

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ABBEY SCHOOL**

Kimberworth, Rotherham

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106967

Headteacher: Mr J S Swain

Lead inspector: Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 268526

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Type of school:              | Special                       |
| School category:             | Community special             |
| Age range of pupils:         | 5 - 16                        |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                         |
| Number on roll:              | 119                           |
|                              |                               |
| School address:              | Little Common Lane            |
|                              | Kimberworth                   |
|                              | Rotherham                     |
|                              | South Yorkshire               |
| Postcode:                    | S61 2RA                       |
|                              |                               |
| Telephone number:            | 01709 740074                  |
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|                              |                               |
| Appropriate authority:       | Governing body                |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Maurice Whitehouse            |
|                              |                               |
| Date of previous inspection: | 9 <sup>th</sup> November 1998 |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Abbey is a school for boys and girls aged five to 16 with moderate learning difficulties or complex needs. Currently, 119 pupils attend the school. They all have statements of special educational needs and, as a result, when they join the school most pupils' attainment is well below average. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, but there are 26 with severe learning difficulties, mostly concentrated in Years 1 to 9. Additionally, 22 pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties, eight have autistic spectrum disorders and four have a hearing impairment. Seven pupils are in public care. Pupils' homes are within the Rotherham area. Although their socio-economic circumstances are varied, overall these are well below average. Eleven of the pupils are not white. Nine of these are of Pakistani origin; one is Indian; and the other is of mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage. Nine pupils have English as an additional language, with Punjabi spoken in their homes. The school has gained the Activemark, Sportsmark and the FA Charter Mark. At the time of the inspection, major building work was taking place on the premises, to provide new classrooms and administrative areas. The whole school was affected by this disruption, with staff and pupils working in very difficult conditions.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                     |                | Subject responsibilities                                                |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15173                          | Rosemary Eaton      | Lead inspector | Design and technology, English as an additional language                |
| 13462                          | Roberta Mothersdale | Lay inspector  |                                                                         |
| 29452                          | Christine Emerson   | Team inspector | English, Religious education, art and design, special educational needs |
| 28106                          | Michele Majid       | Team inspector | Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography        |
| 20566                          | Mary Saunders       | Team inspector | Science, personal, social and health education and citizenship, history |
| 10781                          | Robert Thompson     | Team inspector | Modern foreign language, music, physical education                      |

|                                |                          |  |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| The inspection contractor was: |                          |  |
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Abbey is a **very good** school. Pupils achieve very well and their personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is very good and the school is very well led and managed. It provides very good value for money.

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

- The headteacher, with very strong support from the deputy headteacher, provides excellent leadership and ensures that all staff are fully committed to continually improving the school.
- Pupils are prepared very well for moving on to the next stage in their lives.
- The outstanding quality of their relationships with staff results in pupils who behave very well and are very keen to learn.
- Pupils' learning is assessed very carefully and full use is made of the information collected, in order to guide them and help them achieve very well.
- Links with the community, other schools, and colleges, are very effective in supporting the curriculum and pupils' personal development.
- The school works very hard to ensure that pupils are safe, happy and able to benefit from the many opportunities it provides.
- Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in making checks on the quality of teaching.

The school has improved very well since the previous inspection. In almost every subject, pupils' achievement has improved. Attendance rates have improved and so has the quality of teaching. Assessment procedures have developed significantly and there are now more support staff and learning resources – particularly computers. All the issues raised in the previous report have been tackled and very good progress has been made in most of the areas concerned.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is **very good**. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well, as do those in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is also very good in Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11. Throughout the school, achievement is very good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Achievement is good in science and design and technology. The oldest pupils are successful in a range of examination courses, up to GNVQ Foundation level. However, these do not fully reflect pupils' achievement in several subjects, such as English and mathematics. When their special educational needs are taken into account, pupils with severe learning difficulties achieve as well as those with moderate learning difficulties and so do those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, or impaired hearing. Girls and boys, those in public care and pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language all achieve very well.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are very good and so is their behaviour. Pupils get on extremely well with each other and are confident and enthusiastic learners. Attendance is very good. Pupils very much enjoy coming to school and are seldom absent unless they are ill.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching is **very good** and, as a result, pupils learn very well. Teachers plan very interesting lessons, which they present in a stimulating way. Consequently, pupils want to get involved and they work very hard. Their behaviour is managed very well and teaching assistants contribute very effectively to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Because assessment procedures are very good, teachers have an accurate picture of pupils' strengths and needs and ensure that the tasks they set are pitched at the right level for each one.

The curriculum is very well organised and meets pupils' changing needs as they move up through the school. For instance, the pupils in Years 10 and 11 have very good opportunities for work-related learning, such as work experience and relevant college courses. A very wide range of activities is provided to enrich the curriculum. Sporting opportunities, visitors to school, and varied visits, all help to maintain pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are cared for very well and are provided with very effective support and guidance – for instance, to help them to prepare for leaving. There are very good links with other schools and colleges and with the community, and a strong partnership with parents.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. The school is led very well, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher setting very high standards for other staff. Management is also very good. The school is very aware of its strengths and weaknesses, although subject leaders need to be more actively involved in checking the quality of teaching and helping to improve it even more. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and are working hard to develop ways of finding out more about the school at first hand.

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

Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school. They feel very welcome when they visit. They hold the school's leadership in very high regard and are delighted with the staff's success in boosting their children's self-esteem.

Pupils' views are also very positive. They like the play activities and clubs, physical education, the teachers and their friends. They feel free from bullying.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Carry out the plans to develop further the role of subject leaders, especially in identifying and sharing particularly good teaching.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement is **very good**.

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

- Throughout the school, pupils achieve very well in English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, physical education, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- By the time they leave school at the end of Year 11, pupils have been successful in a number of examination courses.
- Pupils achieve equally well, regardless of their special educational needs.
- Comprehensive assessment data demonstrates that boys and girls, pupils in public care, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds all achieve very well.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils' achievement in science and design and technology is good, in line with the quality of teaching in both subjects. Additionally, the building work taking place is currently limiting what can be done in science in Years 7 to 9. In design and technology, pupils progress especially well in the skills and knowledge associated with making, but the curriculum places less emphasis on designing and this prevents achievement being very good. Otherwise, pupils' overall achievement reflects the very good teaching in most subjects. Again, because they are so successful in the key areas of English, mathematics and ICT, pupils are equipped with basic skills that help them to learn in other subjects. Likewise, their very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development enable pupils to take full advantage of opportunities such as learning in mainstream schools or college, and allow them to concentrate during lessons and be highly effective learners.
2. Last year, 14 of the 21 Year 11 pupils gained the City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education, with the other seven achieving units towards this award. In the more challenging GNVQ health and social care course at Foundation level, two pupils achieved the full award and 13 were credited with completing units of work. The GNVQ construction and the built environment course saw eight pupils achieving success in particular units. All 21 pupils were successful in a range of Entry level examinations, accredited through the South Yorkshire Key Skills scheme. Pupils gained a variety of other certificates, acknowledging, for example, their achievements in swimming or college courses such as catering or computer aided design and manufacture.
3. Very good arrangements are made to provide for all pupils, regardless of their special educational needs. As a result, although the pupils with severe learning difficulties learn at slower rates than those with moderate learning difficulties, when their particular barriers to learning are taken into account, their achievements are equally impressive. The school works very hard and effectively to ensure that pupils with challenging behaviour remain in school and are able to achieve as well as others who have similar learning difficulties. Several pupils have varying degrees of hearing impairment and the school takes full advantage of the local education authority's specialist support service, to enable them to play a full part in lessons and activities and to achieve very well. None of the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders requires a modified curriculum or accommodation. Teachers meet their needs very well and their achievement is also very good.
4. In English, mathematics, science and PSHE, the school collects and analyses assessment information electronically, enabling the progress of individuals and groups of pupils to be



