

INSPECTION REPORT

Bidwell Brook School

Dartington

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113643

Headteacher: Audrey Farrow

Lead inspector: Charles Hackett

Dates of inspection: 6th to 9th December 2004

Inspection number: 268533

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	71
School address:	Shinner's Bridge Dartington Totnes Devon
Postcode:	TQ9 6JU
Telephone number:	01803 864120
Fax number:	01803 868025
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Nichola Winstanley
Date of previous inspection:	24 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bidwell Brook is a day school for boys and girls of primary and secondary age with statements of special educational need for a wide range of difficulties. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Almost all pupils are of a white English background, of the current population two pupils live in homes where English is not the first language. The school is currently in the middle of a major rebuilding project and this has a major impact on the space available. The new secondary department has been completed and, currently, pupils from Year 3 upwards are making use of this building. Pupils in the early years and Years 1 and 2 are housed in the two remaining classrooms in the old building and often their lessons are disrupted by the noise from the building work. Since the previous inspection, the former headteacher has been absent due to illness for a considerable time and an acting headteacher was in post until December 2003. A new headteacher started her duties in January 2004. The school is part of a Federation, which includes a local primary and secondary school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21081	Charles Hackett	Lead inspector	Mathematics, physical education, modern foreign language.
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
23412	Alvin Jeffs	Team inspector	English, personal social and health education and citizenship, work related learning.
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	Science, art, music and design and technology
28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, religious education, history and geography

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bidwell Brook is a **good** school where the quality of care is very high. Pupils make good progress because of good teaching throughout the school. Leadership and management and governance of the school are effective. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is a very happy school where relationships between staff and pupils are very strong.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher, which is shaping the development of the school very effectively.
- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching in personal, social and health education, information and communication technology, art and music.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and the improvements in their personal development are shown in their increasing maturity and independence.
- The school has rightly identified areas for improvement which include pupils' achievements in science and a modern foreign language, and the need to provide a more consistent approach to working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).
- There are no clear management arrangements for aspects such as monitoring the curriculum, pupils' mainstream integration opportunities and the work of learning support assistants.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the quality of leadership has improved and this has had a very positive impact on teaching, the development of each subject, assessment systems and many other aspects of the school's work. The school now has an effective school improvement plan, which is well linked to the money available to the school. The school's accommodation and resources will improve further when the current building work has been completed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils, irrespective of their special educational needs, make **good** progress overall. Their progress is very good in personal, social, health education (PSHE), art and music. Progress in information and communication technology (ICT) is also very good, mainly as a result of the extremely high quality work of the subject leader and the major investment the school has made in hardware and software to support the subject. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of English, in mathematics and religious education. The achievement of the few early years (Foundation stage) children is satisfactory overall. Progress in science has been limited by the unavailability of the subject leader and, currently, pupils make satisfactory progress. Although, overall, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make similar progress to other pupils, this is not always so in all classes because the quality of the support they receive is not always as effective. Pupils' personal development is very good. Their spiritual, moral and cultural and social development is carefully nurtured by the work of staff and this contributes to pupils' attitudes and behaviour being **very good**. Pupils' attendance rates have improved since the previous inspection and are now good and above the national average for schools of this type. Pupils do well in achieving the targets set for them at their annual reviews.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education in the school is **good**. Staff show considerable concern for the individual needs of each child. The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall, although for those few pupils in the foundation stage it is not as effective and is satisfactory. Teachers seek to make learning interesting and use a wide range of imaginative resources, which in a few cases includes very effective use of ICT. Following recent improvements, the planning of what teachers want pupils to learn in lessons is now good. Classroom assistants offer very positive support to individuals and groups of pupils, but their effectiveness is reduced because they are not involved in the planning or the evaluations of lessons. There is very good practice in working effectively with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in many areas of the school, however this is not consistent. Likewise, 'signing' is not used effectively throughout the school. Although there are differences in the timetables for each class group overall, the curriculum is good and ensures that pupils have a wide range of experiences and all national curriculum requirements are met. There are also very good additional activities and experiences provided, including many associated with art and music which enhance the quality of education offered. Standards of care and support provided by all staff are very good. The accommodation is in a state of transition, given that there is a very good new building, but much of the rest of the school resembles a building site and provides unsatisfactory facilities. Links with parents are very good. Parents are always welcome visitors, whether to have a quick word with staff, or to offer their services in activities, such as assisting pupils in the hydrotherapy pool. Links with other schools are good; almost half of the current population have the opportunity to experience time in a mainstream setting. Links with the community are also good and have been used effectively to raise additional funds for the school and support the learning of pupils such as when local artists join in the school's arts week.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and, in the short time she has been in the school, much has been achieved to improve the quality of education provided. The headteacher has effectively matched her own ideas with the good practice that already existed in the school. Subject leaders are developing their roles effectively, although the overall management of the school has been affected by the long term absence of the current deputy headteacher. The school improvement plan acknowledges the need to change the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team in order to ensure that there are better arrangements for the management of aspects such as the curriculum and the integration of pupils into mainstream. Governors are very supportive of the school and are not afraid to make difficult decisions if they believe them to be an interest of the school. The minutes of their committee meetings show that they seek to monitor the work of the school closely and that best value is achieved in its work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the way the school works with their children. They describe the quality of care and concern shown by all staff as outstanding. They comment specifically on the determination of all staff to do everything they can to support their children and praise the way in which staff are very helpful in passing on information and supporting them in their role as parents. Pupils, themselves, are clearly very happy to be in the school. Those with verbal skills talk happily about the activities they have been involved in. Pupils without verbal skills express from the smiles on their faces how happy they are to be in the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop appropriate management systems for all aspects of the school's work.
- Continue with the plans in place to improve the provision for science, a modern foreign language and provide consistency in the approaches adopted to work with ASD pupils.
- Involve learning support assistants more in the planning and evaluations of lessons.
- Develop further the use of signing throughout the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **good overall**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to achieve and do so at an above average rate compared with pupils in similar schools.
- Pupils achieve very well in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) because of the whole school approach taken to support these subjects.
- Achievements in information and communication technology (ICT), art and music are very good.
- Progress is good in English, mathematics and religious education, and satisfactory in science.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) do not achieve as well as other pupils in a few lessons and the progress of pupils with very limited verbal skills is, at times, reduced because of the inconsistent use of signing.

