching of autistic spectrum disorder pupils are mostly related to teachers not adapting the environment sufficiently well to reduce the amount of verbal instructions. A few teachers talk too much, too quickly and for too long. The impact of this is, however, slight at the moment, because the pupils' needs are not very severe. Although good prompting procedures are in place for pupils with the most severe needs, more care needs to be taken about the transition from one activity to the next.
14. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and this encourages pupils to concentrate and work hard. Teachers are consistently very clear about their expectations for behaviour and participation and pupils respond positively. During the inspection there was only a very small number of satisfactory lessons where pupils were at times off task and reluctant to work. In these lessons teachers were not always quick enough to address pupils' behaviour and in one or two lessons teachers did not have the strategies to bring pupils back to the task and, therefore, preventing pupils from achieving as well as they could have.
15. Teachers do not consistently promote literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology throughout the curriculum because there is no effective plan of how this will be done. Without specific guidance to help teachers ensure that all opportunities are identified and addressed, pupils' experiences are too reliant on the skills of individual teachers.

## Assessment

16. The school has developed and implemented good systems to assess and record pupils' achievements. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers regularly record the levels of attainment that pupils have achieved and there is a very good emphasis on moderating

pupils' work to develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria that the school is using. This moderation exercise is also being undertaken throughout the local education authority which is making a significant contribution to teachers' understanding of pupils' achievements compared to that of pupils in other schools. Assessment booklets for each subject clearly demonstrate the progress that pupils make over time and these records are becoming more accurate as teachers become familiar with the assessment criteria they are using. These records indicate the learning that pupils have experienced and the skills and understanding they have achieved. The link between this information and what is planned for pupils to learn next, and any implication for adapting the curriculum has not been clearly established and as a result staff are not always able to use the information effectively to monitor the progress of pupils with differing special needs.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 (6%)    | 14 (25%)  | 25 (51%) | 9 (18%)      | 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.*

### The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. It is particularly effective for Year 1 pupils joining the school and for the oldest pupils with moderate learning difficulties as they prepare to leave the school. Activities to extend the curriculum and the accommodation are good and the range of resources is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is being adapted well to meet the changing needs of younger pupils.
- The organisation of the inclusion of pupils in mainstream schools is very good.
- Preparation for later stages of education and employment are very good.
- Opportunities provided for pupils to attend college and undertake work experience are very good.
- There is a lack of consistent approach to the teaching of personal, social and health education in different classes.

### Commentary

17. Improvements to the curriculum have been good since the last inspection and it now meets all statutory requirements, including the teaching of religious education. The curriculum for younger pupils provides them with a good range of activities and learning opportunities. These help them learn well and meet their needs effectively. The oldest pupils now have the opportunity to take a range of accredited courses before they leave school, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. The curriculum content is good for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
18. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to experience lessons in local mainstream schools as part of its inclusion strategy. The planning and organisation of these opportunities impacts very positively on pupils' progress and achievement; many are attaining results in mathematics and science in line with their mainstream peer group. This is also true for the oldest pupils, who benefit from the very good liaison with the local college of further education. The very good links between Milton staff and those in other establishments underpin the success of the inclusion strategy.
19. The curriculum for pupils aged 14-16 is very good. In their final year pupils take part in well-planned work experience tailored to their specific needs and choices. As a result of their experience their confidence and self-esteem are improved. This affects their response to other

elements of preparation for life after school, particularly their links with the local college. The school takes very thorough action to ensure that pupils are well informed as to the next stage of their educational provision and visits to the college and training providers are very well planned.

20. The school provides a good variety of activities that extend pupils' learning opportunities, including a range of visits and visitors to the school. Visits further afield are planned to stimulate, challenge and encourage pupils to look outwards from the school and discover more about themselves and the world around them. For example, residential visits have included visits to London and France to support the curriculum in citizenship and modern foreign languages.
21. Although the curriculum for personal, social and health education is good, the lack of consistency in how it is taught in different classes affects the rate of pupils' learning. There is no effective monitoring of how these aspects are taught throughout the school. Sex and relationships education and programmes about the dangers of drugs misuse are good, and good use is made of outside speakers and drama groups to support learning in these areas.
22. The match of teaching and support staff to meet the needs of pupils with additional special educational needs is good. Governors and senior staff have rightly given priority in their recent appointments to recruiting staff to meet the needs of the school's changing population. Support staff complement the teaching staff and in many cases make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. The accommodation and resources have been improved significantly. The new buildings have provided a science laboratory, art room and ICT suite, all of which have an important impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are well-catalogued and readily accessible to staff.