followed closely. The analysis of the data from 2003 – 2004 demonstrates how effective are the arrangements to meet the needs of all pupils. For instance, no disparity is evident in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils in public care, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. Teachers are very aware of the particular needs and aptitudes of each pupil and, in tune with the school's determination to do its best for all, they make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to learn and achieve. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language benefit significantly from very effective and sensitive support from a specialist teacher and a teaching assistant. Speech and language therapy is provided by the therapist herself and by a specialist teaching assistant, employed by the school. This is very effective in helping pupils with speech and language difficulties to learn and achieve, in all aspects of the curriculum.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent relationships at all levels make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- The school is very successful in promoting good behaviour.
- Pupils gain a very good appreciation of other cultures, especially those represented within the school.
- All aspects of pupils' personal development are catered for very well.
- Pupils are very keen to attend school and are only late if transport is delayed.

### **Commentary**

5. Staff demonstrate consistently that they are concerned for the welfare of each pupil and want them to achieve as much as possible. In turn, pupils respect and trust the staff and, as a result, their attitudes to learning are very good and they want to do well. For example, in a Year 8 design and technology lesson, pupils' very mature attitudes meant that the teacher and teaching assistant could focus on individual pupils, because the others could be relied on to get on with their work sensibly. By instilling this work ethic, staff prepare pupils very well for their future lives. Parents say that their children are very happy and that they gain in confidence and self-esteem while at the school. Pupils regularly show that they are proud of their achievements. They are very caring of each other and show pleasure in their friends' successes. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 11 spontaneously applauded the efforts of a lower attaining pupil, who responded by smiling at them all with delight.
6. There are very positive approaches to managing pupils' behaviour, including a very effective merit award system. Very detailed behaviour plans for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour describe particular approaches for each individual, designed to avert disruptive behaviour. This means that pupils are handled consistently and lessons are able to run smoothly, enabling all pupils to learn very well. The school has also introduced a very popular play leader scheme during lunch breaks, as a strategy for improving behaviour as well as supporting pupils' personal development. As a result of arrangements such as these, pupils behave very well, develop very good social skills and gain a clear appreciation of right and wrong. Behaviour during lessons is very good. For example, in an excellent lesson in social and communication skills, pupils in Years 1 and 2 showed complete trust in the adults, loved the activities and therefore behaved exceptionally well. Pupils are very aware of how to behave when out and about in the community. The supervisor of the local swimming pool, while commenting on how well the pupils were achieving, stated that 'Abbey pupils are very well behaved and a pleasure to teach'. There were no exclusions during the previous year.
7. There is an impressive multicultural programme through which pupils learn about other religions and cultures. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the Pakistani culture as part of their vocational

accreditation and gain an invaluable insight into the religion and culture of their friends. In a very good lesson, pupils watched a video about the Hajj pilgrimage and listened to Pakistani music with interest and respect. The committed teacher brought a spiritual note to the lesson through the lyrical language used in a prayer. The school has an excellent collection of artefacts, DVDs, videos, pictures and books, which supports pupils' learning. Multicultural assemblies are held regularly, together with speakers about Muslim, Sikh and Hindu festivals. Significant efforts are being made by the teacher of English as an additional language, to boost self-esteem and cultural pride in pupils from minority ethnic groups.

8. The pupils' personal and social development is enhanced by the links with a local school, where those in Year 6 work co-operatively in a relaxed and sociable manner with the mainstream pupils. The school creates as many opportunities as possible to ensure that pupils learn to be independent. For example, parents are very appreciative of the work done to help pupils to travel independently to and from college. The religious education curriculum provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, but staff who teach other subjects are also alert to opportunities to promote this aspect of the curriculum. For instance, an inspiring display of photographs, poetry and art linked to the nature trail with its indigenous wild flowers, reflects the uplifting contribution to the spirituality of this resource. Pupils' moral awareness is enhanced, for example, through their contribution to the environment by carrying out a detailed project on recycling. They also have opportunities for active citizenship in the local community as well as further afield – for example, raising funds for a hospice.

## Attendance

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

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 6.2 | School data          | 0.8 |
| National data      | 8.2 | National data        | 1.8 |

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

9. Pupils enjoy coming to school. When they do not attend it is usually because they are ill. Very effective systems are in place to identify pupils whose attendance may give rise to concern and registers are marked accurately. As a result, the school and the education welfare service can deal with these matters quickly. Because of the limits for traffic access on the school's approach road, there is a carefully devised arrival pattern for school transport to minimise hold-ups. As a result, pupils' punctuality is good, although occasionally transport is delayed because of traffic congestion on local roads.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. The assessment of pupils' work is also **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers choose activities that are very well suited to pupils' ages.
- Lessons are lively and stimulating.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed very effectively.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to the quality of teaching.

- Pupils' learning is very thoroughly and regularly assessed and very good use is made of the information obtained.

## Commentary

- Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects of the curriculum. When deciding what they teach and the methods they use, they apply this expertise, together with their experience of teaching pupils with special educational needs, to very good effect. For instance, during a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, with moderate or severe learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, the introductory activities were carefully designed to appeal to such young children. Reinforcing their understanding of number six, pupils excitedly knocked six times on 'magic' boxes and guessed what might be inside – six seashells or six toy aeroplanes, for example. The teacher kept all pupils actively involved, by counting the objects or helping plastic frogs to jump into a pool, during the song 'Six Little Speckled Frogs'. As a result of this excellent teaching, they all wanted to join in, did their very best, and their learning was extremely good. As pupils move up through the school, teachers adapt their approaches to their increasing maturity, expecting them to be more independent. This was very evident in a health and social care lesson for pupils in Year 11 with a variety of special educational needs and including four from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils were required to work in groups and consider potential barriers to good health care and what might be done to overcome these. They shared tasks such as recording and reporting back and showed that they are able to learn very well through methods they would be likely to encounter in mainstream schools. This is a good example of the very effective way in which teachers prepare pupils for their lives beyond school.
- Because they are so confident in their subject knowledge, teachers are able to motivate pupils very successfully. They are invariably enthusiastic and pupils find this infectious and are very keen to be involved in lessons. For instance, in another Year 11 lesson, pupils following a short course in Pakistani culture learned about the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha and, in particular, the significance of the Hajj. The teacher, who had herself taken part in the pilgrimage, employed a wide range of relevant resources – such as video, art and music – to support her clear commitment to enabling pupils to build on what they already knew about the Muslim faith. In turn, pupils were fascinated, and focused on their work, asking and answering questions and showing great interest in and respect for the topic. Teachers structure their lessons carefully, often following the pattern of introduction, main activity and final, rounding up session. This is usually very successful in maintaining pupils' interest. However, very occasionally, the introductory activities are allowed to run on for too long, they lose their momentum, pupils start to get weary and the pace of learning slows down.
- The excellent quality of the relationships they have with teachers – and teaching assistants – results in pupils who have total confidence in the staff. This means that they are prepared to try very hard and tackle work that is challenging. Because pupils are so willing to co-operate with adults, maintaining order can appear effortless. It is certainly unobtrusive. Teachers do not raise their voices, but they do correct pupils quickly if they are beginning to overstep the mark. For instance, a quiet word was enough to stop a Year 8 pupil from fiddling with resources, when the teacher was talking during a design and technology lesson.
- Teaching assistants, and the teachers who are supporting another who is leading the lesson, are often deployed to work with pupils who find it hard to control their behaviour or who are being particularly challenged by the work. For example, during an English lesson for pupils in Year 10, a supporting teacher worked with two pupils with severe learning difficulties, helping them to spell simple words. A teaching assistant supported two of the higher attaining pupils as they used a computer to record their work, and other pupils worked independently at writing tasks, enabling the teacher and another teaching assistant to listen to individuals as they read. As a result, all pupils achieved their individual targets for the lesson. Managing this number of adults requires significant organisational skills and these are very highly developed in this school. Rarely are staff under-occupied.