Commentary

1. Pupils' achievements in each aspect of English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education are above average when compared with similar types of schools. Although these comparisons are very difficult because the population and the degrees of special educational needs of pupils vary even in similar schools, they do give a good overview of the progress of pupils. Last year's results showed that Bidwell Brook pupils achieved at a higher rate than pupils in similar schools. The school has set targets for pupils' achievements and, during the last year, the majority of pupils achieved these targets, which again demonstrates the good progress that pupils are making.
2. Opportunities for all older pupils to gain accreditation are good, with imaginative courses dealing with health, tourism, media and horticulture supplementing very relevant modules on communication, ICT, personal skills and mathematics. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. However, there are no opportunities for older pupils with moderate learning difficulties to gain accreditation in literacy skills. This would represent good preparation for education after sixteen and enhance pupils' likelihood of moving into work settings.
3. Pupils achieve very well in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE). Pupils gain a good understanding of aspects, such as sex and drugs education. Pupils' progress is demonstrated by their increasing maturity. This was seen during the inspection when Year 11 pupils showed a very good understanding of the dangers of drugs when engaged in a discussion about their use.
4. The school has built up a strong tradition for its work in creative arts. Pupils, as a result, achieve very well in both art and music. Art is given a very high profile and this includes an annual arts week where local artists run a variety of workshops. Although the building work has severely limited the resources and facilities with music, staff work very hard to ensure that pupils continue to benefit from a wide range of musical experiences. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been well supported by the school and these good resources, together with the expertise of the subject leader, are ensuring that pupils make very good progress.
5. In English, mathematics and religious education, the quality of teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Pupils' communication skills are well developed, although the lack of a consistent approach to signing does have a negative impact on those few pupils with limited verbal skills. Pupils' good progress in mathematics is demonstrated by the confident use of

money by pupils throughout the school. The school has identified science as an area for improvement in its school development plan and the current lack of a suitable teaching area and the long term absence of the science subject leader have had an impact on pupils' progress.

6. The progress of pupils irrespective of their special needs is good. However, on occasions, in a few classes, the progress of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) is more limited mainly because a few staff lack a full understanding of the specialist needs of these pupils and the most suitable teaching methods to use. The school has, through its analysis of pupils' achievements, identified this is an area for development and included extra training for staff in the school improvement plan.
7. There are very few pupils of pre-school age in the school. These children make good progress in their personal and social development, physical development and knowledge of the world, but overall, because of weaknesses in the teaching approaches used, their progress is satisfactory.
8. Pupils with additional special educational needs achieve well. For example, the few pupils in the school with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well due to good support, particularly from teaching assistants, and because of some very good inclusion.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and the behaviour of pupils are **very good**. Their personal development, including spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects, is also **very good**. Attendance levels are **good** and punctuality **is good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils treat each other with care and respect.
- Behaviour in and out of class is very good and there have been no exclusions.
- Pupils' individual education plans support the development of independence skills very well and pupils are willing to take responsibility for "jobs" in the classroom.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of moral and social expectations in a range of situations.
- Pupils are increasing their knowledge of other cultures very well through work in religious education, history and geography.