### Care, guidance and support

The school gives its pupils **good** support, advice and guidance. Procedures for the care, welfare and health and safety of pupils are **effective** and the school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views **well**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent relationships within the school contribute significantly to the good support, advice and guidance pupils receive.
- Good links with other agencies extend the support the school is able to provide.
- Pupils feel that they are listened to and enjoy serving on the school council.
- The school environment is a safe place to be but formal risk assessments would reduce the potential for problems.

### Commentary

23. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils give pupils the confidence to feel they can approach any adult within the school should they have any concerns. Class teachers know their pupils very well and give them appropriate guidance, advice and support. This is reflected throughout the school and, appropriately, strategies vary according to the differing needs of pupils and their different stages of independence.
24. The school consciously seeks to work closely with other agencies to support pupils. Regular meetings take place with an education welfare officer and educational psychologist and staff receive specialist advice for their work with pupils with speech and language difficulties. All teaching and non-teaching staff have received recent training in Child Protection and the overall procedures for this are clear and effective.
25. The school council is democratically elected and acts as a voice for all pupils. The council has made good suggestions for improving the school and the school appreciates its work. For example, recently the school council has been involved in surveying pupils' views about school

uniform and has identified and helped solve problems with the school toilets of which the school was unaware.

26. The school identifies any risks associated with visits out of school and in lessons and ensures that steps are taken to minimise any inherent dangers. However, because there is no systematic approach to assessing risks concerning the school site, hazards within the school may develop unnoticed. Whilst all staff are trained to administer emergency first aid, no members of staff have undergone recent, formal first aid training.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The links with parents are **very good**. The school has **very good** links with other schools and colleges. Links with the community are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents receive very good quality information and express confidence in the quality of care provided for their children.
- Links with other schools and colleges extend pupils' educational opportunities very well.
- The school values the Milton Support Group, which is effective in what it does.
- The school's links with health care professionals are very good.

### **Commentary**

27. Parents are very positive about the work of the school and report how pleased they are with the progress made by their children. The school keeps them very well informed and works very hard at involving them in the life of the school. This is reflected in the quality of pupils' reports, which ensure that parents receive detailed information on their children's achievements.
28. The links with other schools in the area are used very well to benefit pupils. The Dearne Valley Partnership consists of seven comprehensive schools, two special schools and a college. The school contributes to, and gains much from, this partnership. For example, all schools within the partnership contribute financially to employ a support worker to seek out funding opportunities. This worker also runs the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme within Milton and this is much appreciated by the pupils involved. There are also very good partnerships with local primary schools. These allow individual pupils to widen their educational experiences and mix socially with a different group of pupils. Links have also recently been established with a secondary school which will allow pupils access to higher range of examinations.
29. The Milton Support Group consists of volunteers from parents and the community. The school values this group as it provides good support for the school. The group raises substantial funds for the school. When the school arranges events for parents or the community the support group is keen to be involved and contributes significantly to the success of these events. The school is constantly seeking to extend its links with the local community. For example, it is planning to open its doors for adults to come into school and make use of its computer suite.
30. The school recently organised a "One Stop Shop" event where health care professionals and other organisations involved with the school attended at the same time. Parents were able to drop in to talk to the organisations and this event was very well supported by parents. The event also enabled productive links to be made across the various health care disciplines that were represented.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership and management of the school is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very **effective** and the work of the governors is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a clear vision and ambition for the school to provide effectively for its changing school population.
- The school improvement plan and the processes for developing the priorities within it are very effective.
- Senior staff provide very good role models in the quality and commitment they show in their work.
- The school is an inclusive school where all children, irrespective of their particular special needs, are cared for and supported effectively.
- Subject co-ordinators are beginning to develop their subjects well but have only limited opportunities to monitor the work in their subjects when taught by other staff.
- There are limited procedures to evaluate the impact of recent developments and the data collected on pupils' achievements.
- The school's finances are managed very well.