14. There are very good strategies to record the progress which pupils make in lessons. Most teachers ask teaching assistants to keep detailed notes of pupils' responses to questions and record how well they achieve their learning targets. Teachers then use the notes to plan future lessons and to ensure that all work set is at just the right level for individual pupils. Almost always, therefore, all pupils participate fully in lessons and learn very well. In the majority of subjects, teachers assess pupils very thoroughly at the end of topics to check how well they have learned. The results are supplemented by specific assessments to check on pupils' development in key skills such as reading and writing. A very positive feature of assessment is the emphasis on helping the pupils to evaluate how well they have done. For example, in food technology, pupils in Year 8 have completed a grid to show how much support they required to make a 'healthier cookie'. In several key subjects, all pupils are assessed annually using a nationally recognised computerised assessment package. The results are very carefully analysed to look at the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils such as those in public care. Where progress is not as good as predicted, the school ensures that effective strategies are put in place. For example, pupils with reading difficulties are targeted for additional support. Although there is not a school marking policy to guide teachers, all work is very carefully marked with notes to show when the work was done and how much support pupils required. This gives a very good record of the progress which pupils make.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 46 lessons**

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 7 (15%)   | 22 (48%)  | 17 (37%) | 0            | 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 quality and range of learning opportunities are **very good**. A **very good** range of activities enriches pupils' learning. The accommodation and resources are **good** overall.

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

- Subjects and courses are very well matched to the age and interests of the pupils.
- Although pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow courses leading to useful and recognised qualifications, the examinations do not always sufficiently recognise pupils' achievement.
- A very good range of interesting and motivating activities, which include outstanding opportunities to participate in sport, add to work covered in lessons.
- The curriculum is very well adapted for pupils who have additional special educational needs such as hearing impairment or speech and language difficulties.
- The school is very well staffed.

#### **Commentary**

15. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and for those in Years 10 and 11 is particularly effective. This is because planning, resources and teaching methods are very well adapted to the age and particular needs of these pupils. Consequently, young pupils benefit from a highly stimulating range of activities enlivened by high quality resources. This motivates the pupils very well so that they really enjoy lessons and make very good progress. The curriculum for the oldest pupils is very well designed to ensure that they are very well prepared for life after school. They follow a very suitable vocational programme and have many, very good opportunities to develop essential skills such as using public transport independently. There are very good links with a college of further education and a very good programme of work experience and work-related learning. All Year 10 and 11 pupils follow courses leading to nationally recognised vocational qualifications. The school is currently investigating additional examination courses, in subjects such as English, mathematics and science, to ensure that

higher attaining pupils have their achievements fully recognised. Pupils are not offered choices as to the courses which they follow, which means that they miss opportunities to make important decisions.

16. The curriculum is very effectively managed by the deputy headteacher. There are regular staff meetings to ensure that all pupils follow very well planned courses of work which build on their previous learning. Teachers ensure that the curriculum is continually developing to meet the needs of the pupils. An example of this is in religious education, where the subject leader has produced a new programme of work for pupils in Years 1 to 6, which is very suitable for the increasing number of pupils with more complex learning difficulties. The curriculum has a very good emphasis on developing key skills such as literacy and computer skills. It is enriched by, for example, excellent sporting opportunities. The school has achieved several national awards which recognise the high quality of the sports programme. Pupils' personal, social and health education is promoted very well and the school is working towards the Healthy School award.
17. The school makes very good provision for pupils with additional special needs, so that they make as good progress as other pupils. Teachers are sensitive to the particular needs of pupils with hearing impairment and take full advantage of the support provided by a visiting specialist teacher. The school has appointed and trained a specialist teaching assistant who works closely with the speech and language therapist to support pupils with speech and language difficulties. This is a highly effective strategy which ensures that the pupils make very good progress in developing skills in speaking and listening. The small number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are fully included in all lessons because teachers know them very well and adapt work set to match their needs. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are very well managed so that their behaviour in school is settled and they learn very well in lessons. In conjunction with the Connexions service, two of the Year 11 pupils are provided with an alternative curriculum, to ensure that they are sufficiently well prepared for their future lives. All pupils have individual education plans which are reviewed termly. However, plans do not always specify clearly what pupils have to do to achieve their targets.
18. Teachers and teaching assistants are very experienced and very well qualified. Together, they make up a highly effective staff team. Additionally, learning resources are good quality and well organised. The school makes very good use of facilities such as a local swimming pool and a secondary school sports hall, visits to sporting arenas and places of local interest, as well as benefiting from sports coaches and other visitors. Accommodation is currently satisfactory. There are, for instance, rooms for food and resistant materials technology, a medical room, good quality outside play equipment and an attractive nature walk. However, the school is situated at the end of a single track road, not adopted by the local council, which makes access very difficult and inhibits independent travel by pupils. Arrivals and departures of pupils occur in a very restricted area. The extensive building programme currently taking place is expected to improve the accommodation significantly.

### **Care, guidance and support**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very clear health and safety procedures are in place to promote pupils' well-being.
- Arrangements for child protection training are very well established and support pupils' safety.
- The excellent relationships throughout the school and very good assessment procedures ensure that there is very good support and advice from all adults.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very well prepared for leaving school.
- The fledgling School Council is very well organised and is already resulting in increased pupil involvement in the school.

## Commentary

19. Procedures for assessing risks are given a very high priority and have been of especial significance during the extensive building work. Closed circuit television cameras around the school allow staff to make sure that they know where pupils are and what they are doing. Health and safety procedures are very clearly defined – for example, in the very well organised and supervised strategies for ensuring pupils' safety when they are arriving and departing from school. The school nurse works closely with staff on healthy eating, sex education, and medication procedures, emergency first aid training and personal hygiene programmes. As a result, pupils are very aware of their responsibility to maintain high health and safety standards.
20. Responsibilities for child protection procedures are clearly defined. Care plans are in place for vulnerable pupils, and a regular child protection training programme updates all members of staff. The school's focus on constantly improving its procedures has raised standards of care since the previous inspection and, as a result, they are now very good.
21. Pupils are confident to approach any adult in school with any concerns, because of the excellent relationships that exist between them. Class teachers and support staff know their pupils' strengths and needs very well and give them very good advice and guidance, based on the very accurate assessment of their learning and personal development. For instance, they ensure that pupils receive any necessary additional support – for example, speech and language therapy or the involvement of the English as an additional language teacher.
22. The school involves a range of professionals to support pupils' achievement, welfare and personal development. For instance, there is very good guidance from the Connexions advisers, who spend time getting to know pupils and helping them to make realistic choices. Pupils in Year 11 visit the local college, go to the main Connexions office for interviews, learn how to fill in forms, and experience mock interviews before work placements. These experiences, together with the very good work-related programme for Years 10 and 11, ensure that pupils are very well prepared for transition to the world of work.
23. There is a recently created and well planned school council and the pupils involved were elected democratically by the pupils in their class. The staff involved stress the importance of communication and consultation with others. The council members are confident that they are making a difference and know that their views are listened to. The school also consults with other groups of pupils. For example, recently, pupils in Year 8 were asked how lunchtimes could be improved. They decided they would like an indoor club and now there is an 'Insiders Club' where pupils are involved in activities such as making friendship bracelets.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with the community and other schools and colleges. Its partnership with parents is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to work alongside and mix with pupils in mainstream schools and college.
- Very good use is made of opportunities and skills that exist in the community to enrich pupils' learning and well being.
- Parents think very highly of the school and there is regular consultation with them.