Commentary

9. Pupils like being in school, show interest in their lessons and want to do well. Throughout the school, pupils show a real enthusiasm for what they are going to learn in class. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils show real excitement when asked to use an interactive whiteboard to find simple songs to sing along with. Similarly, Year 10 and 11 pupils willingly try many different activities and work hard to include all pupils in the group, whatever their individual difficulties.
10. Pupils respond very well to the very good relationships that are evident throughout the school. Their respect for each other is shown by the way they help each other. This is particularly so in how the more physically able pupils do many little things automatically to make life more comfortable for other pupils, such as those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils are genuinely pleased for each other when they achieve well, as is demonstrated by their responses at the weekly 'achievements' assembly.
11. Pupils' very good behaviour means that learning is not disrupted and pupils feel safe and relaxed in school. During breaks, in spite of the restricted play area due to the building work, pupils are able to play on their own and in small groups, and if they wish, take the opportunity

to talk to adults. Those pupils who attend sessions in mainstream settings also behave very well and they try hard to mix with their mainstream peers. The very good behaviour of pupils is demonstrated by the fact that there have been no exclusions in recent years.

12. Pupils' very good progress in their personal development is helped by the emphasis the school has on increasing their independence. For example, in many classes after registration in the morning, pupils choose their jobs, such as preparing the drinks or taking the register and enjoy the responsibility. There is a good focus on developing pupils' independence in the targets set in individual education plans and these are frequently referred to by staff. For example, a pupil with complex learning difficulties, through regular support, has recently achieved her target of being able to open a door. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop increased independence and show responsibility and maturity as they organise and take part in their "mini enterprise" activities.
13. The social development of pupils is well supported by the very good additional activities that take place in the school. As a consequence, pupils learn to co-operate with each other and visitors. Their moral awareness is enhanced by the many different projects they take part in, such as "Operation Christmas Child.", a project to support children less fortunate than themselves at Christmas. The school's religious education curriculum provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of spirituality through looking at the customs of people from other faiths and cultures. In English, there is very good use of multicultural texts, and work in art gives pupils the opportunity to feel wonder and amazement as they look at the results of their work and learn about the art of other cultures.
14. Pupils attend well because they enjoy school. The level of attendance has improved since the last inspection and is better than that of similar schools. Parents are conscientious about keeping the school informed of reasons for absence and the school quickly follows up the very few occasions when this is not the case. Punctuality is good, but after breaks pupils are required to line up outside before returning to class and given the increased special needs of pupils, this process reduces the amount of time available for teaching and learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2%	School data	0.0%
National data	8.9%	National data	1.9%

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall as is the basic curriculum provided for pupils. However, extra activities and events provide pupils with very good additional learning opportunities (curriculum enrichment). Pupils receive good guidance from staff, but their opportunities to be involved in the running of the school are only satisfactory. All staff show dedication and commitment to provide very high quality care and support for pupils. A very good partnership has been established with parents and there are good links with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. The assessment of pupils' progress is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In many subjects, teachers show very good expertise and use this well in their teaching.

- Teachers make learning interesting by using a wide range of activities and resources.
- Lessons are consistently well organised with stimulating starter activities and tasks set to match the different ability levels in each group.
- Staff develop pupils' speaking and listening skills well and use symbols well, but the use of signing is inconsistent throughout the school.
- Learning support assistants provide very well for the care of pupils, but are not fully involved in supporting pupils' learning.
- Assessment arrangements are effective in providing staff with a clear picture of pupils' progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons (2 lessons were taken by staff from mainstream schools and their teaching was not graded)

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	17 (43%)	12 (32%)	8 (22%)	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.

Commentary

15. Pupils benefit greatly from the very good subject knowledge that teachers have particularly in art, ICT, music and personal, social, health and citizenship education. Teachers ensure that lessons are planned at the right level that enables all pupils to make good or very good progress. Pupils are confident to try new challenges because they know that their teachers will offer good support and expert advice. Teachers also use their subject knowledge well to make the lessons interesting. For example, in ICT the teacher has developed skills in the use of the interactive whiteboard and makes effective use of the websites of other schools. This has proved very beneficial in establishing communication with other schools, including a similar school in Perth, Australia.
16. Teachers make learning interesting and lessons involve the use of resources that capture the imagination of pupils. This was the case in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The teacher used a Bob the Builder soft toy and imitation tools to help pupils understand the concept of size, how objects link into the real world. Pupils responded very well and were able to stay on task for a lengthy period of time. Similarly, in a Year 11 French lesson, pupils enjoyed the opportunity to taste various crêpes and responded by trying hard to say simple sentences in French.
17. Teachers show a very good understanding of the different special educational needs of pupils in their classes. They ensure that, during activities, pupils are split into different groups and, although following similar tasks, these are well matched to pupils' ability levels. Additionally, teachers recognise the importance of having a good starter activity for each lesson, which will generate interest in the lesson amongst pupils. This was the case in a physical education lesson for Year 9 and above pupils. The warm-up, which involved pupils making decisions about the activities which should take place, was enjoyed by all and, as a result, all pupils were keen to participate in the main part of the lesson.
18. Staff use symbols very well to help pupils read and follow information and instructions. For a few individual pupils, these symbols are used very well to enable pupils to communicate their ideas to staff (PECs). Signing is also used well by a few individual staff, but it is not used consistently throughout the school and, because of this, there are occasions when pupils without verbal skills are not able to communicate at the same level as their peers.
19. The teaching of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is good overall and in a few classes very good. However, teaching methods are not consistent throughout the school and, because of this, there are times when these pupils do not make the same progress as other pupils. Although satisfactory, the teaching of children in the Foundation Stage would benefit from more