## **Commentary**

31. The quality of leadership and management of the school has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher's vision for the development of the school has played a key role in how the school is successfully changing to meet the needs of the pupils it now admits. He has ensured that high quality staff are being appointed and appropriate staff training is being undertaken. In overseeing these developments, though, he has ensured that the school is still dealing effectively with the needs of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and that the few staff who are finding the changing role of the school difficult, are well supported.
32. The school development plan is much improved from the time of the last inspection. The plan has clear success criteria and is very well linked to the money that the school has available to spend. Impressively all staff and governors have a say in the writing of the plan; a residential takes place each year, where staff and governors reflect on the work of the previous year and consider priorities for the forthcoming 12 months. The whole school plan is then supplemented by subject plans, which again are very well linked to the budget available.
33. Governance of the school is now good and has improved since the previous inspection. The governors are more involved in the decision making process and have a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have played particularly key roles in the appointment of new staff and supporting the school as it changes its role in the special educational plans of the local education authority. The Chair is in close contact with the headteacher and monitors the day to day work of the school very well.
34. Senior staff are very visible and active during the school day and lead their colleagues by example. They wait by entrances to greet children when they arrive each morning and are around corridors and playgrounds during breaks playing their part in ensuring that the school is a safe and purposeful environment. Senior staff have monitored the teaching in the school and this has contributed to the consistency in the standards throughout the school. However, subject leaders have limited opportunities to check on the teaching of their colleagues and this has a negative impact on the monitoring of the teaching of literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal, social and health education. The school values every child and does everything it can to maximise their learning opportunities and provide appropriate support. This means that pupils who need individual support to see them through each school day are well provided for, as are those who are more independent, such as the pupils who attend a mainstream school for part of their timetable.
35. The school has made considerable efforts to collect data on pupils' achievement. This is very relevant and because of this it is possible to identify the standards that pupils are achieving. Senior staff now need to find ways to evaluate this data and identify where weaknesses exist

and what improvements are needed. Similarly, senior also staff need to evaluate recent whole school developments and look to use this evaluation to inform future action plans.

36. The findings of the recent financial audit show that the school has very effective financial control procedures. The finance officer has developed her own very clear financial monitoring system and provides good and accurate information for the headteacher and the finance committee. In the last two years the school underspend has been slightly above the recommended level of five per cent of the total budget, but a scrutiny of records shows that this money is for planned expenditure, much of which is related to the improvement of the school premises.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |        | Balances (£)                        |       |
|----------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Total income               | 956408 | Balance from previous year          | 67991 |
| Total expenditure          | 888925 | Balance carried forward to the next | 81765 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 8081   |                                     |       |



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

### **Foundation Stage**

*The school admits very few children who are under five. There is currently only one such child who is taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2. Inspectors were able to observe lessons taught to the reception age child.*

The arrangements to meet the needs of any children admitted to the school who are under five years of age are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is well prepared to meet the needs of children under five.
- The curriculum provides children with very good opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills.
- There is a good emphasis on the use of specific strategies for children with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Although there is a suitable safe area for outdoor play, facilities need further development.

### **Commentary**

37. The class teacher and the co-ordinator for the primary department both have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the needs of young children. The teacher who takes this group provides a good range of learning opportunities which are planned on an individual basis and take good account of the child's special needs. The experiences provided include suitable opportunities for children to learn alongside those in a local mainstream school if this is considered appropriate. The early learning goals and opportunities for structured play expected for children of this age are effectively incorporated into lesson plans and provide a good focus for achievement.
38. Any children admitted to this group are provided with very good opportunities to make progress in developing their communication, language and literacy skills. There is a good emphasis on the use of specific strategies for children with autistic spectrum disorders, such as the use of visual cues, clear and simple verbal prompts and the modelling of behaviour and play skills. The teacher is developing good skills in using symbols to label activities and provide children with information about routines and expectations. The classroom is appropriately organised into clearly defined learning areas, which are helping children and pupils to understand what is expected of them.
39. The arrangements for ongoing measurement of children's achievement and progress by the teacher are good. The accommodation is good and the school has a suitable safe area for outdoor play. However, these facilities need further development. This has been recognised by the teacher and co-ordinator and there are suitable plans to improve this learning environment in the near future.

## **ENGLISH AND A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

### **French**

*There is insufficient evidence to be able to make an overall judgement on the provision in French, however, the quality of teaching and learning in the two lessons seen during the inspection was good. A key feature that contributes to this is the positive approach of the teacher. She is enthusiastic and very keen to ensure that lessons are lively and pupils can engage in a good range of activities. Resources are prepared well prior to lessons and the teacher has established a good relationship with pupils even though she only meets them once a week and only joined the school*

*just over a term ago. The teacher uses her own very good subject knowledge of French well and ensures that she speaks clearly and fluently in lessons. Work in lessons is planned to develop pupils' communication skills and there are more difficult tasks set for those pupils of a higher ability. Pupils have in the past and will in the future be able to enter the entry-level certifications at the end of Year 11.*

## **English**

*Inspectors were able to see lessons taught to pupils in nearly all year groups as well as looking at pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with the subject co-ordinator.*

The provision for English is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Lessons are effectively planned with clear learning objectives and pupils participate well in lessons.
- Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills in all subjects.
- Pupils of all ages achieve well in reading and teachers keep good records of their achievement.
- Younger pupils achieve well in writing but there are not enough opportunities for pupils of secondary age to improve their skills.
- Teachers have good information about pupils' achievement but it is not always clear how it is used to plan the next steps in learning.
- The subject is well led and managed, although the subject leader does not observe lessons taught by other staff frequently enough.