## Commentary

24. The school has established very good arrangements for inclusive activities and partnerships with local primary and secondary schools. These have a positive impact on pupils' achievements and personal development. For example, in an art lesson, Year 6 pupils quickly sat alongside mainstream pupils whom they knew well and had worked with before, immersed

themselves in the task, and achieved very well. When talking about inclusion activities, pupils commented on how much they enjoyed making friends and referred to the other children as 'pals'. Local schools enjoy Abbey's facilities. For example, the nature trail offers opportunities for orienteering and curriculum enrichment that other schools lack. In return, Abbey's pupils use the sports hall, climbing wall and design and technology facilities in the neighbouring secondary school or can visit the community theatre in a local primary school. A stunning display of multicultural artwork in the school's new entrance is a result of collaboration between the school and a local secondary school. Parents appreciate the outward looking nature of the school's leadership in providing these opportunities for their children.

25. The school is committed to providing pupils with first-hand experiences of work, as it values the consolidation of learning that can take place, for example, when working in a hairdressers, on a farm, or in a fast food restaurant. Year 10 pupils regularly invite guests to feast at their 'Theme evenings' in the restaurant of a college of further education. Local businesses generously support projects. For example, a radio station helped to fund new playground equipment, a local company sponsors a residential sailing experience for Year 9 pupils, and staff from Harlow Carr Gardens advised on the planting of trees in the school's orchard. The school works very hard to overcome the relative isolation of its site, with a range of outdoor education activities that focus on extending pupils' social development and enabling them to explore local history and culture. Consequently, pupils have every opportunity to know the area they live in and the opportunities that are open to them when they are not in school.
26. Although parental partnership does not form part of its improvement plan, the school faces many practical difficulties in involving parents in its day-to-day life. Because it is not accessible by public transport, many parents cannot get to the school without a long walk. However, where possible, the school supports parents – for example, to enable them to attend meetings. So far, no parent workshops have been held and there are no regular parent helpers, although parental support has been valued in setting up the nature trail and in supporting fund raising. Parents are actively encouraged to share concerns with the headteacher or staff, by correspondence, or phone, and this openness enables problems to be resolved promptly. Parents are very pleased with the information they receive from the school on their children's progress and feel that their enquiries are dealt with very effectively. Most years, questionnaires are sent to parents, and the school acts on the responses – for example, by focusing its attention on anti-bullying strategies when parents expressed concern over this issue.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school is led and managed **very well**. Leadership and management are both **very good**. Governance is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Together, the headteacher and deputy headteacher give very strong leadership and direction to the school.
- Very good financial planning is linked clearly to the priorities in the school improvement plan.
- Teaching and support staff are deployed well and have access to effective training and development.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic about their roles, which are developing to include more direct observations of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is very supportive but has insufficient first-hand information to enable it to offer more than limited challenge.

### **Commentary**

27. The very experienced headteacher has an extremely well informed, determined and detailed view of how the school can best meet the needs of its pupils. He is very well supported in putting this into practice by the deputy headteacher. They work closely together to ensure that a relevant curriculum is in place, pupils behave very well, and enjoy coming to school. They

have led the school admirably during the current extensive building project, maintaining staff morale and the quality of teaching and learning, and continuing to move the school forward. Their leadership has ensured that the school has implemented such initiatives as the 14 – 19 curriculum changes, very effectively and is well prepared to further develop its role as part of an inclusive group of local schools. The senior staff provide excellent role models to others – for example, in the quality of their teaching – and are passionate about what Abbey School and its pupils can achieve.

28. The school improvement plan is used effectively to review the changing situation and establish priorities for the school. Financial planning is closely related to these priorities. For example, the school is rapidly developing its inclusive links and has set aside funding for an inclusion manager to support this. Sufficient funds have been carried forward so that the improved premises can be refurbished to a high standard. However, as yet there are no formal procedures in place to consider whether decisions taken have led to an improvement in what the school provides or how well the pupils learn. Day-to-day financial management is very efficient and the school secretary ensures that the school achieves very good value when purchasing goods and services.
29. The provision of sufficient, well trained and experienced staff is the first budget priority for the school. Many staff are of long standing and all work harmoniously together to support the needs of the different age groups of pupils in the school. The management of performance and regular curriculum discussions ensure that teachers have access to training to support their work. Support staff are valued and responsibilities identified as part of workforce reform have been passed to them. For example, the school has a designated member of staff to support ICT and has trained support staff as play leaders so that they can provide activities over the lunch time period. Good information is provided in a staff handbook for new staff and they receive essential training, in areas such as child protection, as quickly as possible after appointment.
30. Subject leaders fulfil their roles very well, accepting responsibility for performance in their area. There are comprehensive programmes of work in place and they support one another by promoting training and subject knowledge. All produce plans for the development of their subjects and have established clear priorities. The computerised assessment data provides very good information about the progress made by pupils in different areas and this is analysed to see where teaching and learning can be further improved. All subject leaders have recently received training to provide them with the skills to observe their subject being taught by other staff, and some have already been able to put this into practice, but the whole school schedule for implementing this is not yet in operation.
31. The effectiveness of the governing body has been affected by the sad loss of several key members. Governors are very supportive of the school's caring, positive ethos. Meetings are held each term and members of staff invited to talk about their areas of responsibility. Governors fulfil all their statutory duties, make visits, and attend school events. However, they have identified the need to make their committee structure more robust, so that issues can be examined in more depth and they are less reliant on the headteacher for information and more actively involved in planning for future developments.



### **Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

| Income and expenditure (£) |         | Balances (£)                        |         |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income               | 1217486 | Balance from previous year          | 90997   |
| Total expenditure          | 1066703 | Balance carried forward to the next | 150782* |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 7729    |                                     |         |

*\* A high proportion of this balance has been accrued to equip the new classrooms.*

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

The provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A very good range of courses and work experience placements is provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- There are excellent partnership arrangements with the local college and Connexions service.
- Leadership of work-related learning provides a clear vision of the importance of this to life after school.