age appropriate resources. The weakness in the resources used in this department has a negative impact on children's learning, particularly in aspects such as communication, language and literacy and creative development.

20. A feature of many lessons is the positive individual support offered by learning support assistants to pupils. They, as do teachers, show a very high level of care for pupils needs. However, there are times when they are not as effective in supporting the teacher because they have not been involved in planning the lessons and are not clear what it is the teacher wants the pupils to learn. In addition, there are no opportunities for learning support assistants to join teachers in evaluating how well pupils have achieved.
21. The school has developed and implemented good systems to assess and record pupils' achievements in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and PSHCE. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers regularly enter pupils' levels of attainment into a whole-school database so that a clear picture of each pupil's progress can be obtained. They indicate what pupils have experienced in their education and particularly in their personal development, providing a good overall view of each pupil's journey through the school. Data from this exercise is analysed externally so that key issues for improvement can be identified. Assessment procedures in other subjects are satisfactory and are in the early stages of development. Records of Achievement are very well maintain and provide a clear record of pupils' time in the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** for pupils throughout the school. There are **very good** enrichment opportunities and activities for all pupils within and beyond the school. Both teachers and learning support assistants are sufficient in number and well qualified. The accommodation, in its present condition, makes the teaching of many subjects difficult and is only **satisfactory**. Resources in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and in the rest of the school, are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school includes all pupils irrespective of their special needs and provides them with equal access to activities.
- The programme of visits and the wide range of additional activities enrich the curriculum significantly.
- The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum is very good and contributes significantly to the very good levels of maturity and independence demonstrated by pupils.
- The timetable in each class varies and, at times, the length of time between literacy and numeracy lessons is too long.
- The teaching of English, ICT, design technology, art and music are restricted by the current state of the accommodation.

Commentary

22. The previous inspection report identified the curriculum as "satisfactory overall". The curriculum now offered is good. It incorporates a wide range of experiences and very good interaction with visitors, and the earlier weaknesses in ICT, science and PSHCE have been addressed. Subject planning has been updated. There is a good relevant curriculum for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, who have the chance of accreditation in many areas. Those pupils with more complex needs are well included into lessons and also receive a rich curriculum, which includes appropriate physiotherapeutic sessions. Pupils experiencing a range of autistic spectrum disorders are well provided for with activities that are focused and predictable, although this part of the curriculum is still developing and will benefit from further training for all staff.

23. The school is a very inclusive one. It welcomes and includes pupils with a wide range of difficulties and disabilities, providing them with equal access to the full range of activities. This is most noticeable with regard to the residential experiences offered to pupils. These are well thought through and begin early in pupils' careers with 'sleepovers' within the school. The programme works up to extended residential trips and activities such as the 'Ten Tors' where extended time away from home, once again, develops the independence of pupils. Pupils and parents attest to the value of these activities and the success owes very much to the preparation, risk assessment and planning put in by all concerned. There is a detailed accessibility plan and the new buildings have been designed in conjunction with staff to ensure the ease of access for all pupils.
24. There are a wide range of visits and additional activities and these greatly enrich the experience of pupils throughout their life at the school. Music and art are well supplemented with clubs, focused weeks and visits from artists and performers. In addition, the school builds on, and develops, the growing confidence of pupils by many opportunities to appear in public, ranging from visits to County Hall to school performances. Storytellers, African drummers, the community policeman, 'HMS Bulwark', anti-drug professionals and overseas students are just a few of the most recent visitors that have added new dimensions to the curriculum. Pupils speak highly of these visits and visitors, and they add relevance and excitement to what is already a good curriculum.
25. Links with other schools, particularly in the local 'Federation' have contributed well to inclusion opportunities for many pupils. Pupils, as individuals or in small groups, join mainstream classes and a few pupils from mainstream join the school for appropriate parts of their curriculum. In addition, all pupils have good opportunities to mix socially with pupils from other schools. The good relationship between 'special' and mainstream staff has contributed very well to this development. Pupils appreciate these opportunities. Work, though, is still required to ensure that mainstream experiences are always of the highest quality and link to the curriculum offered at Bidwell.
26. Within the overall curriculum, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) makes a very strong contribution to pupil health and maturity. A comprehensive programme of drugs and sex education, together with good opportunities to act as members of the school community contribute to the noticeable maturity displayed by pupils as they enter their final years at the school. There is an appropriate religious education curriculum and this is supported by regular assemblies.
27. Although the curriculum has developed significantly, there is currently no overall supervision of timetables and the day-by-day implementation of the curriculum. This means that a few classes receive large amounts of PSHCE and less literacy, while others have different imbalances. Although this does not affect the overall good quality of experience that pupils receive, it can mean that pupils have long gaps in the week between their literacy and numeracy lessons and the opportunities to practice literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are not similar in each class.
28. The school is appropriately staffed and there is a good match between the skills that staff possess and their areas of responsibility within the school. Curriculum leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects and many teaching assistants display a wide range of skills in areas such as art, ICT and music. These are well used within the curriculum. This means that pupils are taught by staff, who know their subjects and can support their colleagues in developing work. A few staff have specialist skills related to counselling, signing and work with autistic pupils. These are well used and enrich the curriculum.
29. Although the school has coped impressively with the building work on site, there are a number of curricular limitations that exist as a result. The present lack of appropriate library facilities limits pupils' development of research skills, while design and technology and music are also hampered by the current absence of specialist areas. ICT is restricted by the lack of a computer