### **Commentary**

40. Teaching and learning are good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are effective because teachers plan well. They clearly identify what they want the class and individual pupils to achieve. Teachers provide good explanations for pupils so they are clear about the tasks they will be doing and what they will know and understand by the end of the lesson. This enables pupils to participate in learning more effectively and contributes to their achievement. In almost all lessons teachers go over prior learning, which enables pupils to apply their understanding and skills effectively to new tasks. For example, in a Year 6 lesson a brief recap about different types of books enabled pupils to successfully sort a large box of books into three categories. Because they had the opportunity to remember the key features of information, story and poetry books pupils were able to apply their knowledge effectively to the task. Very good teaching was seen for pupils in Year 6 and in Year 7. In the Year 7 lesson a simple visual check list on the board of words and pictures, helped pupils organise themselves for the lesson and understand what task had been completed and how much more work needed to be done. Pupils were very clear what was expected of them and this helped them to concentrate.
41. Pupils of all ages and differing special needs achieve very well in improving their communication skills. In all subjects teachers ensure that pupils have very good opportunities to express their ideas. Teachers use questioning very effectively to check what pupils have learned. Symbols are used very effectively with many of the younger pupils to help them understand what is expected of them. As they grow more familiar with the cue cards, the participation in lessons of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders improves because they know what is going to happen. Pupils also begin to express their needs more effectively. Older pupils are confident to share their ideas and ask questions because adults acknowledge and value their contributions. They participate in discussion confidently and effectively. Pupils are able to listen to contributions and build on the ideas and suggestions of others because teachers provide them with plenty of opportunities to talk about their experiences. The majority of classroom support assistants are effective in encouraging pupils to communicate. However, in a very small number of lessons

they used questions which only required one word answers or provided pupils with few options as replies. This prevented pupils from expressing themselves or clarifying their thinking, and the outcome of the discussion reflected the views and ideas of the adult rather than the pupils.

42. Pupils of all ages achieve well in reading. Basic reading strategies are taught effectively to younger pupils and they have good, regular opportunities to read to or with an adult. Their progress is monitored well and their achievement is recorded effectively. This ensures that teachers have good information about pupils' abilities, which they use effectively to plan so that pupils improve. As they get older pupils are given good opportunities to continue developing their skills although the current lack of a library is restricting their opportunities to develop library skills and undertake independent research. In all subjects teachers encourage pupils to read or attempt the texts they are given independently and pupils are confident to 'have a go' reading aloud to the class. Older pupils read their own writing well when giving answers or sharing their work and are confident to attempt reading that of other pupils. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read in almost all lessons and this contributes well to pupils' overall achievement. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the teacher effectively promoted pupils' confidence to read by providing a worksheet on which the text had been significantly adapted for lower attaining pupils. This enabled them to complete the task independently. However, in a very small number of lessons insufficient thought was given to pupils' reading ability and they needed considerable support to complete worksheet tasks.
43. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well in writing and the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. Standards have improved for younger pupils and have been maintained for older pupils. Younger pupils achieve well because there is a good emphasis and systematic approach to the teaching of early writing and writing skills. As pupils get older, opportunities for them to continue developing their skills are frequently missed. The school has not identified how 'writing' can be promoted through other subjects and teachers frequently accept single sentence answers from pupils who are capable of writing in more detail. However, for older pupils in particular, the use of computers for word processing is good and there are a suitable number of examples of pupils' work showing that they can write at length and that they have a good understanding of basic punctuation.
44. Procedures to check and record what pupils have learned are good. The subject assessment booklet provides a good visual record of what pupils have experienced. However, the information about what has been achieved and what has been planned as the next steps for pupils' learning are not always sufficiently clear.
45. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is an effective action plan which outlines and costs priorities for development over the year. These priorities are generally focused on tasks related to the maintenance and monitoring of the subject but the action plan does not clearly identify how the school will develop suitable learning opportunities to meet the needs of pupils now being admitted to the school. Teachers' planning is checked regularly and the positive impact of this is demonstrated in the good quality of the plan used. However, the subject leader does not have enough opportunities to observe lessons and as a result very good practice within the teaching team is not being effectively shared with other colleagues.