### **Commentary**

32. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have an opportunity to study introductory vocational courses at the local college in construction, catering and engineering. Their curriculum is organised to include a series of case studies in subjects and topics which equip them for life after school, in line with the National Framework for Vocational Education. These studies include an enterprise project and work on independent travel as well as the college courses. The work ethic is further encouraged through participation in a 'project leadership' scheme which involves pupils organising tasks such as setting out the hall for assembly. All pupils follow a case study in work experience which includes preparation for, and participation in, a work placement. This very good range of opportunities allows all pupils to leave the school with an accreditation in Preparation for Employment. The very high level of achievement in this area is demonstrated both by the certificates gained and the feedback from local employers following work placements. Pupils are fully involved in assessing their progress in case studies during their final two years at school and have the opportunity to record their successes in Progress Files. They are justifiably proud of these.
33. Teachers from Abbey School work with the college lecturers in planning and teaching the courses at the college and at school. This ensures that pupils have the advantage of very good vocational education that can be followed up and supported at school. The Connexions service is involved with all pupils from Year 9 and fully supports the work experience programme. These excellent partnerships support pupils well in their final two years and ensure that they have the experience of working with adults outside of the school, who can help them with the next steps in their lives.
34. Work-related learning has a very high priority at Abbey School and meets statutory requirements. Staff have extremely high aspirations for their pupils and are proud of their achievements. The close links with the college and preparation undertaken at school give many pupils the skills and confidence to take up places on NVQ courses when they leave. A few pupils are successful in moving straight into employment. Developing the range of courses available, particularly through the college, incurs a significant cost. The headteacher and governing body have shown a strong commitment to this aspect of the provision and make sure that sufficient funding is available.

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

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES

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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

*French is the modern foreign language taught in Years 7 to 11. One lesson was seen in French and judgements about provision were not made in this subject. Seven English lessons were seen.*

35. The teacher ensures that the French curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, with a wide range of activities offered. Pupils take pride in their work. It is neat, well presented, with helpful comments added by the teacher. French lessons enhance pupils' literacy and oracy skills, by providing them with practise in listening, speaking, reading and writing. A 'breakfast bar', selling fruit, is open to all pupils each morning. All produce is labelled in French and pupils speak in French when ordering their purchases. This is a practical way of promoting French and pupils' personal, social and health education. In Year 8, pupils work collaboratively in French and ICT to produce a 'French Magazine' which is distributed to all pupils in Years 7 to 9. The school is fortunate this year to have a French assistant, allowing pupils to converse in French to a 'real' French person. In the one lesson seen, teaching and learning were of a very high quality. Pupils had good recall of the French names for sports and could say which ones they liked and disliked. Their attitude to French was very good and they worked hard to improve their accents and learn new vocabulary.

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very skilled at matching work to the needs and interests of all pupils.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in developing speaking and listening skills, benefiting from the support of a specially trained teaching assistant.
- Learning resources are used very effectively to improve pupils' reading skills.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress very thoroughly, but the current examination courses do not recognise their very good achievement.
- Pupils have many, very good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in the different subjects of the curriculum.

#### Commentary

36. English lessons are very carefully planned to ensure that pupils have very good opportunities to practise and extend their skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening. As a result, throughout the school, pupils achieve very well. By the time they reach Year 11, most pupils have developed functional literacy skills which will help them to manage independently in the community. Last year, all Year 11 pupils achieved the South Yorkshire Key Skills award, although this examination does not reflect the levels at which they work. Because work set is very well matched to the age and aptitude of the pupils, they really enjoy lessons and learn very well. This is particularly evident in the classes for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and for pupils in Years 10 and 11. For example, in an excellent lesson about 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', which was taught by the subject leader, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were given an extremely rich range of short, focused activities which were supported by a variety of lovely resources. Consequently, these young pupils were very highly motivated, sustained concentration very well and made excellent progress in using simple sentences to retell the story, and in learning

to write and read their names. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very suitable for young adults. For instance, they have analysed newspapers and produced some very thoughtful and high quality written work on topics from the news, such as the American election and the ban on fox hunting. The pupils initially made a handwritten draft and then word processed the final copy in the style of a newspaper article, with headings and subheadings.

37. Teachers are very skilled at teaching pupils to listen carefully, use a wider vocabulary and participate fully in class discussions. The school employs a specialist teaching assistant who has been trained by the speech and language therapy service. She works closely with the speech and language therapist to deliver individual programmes for those pupils who have particular difficulties with speech and language. Recently, this work has been extended to develop a comprehensive support package for two pupils who are learning to communicate using specialist communication aids. The high quality and level of support provided by the specialist assistant ensures that pupils with speech and language difficulties make as good progress as other pupils in developing speaking and listening skills.
38. The subject leader has worked hard to develop resources, such as collections of objects linked to particular books which help younger pupils to understand the story. There is a good collection of fiction and non-fiction books, including dual language books, in classrooms and in the school library. Teachers are skilled at using 'big books' with the younger pupils, to promote their enjoyment of literature and develop early reading skills. Older pupils have very good opportunities to practise and extend their skills. For example, teachers in Year 9 make valuable use of arrival time in the morning to hear pupils read individually. Careful records are kept to show what pupils have read and teachers carry out detailed reading assessments to check for progress and identify any problems. As their reading skills develop, pupils are given good opportunities to study literature, such as the works of William Shakespeare.
39. The very thorough assessments which teachers carry out are analysed by the subject leader, in order to check on the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. The information is then used very effectively to develop the subject further. For example, in response to an analysis of pupils' progress in reading, she is reviewing the way pupils are taught to use letter sounds. A collection of marked work is being developed, to guide teachers when they are assessing pupils. The school is also aware of the need to introduce suitable accreditation to challenge higher attaining pupils.
40. The subject leader is a 'leading English teacher' within the local education authority and provides an excellent role model for other teachers. There has been very good improvement in English since the previous inspection. In particular, teaching and the progress which pupils make are both much improved. In order to develop the subject further, the subject leader needs to regularly observe teaching throughout the school and share particularly good practice.

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

41. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening are promoted very well through other subjects. The school has worked very hard to raise standards in writing and pupils have many, very good opportunities to write for different purposes. Written work is very well presented, with good use of computers for recording. Pupils take pride in their written work and older pupils learn to make hand written drafts and then produce high quality final pieces on the computer. All staff ensure that pupils develop their speaking and listening skills through very good questioning and reinforcement of key words. Pupils are encouraged to read wherever possible and teachers are skilled at linking reading, writing and speaking and listening. An example of this was in a lesson for pupils in Year 11 about health and social care where pupils discussed barriers to health care. Higher attaining pupils wrote the responses down and then pupils took turns to read them out.

### **MATHEMATICS**

*Eight mathematics lessons were observed.*

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' very good use of assessment information ensures that learning is effective and pupils make very good progress.
- ICT resources and the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy make effective contributions to teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants support the subject very well.
- Very effective leadership and management ensure that all staff have very high expectations for pupils to achieve well.
- The use of numeracy in other subjects is taking place, but is not part of teachers' planning.