suite, although the development of work using interactive whiteboards is rapidly enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for pupils' health, safety and welfare are **very effective**. Pupils are provided with **good** quality support, advice and guidance. There are **satisfactory** systems for taking pupils views into account.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a very safe and caring place.
- The very good relationships pupils have with staff help to ensure that they receive good quality support and guidance.
- The school provides good specific therapies to help promote pupils' physical and personal well-being and development.
- As they get older, pupils change classes without problems because of the time taken to help them cope with change.

Commentary

30. Great attention is being given to health and safety during the building works at the school. Weekly meetings with the contractor help to ensure that any risk is assessed and minimised. Risk assessment is also undertaken for activities in and out of the classroom and necessary steps taken to reduce any inherent danger. Pupils are very well supervised throughout the day and this further minimises risks of accidents. Should they occur, first aid, together with the routine administration of medication, complies fully with the school's policies and procedures because staff are appropriately trained. Child protection procedures are clear and effective. The head teacher has received recent training and she, in addition to a governor with a background in this area, have reviewed the school's policy and regular training is provided for all staff. The school promotes healthy living very well through the personal, health and social education programme; older pupils who run the healthy tuck shop have valuable first hand experience both of what are appropriate foods and of running a mini enterprise.
31. Pupils are confident to approach any adult in school with any concerns because of the very good relationships that develop between them. All staff have a very good knowledge of the pupils because they are discussed regularly in whole staff meetings. At these, any problems are tackled by drawing on the wide range of experiences and knowledge amongst staff. Class teachers know their pupils' strengths and areas for development very well and give them good support, advice and guidance in lessons. The targets set in individual education plans assist with this and appropriately these are often displayed clearly in classrooms.
32. A good range of therapies is provided that are designed to tackle barriers to development and to promote pupils' confidence and self esteem. After discussions between therapists and teachers, and with parental permission, pupils, who would benefit from provisions such as aromatherapy, rebound therapy (based on the use of a trampoline) and Riding for the Disabled, are identified. Their participation is well monitored. Very well thought out support is also provided for specific pupils by the speech and language therapist.
33. A good induction programme helps to ease children into school at the Reception year. Parents are very appreciative of the way in which their children are helped to move through the school with visits and opportunities to get to know new staff and rooms. They particularly like the system of photographs of staff being sent home because this helps their children to recognise the staff and prepare them for a change of class.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **very good**. Those with the community are **good** and those with other schools are also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very positive about the school and many support its work through a parents and friends association.
- High quality information keeps parents very well informed.
- Links with other schools provide pupils with good opportunities to be with their mainstream peers.
- The local community is a valued resource used well by the school.