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

46. The majority of teachers give good attention to the promotion of pupils' literacy skills in other subjects and there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' communication and reading skills in almost all lessons. However, the school does not have a clear plan of how different subjects can be used as a vehicle to promote literacy skills and there is no effective monitoring of the development of pupils' literacy skills throughout the curriculum.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Nine mathematics lessons were seen. Evidence was also collected from looking at pupils' assessment records, samples of work, curriculum documents and from discussions with teachers.*

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because in most lessons work is matched to their individual needs.
- In a few lessons teaching fails to arouse pupils' interest.
- The very good management of pupils' behaviour enables them to achieve well by helping them to concentrate on their lessons.
- Good leadership of the subject has brought about improvement to the curriculum and the quality of teaching.

### **Commentary**

47. Pupils' records show that their achievements over time are good. There are no noteworthy differences between the achievements of groups of pupils from different cultural, language or special needs backgrounds or between boys and girls. Pupils' achievements are equally good in all areas of mathematical learning. In lessons seen during the inspection, differences in the rate of pupils' achievement are related to the relative strength of the match between the work set for pupils and their individual learning needs. Primary pupils make particularly good progress in their understanding of number and older secondary pupils have developed their confidence in the application of mathematical skills in everyday situations.
48. The overall quality of teaching is good. The best teaching in the school is typified by detailed planning that uses knowledge of each pupil gained from good assessment data to allocate tasks that are challenging but not too difficult, so that pupils can work as independently as possible. Sensitive support is provided as necessary and activities are stimulating and hold the interest of pupils. Teachers provide good introductions and set clear objectives that build upon pupils' previous learning. Lessons are adapted well for the significant numbers of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders, for example, by providing symbol timetables and task lists, or by individual cue cards for key actions such as changing activity, to cater for their more visual learning styles.
49. Where teaching is less successful in the school pupils' achievement is only satisfactory. The activities provided in these lessons are less challenging and provide fewer opportunities for independent work. On rare occasions this is because of an over-reliance on teacher-led question and answer activities that, despite good beginnings, do not sustain pupils' interest. There are periods of inactivity and pupils' behaviour deteriorates.
50. High expectations of pupils' achievements are matched by similarly high expectations of their behaviour. The majority of pupils behave well because they are motivated by stimulating and interesting lessons and because the school's expectations regarding behaviour are very clear. Very good strategies, such as individual behaviour plans, adaptations to make the classroom environment more manageable, visual cues to signal changes of activities and individual support, are provided. These help pupils, especially those with autistic spectrum disorders.
51. Good leadership has brought developments to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching that have led to a good rise in pupils' level of achievement since the last inspection, particularly for those aged 5 to 11 years. There is now a good curriculum, adapted appropriately from the National Curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy to cover all areas of mathematical learning and be appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 now have the benefit of good opportunities to work towards nationally recognised awards and the school is rightly considering additional accreditation possibilities.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

52. There is satisfactory use of mathematics in other subjects. Pupils' work indicates that, for example, they use data charts to record results of experiments in science, work out budgets for

meals in food technology and measure accurately in design and technology. Younger pupils aged 5 to 11 take every opportunity to practise counting, in their circle time and in all lessons. However, this use of mathematics is incidental rather than planned and depends upon the initiative of individual teachers.

## SCIENCE

*Inspectors saw science lessons that spanned all year groups and pupils' work was scrutinised.*

The provision for science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good practical experiences for primary aged pupils that impact positively on pupils' achievement.
- Good planning and organisation by the subject leader ensures that lessons are tailored to the needs of all pupils.
- There is limited use of ICT, which restricts learning experiences for pupils.
- Accommodation and resources are very good and used to support pupils' learning well.
- Management of a few pupils' with difficult behaviour at times is not effective and disrupts the learning of other pupils.