### **Commentary**

42. The quality of teaching is very good. A particular strength is the way in which teachers use their knowledge of pupils in order to set tasks that are matched very well to their individual needs. As a result, all pupils learn and achieve very well. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, activities were organised to help them develop their number skills, knowledge and understanding. A lower attaining group, with severe learning difficulties, took part in activities such as spreading glue onto large card numerals and sprinkling these with beads, as a teaching assistant reinforced the names of the numbers, one to three. Meanwhile, higher attaining pupils drew cards from a box and placed the corresponding number of plastic fruit on a number line. One pupil, with moderate learning difficulties, was successfully challenged to add two more fruit and count how many this made. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop their abilities in the different aspects of mathematics, but teachers work very hard to ensure that they are equipped to apply what they have learned, for example, when on work experience or after school.
43. Lessons follow the structure advocated in the National Numeracy Strategy. For example, during a Year 5 lesson, the whole group took turns to identify which numbers were hidden on the interactive whiteboard. They then split into three groups, to work on tasks very closely matched to their particular needs, before coming back together to report what they had been doing. The teacher gave out lots of praise – for example, when a lower attaining pupil with autistic spectrum disorder had recognised 'zero' for the first time. Additionally, key words – such as 'shortest' and 'tallest' were stressed, to remind pupils and reinforce their learning. Teachers are making increasingly good use of the new interactive whiteboards – for instance, to demonstrate to pupils and help them to understand.
44. The skills and experience of teaching assistants are deployed very effectively – for instance, to make notes of what individual pupils contribute to discussions, so teachers can use these comments when assessing pupils' learning. They frequently support small groups of pupils, enabling them to have more individual attention to help them focus on their tasks. For example, in a lesson for lower attaining pupils in Year 9, two of the three groups were led by teaching assistants, who were fully aware of pupils' individual needs and their own responsibilities. As a result, the pupils in one group, who were calculating the doubles of numbers, were challenged to move on to doing this without the help of plastic cubes. In a Year 10 lesson, the specialist support teacher helped four pupils with English as an additional language to successfully participate in the lesson, when they had difficulty understanding or explaining the coins needed to make up particular sums of money.
45. The subject leader ensures that national initiatives are taken on board and are used effectively throughout the school. He has established a good range of resources and makes good use of outside support to ensure that staff training opportunities are very good and that the programme of work is relevant to all the pupils in the school. A very good role model for other staff, the subject leader is a 'leading mathematics teacher' within the local education authority.

Mathematics has improved well since the previous inspection and there is a clear plan for its continued development.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

46. In many subjects, there are good opportunities for pupils to practise their number skills. This is particularly so in counting, where teachers frequently encourage pupils to count out items. In design and technology, teachers make especially good use of mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 7 learn how to use an electronic scale to measure ingredients for a pizza. They learn that if the number of grams is higher than the one identified, they need to take out some flour. Older pupils, in Year 10, are asked to refer to the number line when looking at labels in order to identify that 0.2 is a very small amount and less than 1. They are also able to use calculators to interpret which recipe has the highest fat content. Every morning, older pupils are in charge of a breakfast bar, where they are able to give out the appropriate change. There is, though, limited formal planning for how mathematical skills will be developed in other subjects, which makes it difficult for the subject leader to check that full use is made of all opportunities.

### **SCIENCE**

*Three science lessons were seen.*

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan well to provide pupils with first-hand opportunities for learning.
- Pupils are taught how to conduct increasingly complex investigations.
- The subject leader has collaborated effectively both in school and with other schools to develop the subject.
- The current building work makes the teaching of science very difficult in several classes.
- Pupils' achievement is not reflected in the examination courses offered.

### **Commentary**

47. Pupils' achievement in science is good and in line with the quality of teaching. They particularly enjoy the wide range of practical investigations planned for them by their teachers. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, show great delight in finding out which objects – for instance, a toy duck or a key – will float or sink. By Year 6, they notice differences between plants and animals and can recall how they planted seeds. Those in Year 7 are encouraged to predict which objects will go fastest down a slope when learning about gravity and friction. By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils achieve level 4 of the National Curriculum in all areas of science. However, the involvement of the lowest attaining pupils, who find it difficult to contribute verbally, is sometimes limited. Very good links with ICT have been established to enable pupils to record their work effectively, especially in Years 7 to 9. Measurements taken in scientific investigations are used in ICT lessons to produce excellent charts and graphs, making it easier for pupils to draw conclusions from the data they have collected.
48. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the area of scientific investigation. This has led to pupils developing their investigative skills well. While those in Years 1 and 2 learn to observe what is happening, by the time they reach Year 6, most can make simple predictions about how an object will feel and can use key words to record their work. In Years 8 and 9, pupils work with their teacher to suggest what might happen and how this can be tested, in activities such as creating the most effective parachute. A college course for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils encourages them to design fair tests to find out the answer to questions – for instance, how much energy is stored in a crisp.
49. Leadership and management of science are good. The subject leader has worked with other teachers to ensure that the needs of all pupils are reflected in the programme of work and that

they are well trained to teach science. Assessment data is being collected annually, so that the progress of pupils can be tracked and the curriculum modified when necessary. Comparison of this information with that from other schools is being developed. The subject leader has recently received training to support him in making observations of teaching and learning, so that these can be improved still further. However, these checks are in their infancy.

50. The large building project taking place means that science is currently being taught in unsuitable accommodation, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Despite the very best efforts of teaching and support staff, the cramped and uncomfortable conditions limit what can be achieved in this subject and it is a credit to staff and pupils that pupils continue to learn well. A new laboratory is planned and the school has set aside significant resources to equip this to a high standard. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study science at the local college and have the benefit of specialist expertise and facilities, but their achievements at this level are not recognised by any nationally recognised examinations.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

*Four lessons of ICT were observed.*

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan lessons very effectively, so pupils are enthusiastic learners.
- The opportunities available for pupils to use their ICT skills in other subjects are very good.
- ICT is very well led and managed.
- Higher attaining pupils do not have their achievements fully recognised through examinations.

### **Commentary**

51. All pupils are achieving very well. This is mainly due to very good teaching, whereby challenging tasks enable pupils to make very good progress in their learning. For instance, during one lesson, pupils in Year 5 logged on to the network and found the graphics program they required. The very good relationships in the lesson resulted in very good behaviour and attitudes as the pupils were keen to improve their skills and were confident to make choices and decisions. They respect and appreciate the equipment and use it confidently. They used the correct ICT vocabulary, because the teacher constantly stressed key words, such as 'select' and 'drag'. These early skills were built on and applied during a very good lesson for pupils in Year 9. They used their knowledge of 'Macbeth' very effectively in order to design an animated magazine. They were able to find their way through the folders on the intranet to locate their work and they used the software with confidence. One pupil, with autistic spectrum disorder, was very eager to demonstrate how he could change the size and position of the images on the screen, saying 'I love it'. A pupil with English as an additional language achieved very well as she typed 'Kill the King' in a speech bubble attached to Lady Macbeth. The teacher had planned the lesson very thoroughly, enabling pupils to investigate magazines, comics and newspapers in order to identify the importance of graphics in illustrating the text.
52. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use ICT as an integral part of their vocational accreditation. From this year, there is a separate ICT unit within the course. The pupils have designed menus, using text and graphics very effectively. They are able to create curriculum vitae and import specific information from this into a standard letter. They use the word processing program independently and can change the style, size and colour of fonts to suit their purpose. In a good lesson, pupils were able to find a suitable website relating to their career interests. For example, one pupil, who was interested in working with animals, located and carefully read relevant information on a website. However, higher attaining pupils would benefit from a separate ICT examination, to celebrate fully their achievements.

53. ICT has improved well since the previous inspection and is now much better resourced. The subject is very well supported financially by the school, and the subject leader has been proactive in gaining funding from outside sources. She has worked closely with other staff to develop the use of ICT in other subjects and has ensured that staff receive necessary training. This is already reflected in the enthusiasm of staff to use the new interactive whiteboards. There is a very effective technician, based in the communications suite, who keeps the hardware in good working order, enabling lessons to run smoothly.