Commentary

34. The returns from parents for both the Ofsted and the school's own questionnaires show that they are very positive about the school. Parents feel particularly that their children are happy, do well and like the teachers; they report that the quality of care their children receive is very high. The parents and friends association is actively involved in organising fund raising events. The money received supports the school's 'themed' weeks in art, music and sport.
35. Pupils' reports are of high quality and provide the information parents want; other general information is good. Well attended annual review meetings play a significant part in developing a productive partnership between home and school. These and other meetings, both formal and informal, provide very good opportunities to exchange information, discuss problems and concerns, as well as progress, and talk about ways of working together to the advantage of the pupils. For example, the school recently held a well attended and successful workshop on autism; it is eager to develop these workshop sessions further.
36. The school has recently become part of a Federation of schools, aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning for all. This has formalised a good programme of inclusion, which has run for some years whereby Bidwell Brook pupils take part in activities and lessons with their peers in the partner mainstream schools. The member of staff, who undertakes the liaison work, has made a good start in developing effective links with the two other schools, provides good support for the pupils involved and is beginning to evaluate what is going on through discussions with the teachers concerned. However, despite the high priority placed on inclusion within the Federation, there are no formal ways in which the links are overseen or evaluated by senior members of staff. Links with other colleges are developing well. Further a field, the audio link, through the internet, with a school in Australia is providing the Year 7 and 8 pupils who take part with a stimulating introduction to life on the other side of the world and adding considerably to their learning and understanding.
37. The local community is very supportive of the school, often raising funds for its work. It is also used well to provide valuable first hand experiences for pupils, which are effective in making learning interesting. These opportunities have included pupils who helped a local caravan park prepare for 'the season' whilst studying leisure and tourism and others who used the local church for the re-enactment of a wedding and christening.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher has shown a real sense of purpose and vision in her efforts to improve the quality of education within the school.
- Very good procedures to evaluate the quality of the school's work have led to a creation of a highly perceptive school improvement plan.
- Senior staff are excellent role models for their colleagues, but their effectiveness has been reduced by senior staff absences.
- There are management weaknesses in key aspects of the school.
- Governors provide effective support for the school and, through their committees, monitor its work very well.

Commentary

38. The headteacher is very determined that the school will do its very best for its pupils. In the year she has been in post, she has acknowledged the need for improvements, but has also recognised the existing strengths within the school. In bringing about improvements, she has led by example and has earned the respect of the staff team, governors, parents and pupils. Through the determination of the headteacher, the building work, which has caused considerable disruption, has not been allowed to reduce the quality of education provided for pupils.
39. The headteacher, with the support of external consultants, has evaluated very carefully the quality of the school's work. Rightly, this has focused on improving the achievements of pupils in all subjects and it is as a result of this that the provision for science, modern foreign language and design and technology are now appropriately part of the areas to be developed within the school's improvement plan. In addition, it is recognised that the quality of the work for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders varies and this will also be a focus for improvement in the school improvement plan.
40. The headteacher recognised the need for a clear management structure for the school. The deputy headteacher, who previously was class based was moved to a more strategic role with whole school responsibilities. However, because he is now on long term sick leave, the effect of this has not yet been recognised. Although not employed on management salaries, two senior staff have taken on additional responsibilities, many in an acting capacity. These responsibilities include the management of the primary and secondary departments of the school. Both staff are outstanding professionals who, between them, have brought about the very good provision for art, personal, social and health education, ICT and the maintenance of school assessment records. However, as full time teachers they have little opportunity to manage and influence the work of their colleagues in their departments. As a result, although there are no unsatisfactory elements of the school's work, there are inconsistencies in the approaches used by different staff and a few aspects could function more effectively. For example, there needs to be more effective management arrangements for ensuring that:
- There is a whole school approach to working with ASD pupils.
 - The work pupils undertake in mainstream schools is linked to what they are asked to do at Bidwell.
 - The curriculum opportunities are similar for each class.
 - The work of the learning support assistants is monitored and given greater value.
41. Governors have been very supportive of the new headteacher in her efforts to bring about improvements. Through their committees and their full governing meetings, they show that they understand many of the school's strengths and weaknesses and that they are prepared to make difficult decisions if necessary. They have, though, recognised that they should try to visit the school more often and, with this in mind, have agreed a protocol for future visits.

42. The financial management of the school is effective and has ensured that the school is spending wisely to benefit its pupils. The sum that the school is allocated is well below the national average for schools of its type and out of necessity senior staff and governors have been very prudent with expenditure. The slightly above average underspend for last year is attributed to the temporary senior posts and the uncertainties of staff absences. However, there are very realistic plans to make use of this money during the current financial year.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	932572	Balance from previous year	24810
Total expenditure	848267	Balance carried forward to the next	74125
Expenditure per pupil	11947		

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- 'Mini enterprise' projects have made a very positive contribution to pupils increased awareness of work related skills.
- The school's PHSCE curriculum and the accredited courses for older pupils help pupils prepare for leaving school.
- There are no external work experience opportunities and this is a limitation to this aspect of learning.
- The school uses outside agencies well to provide pupils with good advice and support with regard to the next stages of their lives after school.