### Commentary

53. Pupils' achievement in science is good. Primary pupils enjoy the emphasis on practical experiences. Higher attaining pupils make the connection between melting ice and melted chocolate and know and understand the effect of warmth on both. They use a good range of words to describe the tactile experience of melting ice. Pupils with very specific learning and behavioural difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, with minimum adult intervention, successfully assemble an electrical circuit and, to their great delight, make the buzzer work. This has a significant effect, not only on their learning, but also their self-esteem and confidence.
54. Secondary pupils benefit from the good organisation and planning of lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is used effectively to plan topics that build on what pupils have already learned. This prepares them well for the certificate of achievement course, which many complete successfully in their final years.
55. Planning is well related to the specific needs of pupils and, consequently, the majority of pupils find the lessons stimulating and their rate of learning is good. Primary pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are engaged and focus on practical activities. They enthusiastically prepare pots for planting. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties know all the basic parts of a plant and can label their drawings. By Year 6 all pupils are making very good progress. These skills are built upon and developed in the secondary department so that by Year 9 they show confidence in the use of appropriate words when discussing environmental issues and give good examples of why living creatures need habitats. By Year 11 pupils are showing good knowledge and understanding in their exploration of basic scientific principles.
56. The teaching of science is very good in the primary department and good in the secondary department. Expectations are high and teachers challenge pupils to show what they know, understand and can do. Learning is usually good in lessons but there are a few occasions when pupils' behaviour is not managed well and as a result the work of all pupils is affected. There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons and this reduces pupils' opportunities to practise and use the skills developed in specific ICT lessons.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new subject leader is establishing a clear vision for the department and aware, through thorough self-evaluation, of how she can

further improve teaching and learning of the subject, especially by sharing the existing good practice in the school. Improvement has been good since the last inspection, most significantly because secondary aged pupils now have access to the new science laboratory, and this, coupled with improved resources, is beginning to have a significant impact on teaching and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

*Five ICT lessons were seen and the use of ICT in other subjects was considered.*

The provision for ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Resources and staffing are very good and include a newly developed ICT suite and the appointment of a specialist ICT technician.
- There is a good emphasis on the timetable to provide specific lessons for pupils to develop a wide range of skills in the use of computers.
- Year 11 pupils have a good opportunity to achieve an entry-level certificate but this is not sufficiently challenging for higher ability pupils.
- Good overall planning shows where ICT can be used in the teaching of other subjects, however, in practice this is applied inconsistently by teachers and there is no effective system to monitor this.

### **Commentary**

58. This school has invested a lot of money in the development of the ICT suite and in the appointment of a specialist ICT technician. This has proved effective and there is clearly an increased use of ICT in the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In addition resources have been enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards, digital cameras and computers being networked; there is at least one computer linked into the overall network in each teaching area. The ICT technician is able to give good advice to the different teachers who use the ICT suite and maintain the majority of computers in good working order.
59. Pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching in specific ICT lessons are good. All pupils benefit from the lessons they have in the ICT suite and the range of topics they cover gives them a good grounding in how computers can assist their learning in a range of subjects. Pupils clearly enjoy these lessons and the progress they make in developing their skills. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils were able to input instructions to enable them to manipulate an image on the screen and link this to the instructions they were giving to a 'foamer' (a small robotic machine). Pupils' work shows they achieve well in a wide range of applications. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, for example, are developing their portfolios ready for the entry-level certificate and these show the use of different software programmes, creating databases and the use of the Internet. There are, though, pupils of higher ability in the school and there are no opportunities for these pupils to take examinations that will demonstrate their achievements.
60. The subject leader has led the development of the subject well although as yet not all staff are fully competent in their use of computers. Staff have received additional training in the use of computers and for a few individual staff this has proved to be very beneficial and they now show increased use of ICT in their teaching. This is certainly the case in careers where very good use of software applications, word processing, and the use of databases have a positive impact on the quality of the final portfolios pupils are able to produce.

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

61. The use of ICT across the curriculum is only satisfactory; it is not used consistently in lessons and because of this pupils' rate of progress is reduced and not the same in each class group.

Planning documents show that careful consideration has been given to how different aspects of ICT can be taught in the teaching of other subjects. However, a scrutiny of teachers' planning does not show consistency in how this is actually happening in practice. As well as this the subject co-ordinator has insufficient time to monitor the work of his colleagues. As a result of this the development of pupils' skills in ICT is inconsistent and there is no coherent understanding of how pupils will develop and practise their skills as they move through the school.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History and Geography**

*Inspectors observed one lesson each of geography and history. A limited amount of the pupils' work was sampled for both subjects.*

62. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for geography and history. A scrutiny of the planning documents shows that pupils experience a range of topics relevant to each subject. It is clear from the planning that there is effective organisation and modification of the National Curriculum to reflect the changing needs and abilities of all pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

*Inspectors saw four lessons that spanned most age groups. Work and displays were analysed and an inspector joined pupils on a visit to a local church.*

Provision for religious education is **very good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management of the subject impacts significantly on pupils' learning and achievement.
- The excellent opportunities for spiritual development in religious education lessons are a model of good practice.
- Meticulous planning of the subject provides a wide range of experiences for pupils and is appropriate to their individual special needs.
- Very good opportunities for social, moral and cultural development are included in lessons.