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

54. ICT is used very well in other subjects to enhance pupils' learning. For example, in a very good Year 9 citizenship lesson, the interactive whiteboard was very effectively used to gain pupils' interest in the topic of disability. Pupils are encouraged to apply their ICT skills – for example, in English, they word process their work with high quality results. Older pupils have also used their skills in their beautifully presented Progress Files. Pupils have entered data into spreadsheets in mathematics and are very impressed when the computer produces a graph. In design and technology, computer aided design and manufacture equipment extends the range of pupils' learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

*History and geography are taught in Years 1 to 9. One lesson was seen in geography, and a history presentation for pupils in Years 7 to 9 was observed. Judgements about provision in these subjects were not made. Four lessons of religious education were seen.*

55. As pupils move up the school, **geography** lessons help them learn about the world around them. Pupils in Year 2 are developing their knowledge of the school environment and its locality – for example, through visits. By Year 6, they apply simple geographical language and have used maps, understanding that the blue areas represent water. Year 9 pupils study maps in more detail and interpret aerial photographs. The subject includes aspects of citizenship and pupils have sent Aqua boxes to disaster areas. In the very good Year 5 lesson, the excellent use of the interactive whiteboard to move from an aerial photograph to a simple map resulted in pupils being enthusiastic and listening well. As a result, most pupils could match features, such as a path and a river, to those on the map.
56. Artefacts and visits are used regularly to help pupils understand **history**. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 to 9 enjoyed watching and listening to a Roman presentation and remembered the names of clothes and weapons. Similar practical experiences during visits to the village of Eyam, when studying the Plague, and to the Armouries museum and Conisbrough Castle are evident in the high quality displays which remind pupils about what they have learnt. While the youngest pupils learn to label objects from the past, those in Year 5 can distinguish between old and modern. Pupils begin to understand the passage of time through interesting topics such as 'Food through the Ages' and learn about Victorian Britain and Medieval times. The subject leader has identified the need to ensure that work is consistently matched to the needs of lower attaining pupils and is planning to provide additional ICT resources to support the subject.

### **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' understanding of other faiths is promoted very well by visits to places of worship.
- Lessons are enriched by well planned contributions from pupils of different faiths and the teacher of English as an additional language.
- Religious education supports pupils' spiritual and moral development very effectively.

- The subject leader is enthusiastic and committed and is developing the subject very well.
- Pupils' progress is assessed thoroughly but older pupils do not have the opportunity to enter for examinations.

## Commentary

57. Pupils follow a very rich curriculum, based on the Rotherham Agreed Syllabus. This has been adapted very well to meet the particular needs of the pupils and is enhanced by very good opportunities to visit places of worship. Such visits have included a Christian church, Muslim mosque, Sikh gurdwara, Hindu mandir, and a Jewish synagogue. The subject leader is planning to extend this further through links with a new Buddhist centre. The visits are celebrated through beautifully presented displays that provide a very good pictorial record to remind the pupils of what they have seen. Pupils clearly really enjoy the visits and gain a great deal from them. Their writing about them demonstrates very good knowledge and understanding of different faiths and their respectful and positive attitude. For example, after a visit to a Hindu mandir a Year 5 pupil wrote, 'We saw the Sun God and the Monkey God. It was a very nice place'.
58. Teaching is never less than very good and in two of the lessons it was excellent. In these, teachers frequently work very effectively with the teacher of English as an additional language to promote pupils' understanding of other faiths. Because this teacher has first hand knowledge of the faiths, lessons are particularly interesting and pupils are highly motivated to learn. Consequently they make excellent progress. In addition, teachers are very skilled at involving pupils of different faiths to demonstrate to others what they do in their religions. At the start of an excellent lesson taught by the subject leader, recapping previous learning about Islam and Christianity, a Muslim pupil demonstrated how he prays. The teacher then helped the pupils to build a Hindu shrine using an excellent variety of resources. The teacher of English as an additional language provided very good support, for example showing pupils how Hindus use 'Kum Kum' powder to make a mark on the forehead.
59. Due to the very good role models provided by teachers, all pupils are very respectful of each other and of different religions. The subject makes a very effective contribution to their spiritual and moral development. This is particularly evident for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Their programme of work has been rewritten to focus on moral issues such as birth, marriage and death, related to Christianity and Islam which are the two religions most prevalent in the school. The school celebrates a variety of religious festivals and there is a 'festival calendar' in the school hall to show pupils when the main ones, such as harvest festival, Eid, and Hanukah, take place.
60. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader provides an excellent role model for other teachers. There has been very good improvement in provision for religious education since the previous inspection. Teaching and the progress which pupils make have improved significantly and resources and the curriculum have developed well. There are very good procedures in place to assess the progress which pupils make. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have their very good achievement fully recognised through examination courses. Other areas for development include extending the opportunities for the subject leader to observe lessons taught by colleagues and keeping a collection of marked work to ensure that teachers' assessment is consistent.



## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

*Four lessons were seen in design and technology.*

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' making skills develop particularly well, but teachers need to provide more opportunities for pupils to design.
- Good use is made of ICT resources.
- The partnership with a mainstream secondary school is very effective in helping the subject to move forward.
- Assessment procedures are very well developed in food technology in Years 7 to 11.
- The subject leader has begun to observe lessons taught by colleagues.

### Commentary

61. As they move up through the school, pupils become increasingly competent and confident in the use of tools and the handling of materials. This is because they are taught well, with activities chosen carefully to provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn and practise skills such as cutting, joining, combining and finishing. For example, during Years 3 and 4, they draw round their hand to produce a template for a simple puppet. They add features such as a cotton wool beard or felt nose and then sew the back and front of the puppet together, using running stitch. In the secondary years, more complex tools and techniques are introduced, so that materials including wood, metal and acrylic are used, in addition to textiles and food. Throughout the school, pupils produce objects and items that are of very good quality – for instance, appetising pizzas and functional bird feeders or memo boards. Pupils are very proud of their work. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' finished results and they teach the necessary skills very well – for example, how to weigh accurately. However, although pupils are given opportunities to make choices – choosing an illustration to use as part of a wooden puzzle, or deciding between white or wholemeal pasta – their completed work shows very little originality in design. Rather, each pupil produces a slight variation to an outcome decided by the teacher.
62. The recent introduction of resources to support computer aided design and manufacture is beginning to have an impact on pupils' designing. For instance, guided by a teaching assistant, pupils in Year 8 create the design for a nameplate, which is engraved into plastic, in order to enhance the appearance of their puzzle. Similarly, pupils in Years 7 to 9 produce textiles motifs or patterns using graphics programs. Currently, however, in every material area, most of the designs created are purely decorative, rather than influencing the construction of the items to be made. The development that is having most influence on the quality of design work is the school's link with a mainstream secondary school, which specialises in technology. Already, this partnership has, for instance, enabled Year 10 pupils to design and make very original acrylic mirrors, using resources such as a laser cutter and benefiting from specialist teaching.
63. Although the school's systems for assessing how well pupils are achieving are used by all teachers, in food technology in Years 7 to 11, the specialist teacher has developed additional refinements. For instance, a simple grid is available during lessons, which enables staff to mark quickly when individual pupils have achieved the targets set for them. Again, during modules of work, pupils complete assessment booklets, describing what they have done and evaluating their own performance – for instance, how independent they have been. All this helps to build up a detailed profile of each pupil's learning. In all aspects of the subject, assessment information is used to identify pupils who need additional support during lessons or who might understand a more difficult idea. However, teachers very seldom plan harder tasks for pupils

with moderate, rather than severe, learning difficulties. Instead, these higher attainers complete tasks more quickly and with less support and occasionally they are not working to capacity. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work contributes, for example, to the GNVQ course in Construction and the Built Environment or the meal preparation elements of the Certificate in Preparation for Employment.