Commentary

43. The school places a strong emphasis on the importance of pupils developing work related skills. A key element of this is the development of mini enterprises linked to the sale of healthy snacks within the school and the production and sale of vegetables within the horticulture modular course. Pupils are assisted in the development of planning, advertising, presenting and accounting skills that arise naturally, but which also contain essential elements transferable to any commercial activity. This has been a great success and pupils talk about the work animatedly and with understanding.
44. The PSHCE curriculum develops a range of skills, particularly within the citizenship strand, that contribute well both to pupil confidence and to their ability to make informed choices and decisions. Active support by the Youth Service and Connexions assists well in this. Courses in leisure and tourism, media and horticulture have focused on what it means to work and be at work. Good links with local industry have helped in this. In addition, visits to a local newspaper have presented an alternative setting so that pupils can compare different jobs. As a result of these opportunities, pupils talk sensibly about possible work prospects and understand what employment involves and demands.
45. Although there are no opportunities for pupils to undertake external work experience, a good programme of work placements within the school has been developed. These give pupils the chance to work in the office, assist the site manager or act as teaching assistants with the primary pupils. Links with colleges are not as strong as they might be, largely as the result of distance. This means that pupils are not able to use the extensive resources available in such institutions on a structured basis and limits the opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses.

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

*(Throughout this section of the report, overall judgements about **provision** relate to pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and management and any other significant aspects)*

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development.
- There are weaknesses in the resources and teaching methods which impact on children's learning in communication, language, literacy, mathematical and creative development.
- Children have positive attitudes, behave well and enjoy their school activities.
- The curriculum includes a good range of visits and these lead to children showing good levels of interest.

Commentary

46. Teaching and pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. The leadership and management of this part of the school are also satisfactory. The teacher has an appropriate understanding of the needs of young children. A satisfactory range of learning opportunities is planned to incorporate the work (early learning goals) expected for this age group. Children share their learning with Year 1 pupils, and there is an appropriate emphasis on interaction and ensuring that children feel secure and happy at school and enjoy their learning.
47. Children achieve well in **personal, social and emotional development** because they are well supported and encouraged to try things out for themselves. They quickly settle and show good understanding of the class routines. Good teaching in this area of learning encourages children to take on simple responsibilities for their own behaviour and belongings.
48. Children develop satisfactory **communication, language and literacy skills**. They are provided with good opportunities to listen to stories, answer questions and join in with discussions. However at times, there are too few clues to help them understand what is being said. Not enough alternative means of communication, such as signs and symbols, are used in group sessions to improve language skills further. In their **mathematical development**, children also achieve satisfactorily due to satisfactory teaching. They are able to join in with count to 5, and recognise a few colours and shapes, but there is not always enough emphasis on the teaching of early number concepts and working with real objects to improve their skills further.
49. Children's learning in **knowledge and understanding of the world** is good and they achieve well. This is because they have many opportunities to explore the local environment and visit different places on a regular basis. For example, during the inspection, children were preparing for a visit to see a Nativity Play. They practised the story and showed that they could name the major characters and sequence some of the events. Good teaching led to good understanding of the main themes of the story.
50. Children's skills in **creative development** are satisfactory. They explore colours and take part in a range of appropriate tactile experiences to develop their awareness of form and structure. Teaching in this aspect is satisfactory, but there are too few opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves or to be creative on a regular basis. In their **physical development**, children achieve well. They enjoy going out to play and are developing good skills in riding

bikes, climbing, running and playing together. Good provision and teaching promotes a good range of experiences and opportunities to extend children's skills.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE (FRENCH)

One French lesson was seen for pupils in years 10 and 11. A very recently revised planning folder was also considered. Seven English lessons were observed throughout the school, together with discussions with pupils of all ages and a detailed scrutiny made of teachers' and coordinators' work and planning.

FRENCH

51. Insufficient information is available to make a judgement on provision for this subject. It has been identified by the school as a subject for development within the present school improvement plan. A subject leader has recently been appointed and she has started to put together a subject planning file which will show what will be covered as pupils move through the school. In the good lesson seen, pupils enjoyed making and tasting crêpes. A few pupils could give simple responses in French, whilst the majority could follow the lead of staff in repeating French words that described the taste of the crêpes. All enjoyed the lesson and were keen to contribute.

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop their skills of speaking and listening well and this makes a valuable contribution to their independence and maturity.
- Teachers use the strategies of the National Literacy strategy well.
- The use of symbols is good, but signing is not used consistently throughout the school.
- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties do not have the opportunity to participate in accredited courses.
- The subject is well led, but there are few opportunities to check on the work of other staff.
- Lack of library facilities limits the development of pupils' research and reading skills.

Commentary

52. The achievement of pupils in English is good. Communication skills are developed in a range of contexts; in the classroom, assemblies, school productions and in meeting visitors. Pupils gain in confidence and clearly enjoy conversations with their friends and staff. All pupils enjoy the written word. Many develop reading skills and become independent readers. Others gain great enjoyment from books read, acted and discussed regularly throughout the week. Written work is slower to develop, but many opportunities are given to write letters, caption pictures and word process. The use of ICT is better than in the last inspection and imaginative work was observed, for example, in the development of handwriting skills using the interactive whiteboard.