## Commentary

63. Leadership and management are very good. The planning of the curriculum and individual lesson plans are very detailed and show very good awareness of the individual needs of all pupils. Achievement is very good overall and promoted very effectively by the quality of teaching, as well as the very good learning opportunities. Primary teachers provide a good range of materials that are well chosen for the specific needs of pupils. For example in one lesson, very good use was made of visual symbols by the youngest pupils to design their own prayer. In the same lesson the highest attaining pupils used the computer to type out a simple 'thank you' prayer. Secondary aged pupils make very good progress because of the very good teaching of the subject leader. He uses a range of very imaginative teaching aids, which range from artefacts of different faiths, to excellent use of visits to venues of different faiths.
64. Sensory experiences in the classroom greatly enhance opportunities for spirituality. One memorable lesson took place in the local church where, following discussion with the family, the grave of a pupil's mother was visited by a group of Year 9 pupils. The group included others who had been very recently bereaved. The very sensitive management of this visit contributed significantly to the spiritual experience for all. Not only did pupils show considerable respect and even reverence at the graveside, but were also very supportive of the pupils who had suffered loss. The teacher encouraged discussion of loss and bereavement very appropriately and the pupils responded maturely.
65. The religious education curriculum is well planned to develop pupils' values by encouraging them to share, be kind to and think of others and develop a social conscience. In this way it makes a very good contribution to citizenship and personal and social development. The subject contributes very well to pupils' moral and cultural development by providing opportunities for discussion of moral issues and introducing them to other faiths and beliefs with which they are not familiar. The development of pupils' communication skills is an integral part of all lessons.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LESSON FOR YEAR 9**

#### **11 PUPILS - SEVEN WITH MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES + THREE WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES AND ONE WITH SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

Eleven children stand respectfully and reverently by a grave in a large, well-mown churchyard on a chilly May afternoon. They are silent as the teacher speaks softly about loss and bereavement. Three children have suffered bereavement recently of someone they were close to in their family. Indeed, the grave is that of the mother of a pupil in the group. He has, with his father's blessing, agreed to take his classmates to visit his mum's grave for a moment of quiet reflection. He begins to talk about his mum and what he misses most about her. 'It's her cooking and the fact that I love her and she is always in my heart. We all miss her and think about her every day.' He talks candidly and unaffectedly; the others all listen keenly and the sympathy and empathy are palpable. The teacher allows the thoughts to flow. Children move together around him as though giving him physical support. They move off into the church for time to think in peace, leaving the well-tended grave, itself supported by the regimented line of headstones.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and Design**

*Although two lessons were seen in art and design there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about this subject.*

66. The curriculum for art and design has been improved since the last inspection and is now good. From the lessons seen and from displays of work around the school it can be seen that art is a popular subject that pupils enjoy. In the two lessons seen, teaching was of good quality and the pupils achieve well. Noticeably, they become engrossed in their work and develop good ideas of their own from the initial inspiration provided by their teachers.



## Design and Technology

*One lesson was seen in design and technology and examples of pupils' finished work were seen. No overall judgements, though, can be made about this subject.*

67. Discussions with teachers and examples of pupils' work seen indicate that this subject has made good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in each age range establish their own designs, plan and make their project, and then evaluate the success of their design. There is a good emphasis on supported independent work. The quality of finished items seen is very high, particularly, the resistant materials and food technology work of pupils in the secondary department leading to nationally accredited awards. Design and technology is a popular subject and the teachers are enthusiastic about its development in the school. The accommodation and resources are good and there are good plans for their further improvement.

## Music

*No overall judgement can be made. One music lesson for pupils in Year 3 was observed and curriculum documents scrutinised.*

68. The lesson seen was good and pupils made good progress. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils are given a wide range of opportunities and build on their past experiences. There is an appropriate system for checking what pupils have learned and recording what they know. This is in the form of an 'assessment booklet'. These records indicate that over time pupils' understanding and skills improve. The quality and range of resources available to promote learning is very good and has benefited from a recent investment in a number of 'keyboards'.

## Physical Education

*Six physical education lessons were observed and a scrutiny of subject documents was undertaken.*

The provision of physical education is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school gives a high priority to physical education and this is reflected in the achievement of the Sportsmark award for the second time.
- Pupils achieve very well in many aspects of the subject.
- The quality of teaching is consistently very good throughout the school.
- Pupils are offered a wide range of experiences including regular swimming sessions and the opportunity to take part in outdoor education.
- Lessons and activities are planned well and include very good risk assessments.