64. Leadership and management are good and have resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection. In particular, pupils in Years 7 to 11 now work with a much broader range of materials. A subject action plan is in place and identifies the most important areas for development, including the need for more opportunities for the subject leader to observe teaching throughout the school, in order to ensure that pupils' designing skills develop systematically.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

*One lesson of art and design was observed and one in music. Judgements were not made about these subjects, which are not taught in Years 10 and 11.*

65. Examples of pupils' work in **art and design** enhance the school environment. All pupils in the primary department have worked on a project with a professional artist to produce very lively and colourful collage pictures. The theme of the work, 'living in a multicultural society', is very relevant to the pupils' personal development. The pictures are very well composed and celebrate the richness of multicultural Britain. In the one lesson seen, Year 6 pupils made a map of an imaginary journey using map symbols. The lesson took place in a mainstream primary school and the pupils worked with partners from a mainstream class. The lesson was very stimulating and challenging for the pupils and they made very good progress in using the space on a page and planning and testing out their ideas. This mainstream experience is very beneficial in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, social skills and confidence, as well as promoting high standards in art work.
66. A comprehensive programme of work for **music** shows detailed objectives for each class each term, with suggested assessment activities to check what each pupil has learnt. This ensures that skills are understood and consolidated over time. The curriculum allows pupils to establish important musical elements and emphasis is placed on making music fun. A high priority is given to the study of music from a wide variety of cultures, and a good range of multicultural instruments is available. Recently, pupils have performed with other musicians at the Magna Centre to a large audience of pupils from Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham. Staff and pupils are proud of their musical achievements. In the one lesson seen, Year 6 pupils sang confidently in tune and followed simple musical notation on the interactive white board as they played percussion instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

*Four lessons of physical education were observed.*

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils participate in a wide range of activities that promote very well their physical development.
- All pupils have the opportunity for regular swimming activities, in which they excel.
- Very strong leadership and management have contributed positively to developments in physical education.
- Links with other schools and the community contribute very well to the curriculum and pupils' achievement.
- Very good subject expertise brings high expectations, enthusiasm and rigour to teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

67. The school sets out to provide an extended range of activities, through ensuring a generous allocation of time to the subject. As a result, pupils make very good progress in developing a range of skills and techniques which not only enable them to achieve very good standards, but also contributes very well to their personal development and self-confidence. During the inspection, pupils undertook gymnastics, developing their mobility, body control and balance; swimming, preparing for life-saving awards; and Junior Sports Leadership training, learning to lead physical activities in primary schools. All activities are entered into with enthusiasm and pupils constantly strive to improve their performance. This is particularly noticeable in swimming, where pupils advance quickly in their skills and achieve external awards from bodies such as the Amateur Swimming Association and the Royal Life Saving Society.
68. The leadership and management of the subject, by a specialist teacher, are very good and have given the subject added impetus. Her knowledge, drive and enthusiasm have resulted in lunch time clubs for pupils of all ages. She ensures the school benefits from arrangements with a local secondary school with sports college status, offering pupils basketball, ball skills, swimming and rounders as well as enhancing her own professional qualifications. Coaches from Rotherham Rugby Union Club, Rotherham Football Club, Yorkshire Cricket Club and Rotherham Basketball Club all visit the school and voluntarily coach pupils. Tournaments against other schools and visits that provide rich opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities, contribute to pupils' very good personal and social development. As a result of the hard work put into physical education, the school has been awarded the Activemark, Sportsmark, and Football Association Charter Mark awards. This has ensured that physical education has improved well from the high standard at the time of the previous inspection.
69. Staff expertise is significant in the very good teaching and learning across the school. Exciting lessons keep pupils interested throughout. Skills build up step by step and these are recorded and evaluated in a very effective way. As a result, lessons meet the needs of all pupils very well and consequently, pupils of all ages and abilities achieve very well. Teachers act as very good role models both in the relationships they build with pupils and the high standards of their own performance. Pupils are frequently asked to demonstrate to their class – for example, the sequences of movement devised by those in Year 6. These lead to discussions, which develop pupils' ability to evaluate and learn from their own performance and that of others.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

*One lesson was seen in health and social care. Judgements have not been made about this course.*

70. Although a pre-vocational course, the study of **health and social care** at GNVQ Foundation level plays a significant role in preparing Year 11 pupils for their future lives, by informing them about services and facilities. For instance, during the lesson observed, pupils considered barriers to good health care – in this case, factors that might prevent people attending a general practitioner's surgery. They then discussed how these obstacles could be overcome, in the course of which they learned more about the support available – such as when a call to *NHS Direct* might be relevant. In addition to enabling them to gain factual information, teachers encourage pupils to question their attitudes and form opinions – for example, about the universal right to health care. As a result, lessons contribute very effectively to pupils' learning in citizenship.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

*Six lessons of PSHE were observed and one of citizenship.*

### **Personal, social and health education and citizenship**

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good curriculum for PSHE and citizenship is appropriately linked closely to the whole school aim of preparing pupils to be citizens of the future.
- Supportive relationships both in and outside of lessons enable pupils to reflect and deal with issues in a mature way.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject help pupils to make the most of all opportunities for learning in this area.

## **Commentary**

71. Pupils achieve very well, because they have access to a wide range of activities which encourage their personal development and understanding. In lessons, primary aged pupils learn about people who help them in school and are encouraged to express their views and describe their feelings about activities. Visits and visitors are used well, from the school nurse – who supports the sex education programme – to drama presentations about the dangers of smoking. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn about public services by making visits to the Council offices and using the Internet to research information about ‘Childline’ and children’s rights. Those in Years 10 and 11 learn first aid and practise child care with a baby doll. This very relevant taught programme is supplemented by the expectations on pupils throughout the school day and the many projects in which they become involved, such as raising money for charity, recycling activities and selling fruit. They are encouraged in these activities by receiving Active Citizen certificates from the school.
72. Pupils are taught very well. They are confident to offer ideas, such as why people smoke, and to reflect at the end of the day about their behaviour. By Year 11, they consider sensitive issues – for instance, the transmission of HIV/Aids – with great maturity, during small group discussions. On a minority of occasions, lower attaining pupils find it difficult to participate fully in discussions, which they may not be able to follow. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning and to set targets for themselves in relation to their personal development, and these form an element of their individual education plans. Annual assessments of progress in this area are made, enabling staff and pupils to be clear about their achievements and what they need to learn next.
73. The very good features reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and developed well. The subject leader has a clear vision about the importance to the pupils of this aspect of their learning. She has put in place programmes of work for each age group and ensured that very good resources are available to teach these. The way that the subject permeates throughout the school day is fully recognised and the subject leader is looking at all other subjects to see where further opportunities can be identified. Assessment data has been analysed so that actions, which might lead to further improvement, can be taken. Some opportunities have been created to observe teaching in other age groups but these are not sufficiently systematic to be fully effective at the present time. This has been identified as an area for development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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