## Commentary

69. Pupils enjoy taking part in physical education lessons. They work hard and as a result they are able to develop their skills in a wide range of subjects. This is the case in an excellent lesson seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION LESSON FOR YEAR 1 AND 2**

### **7 PUPILS WITH EITHER SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES OR AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

Pupils all took a full part in what was an inspirational session. The lesson was a buzz of activity, learning and enjoyment and linked musical extracts with very well thought out resources. The teacher has clearly developed amongst the pupils an understanding of what is expected of them in physical education lessons. The lesson allowed for the extremes of the characteristics of pupils' disorders and modified them to allow pupils to participate and achieve. As a result pupils are able to make rapid progress in increasing their awareness of their body, how it moves and how to control it. At one stage pupils were intrigued how a ball bounced back to the teacher and then tried to copy the movement of the ball bouncing individually as they jumped excitedly around the hall. The selection of music to match the required movements was very effective, none more so than at the end of the lesson when the teacher was encouraging pupils to slow down and cool down after their exertions. Pupils waved silk scarves to the music and slowed down their movements to enable them to finish the lesson in a calm and relaxed manner.

70. Teaching is based on very effective planning, which is well matched to the differing special needs of pupils. Lessons have a clear structure with a good warm up, followed by skilled development periods and completed usually by pupils having the opportunity to take part in a game. This was the case in a Year 8 games lesson where pupils were developing their skills in cricket. The teacher had devised a very effective scoring system that gave pupils points for batting, bowling, fielding including catching and as a result of this all pupils were involved and keen to take part and score points. The teacher then very successfully sat down with pupils at the end of the lesson to talk through what they had achieved and made very effective use of praise.
71. The department has a very detailed policy, which reflects the high priority given to the subject in the school. The policy and whole school emphasis to the subject ensures that teaching is consistent throughout the school and that pupils are able to benefit from a wide range of activities. This is exemplified by pupils' progress in swimming lessons. Pupils have developed very clear confidence in the water and many are now confident swimmers. Pupils also benefit from residential outdoor education experiences, including a regular sailing week in the South West of England.
72. The thought given to physical education is exemplified by the detailed risk assessments taken of each activity and the group participating. These show that very clear attention is given to each activity to ensure that pupils are safe and yet can experience a wide range of activities. A particular strong feature of the success of the subject is the way in which staff prepare appropriately for lessons, dress in suitable clothes and ensure that all pupils are changed and have suitable footwear for each lesson. In games lessons pupils are also given the opportunity to shower at the end of each lesson.
73. The work in the subject and pupils' success helps to build up their confidence and self-esteem and it is clear that the subject makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of education provided by the school.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP**

*Inspectors saw one lesson of citizenship in Year 11, analysed pupils' record of achievement and progress files and joined pupils on visits.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The oldest pupils benefit from a very good range of strategies that impact very positively on improving their independence skills.
- Opportunities for younger pupils to develop their social skills are very good.

- Delivery of the subject across the curriculum overall is inconsistent, and monitoring of the subject is not always effective.
- Religious education makes a very good contribution to personal, social and health education and citizenship.

### **Commentary**

74. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties, make very good progress. Teachers ensure that all pupils participate in a wide variety of work-related activities and college placements. This enables them to look beyond leaving school and increase their confidence and communication skills. The youngest pupils, particularly those with autistic spectrum disorders, make very good progress in their social interaction with others. This is because PSHE underpins activities in lessons and teachers take every opportunity to reinforce appropriate attitudes and behaviour.
75. Although PSHE is taught as a discrete subject, it is a fundamental part of teaching across the curriculum. Its delivery, though, is not effectively monitored and, as a consequence, the quality of planning and activities in individual lessons varies. This results in inconsistent learning opportunities for pupils. Planning for the taught programme is good and includes sex and relationships education. Speakers from outside are brought in to discuss drug issues in an imaginative way. Staff handle sensitive issues that may arise in lessons effectively and sympathetically. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because overall, planning for the curriculum has been more clearly related to the changing needs of pupils.
76. Elements of the citizenship curriculum are taught through topics such as relationships, co-operation and preparation for life in the wider world and through religious education and assemblies. Pupils are given good opportunities to be involved in active citizenship through the School Council, which has its own budget for a 'Healthy Schools' action plan, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They fund raise for charities, which teaches them to appreciate that there are others in the world less fortunate than themselves. The taught programme is well supplemented by lunchtime activities, when pupils interact with each other and staff, and learn to share and take turns. Religious education lessons also make important contributions to pupils' personal, social and health education through their emphasis on the moral and social differences of different faiths.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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