53. Teaching and learning of English are good overall. Teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and use starter activities, group work and final discussion sessions well. They work well with teaching assistants and in conjunction with speech and language therapists. This was exemplified in a very good lesson with Year 3 pupils. The teacher and speech therapist worked well as a team, with one taking over from the other at appropriate moments in the lesson. The lesson was planned with the individual needs of pupils very clearly in mind. For example, a non-verbal pupil with complex difficulties is

supported separately in a one-to-one setting by a teaching assistant who used language and a sand tray very well to develop skills of anticipation in a game involving pouring sand on the command of 'Ready, steady, go'.

54. Resources, often made by staff, are imaginative and very well used. Time is also efficiently used to ensure that all pupils receive the maximum opportunities to talk, read and write in lessons. All pupils are included well in lessons and those with communication difficulties receive support from symbol work and signing. These latter techniques are developing, but require more work before they are a fully integrated part of pupils' experience in literacy and other lessons. Learning support assistants offer very positive support in lessons, but there are limited opportunities for them to talk through pupils' targets and lesson plans with teachers.
55. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties have good opportunities to develop oral, reading and writing skills, but in Year 10 and 11, they do not have the opportunity to gain accreditation in literacy through involvement in externally validated courses. To ensure that their progress is celebrated and they have the best preparation for education after sixteen, such courses would be very beneficial. These pupils do, however, have considerable literacy experiences in the modular courses they take.
56. The good progress in the provision for English, which has been made since the last inspection, is the result of strong and imaginative leadership of the subject. Both subject leaders set a good example in their own teaching and have developed a very good assessment system which assists them record and extend pupils' skills. The overview of teachers' planning is good, but the timetables and balance of literacy skills within the week are the responsibility of each class teacher. This leads to a variation that means that, in a few classes, literacy is not taught for two of the working days of the school week. Additionally, the subject leaders have few opportunities to observe and comment on the work of their colleagues. The school does not have a library at present and this is a significant constraint on the opportunities for pupils to choose books to read and the development of their skills in research.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Provision for language and literacy is good. Planning in most subjects pays attention to the development of specialist vocabulary. The regular use of questions and stimulating activities encourages pupils to take part in class discussions, put forward their ideas and demonstrate what they have remembered. Particularly good examples of this were observed in PSHCE lessons, where pupils' views were actively encouraged and new vocabulary introduced, practised and reinforced in a methodical way. In one particularly good physical education lesson, the key vocabulary was displayed in traditional format, but also in symbols. This approach to the development of vocabulary is imaginative, but not often enough used in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good opportunities to consolidate key skills, particularly in basic number and using money.
- Lessons often involve pupils in activities that interest them and motivate them to learn.
- The school has a suitable mathematics curriculum and responds very well to national initiatives in the subject.
- The information the school has on pupils' achievement is good, but not sufficiently analysed to plan what future work should be undertaken.
- The subject leader leads by example but has limited opportunities to influence the work of her colleagues.

Commentary

58. The achievements of pupils throughout the school are good overall. Due to the emphasis given by staff on consolidating basic number skills, pupils are able to count up to ten and, in many cases, add and subtract numbers without adult support. For example, older pupils with severe learning difficulties are able to count in ones and twos when buying small items from their imaginary shops. Pupils of all ages can recognise different coins and become increasingly confident and independent in counting out money. Pupils' achievements have been recognised in recent years by successes in passing externally verified tests in Year 11. Pupils have passed up to five modules in the last three years. Pupils' number skills are reflected also in the ability of the Year 11 pupils to collect money for the healthy snacks they sell as part of their mini enterprise project.
59. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is consistently good. Staff seek to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and that they can take an active part. This often involves imaginative use of resources, which are successful in encouraging pupils' involvement. Examples of these range from the class for Years 1 and 2 pupils being involved with building blocks and 'Bob the Builder' toys to older pupils using a programme on the interactive whiteboard to select coins to purchase small items in an imaginary shop. Teachers make effective use of ICT in their teaching of mathematics, this is particularly so in the use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers also ensure that the activities in lessons are linked to pupils' different ability levels. Careful thought is given to the suitability of resources for pupils to use. These include small tills, where Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils use pennies and two pence pieces to buy items of food or drinks. As a result of the high expectations for pupils to be involved in activities, pupils show very positive attitudes to their work and there are few incidents of uncooperative behaviour.
60. The school has thought very carefully about its curriculum for mathematics and all staff have been involved in training to establish an effective curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adapted well and implemented throughout the school and, currently, nationally recommended revisions to the curriculum are being implemented. Good in-service training opportunities are being provided and staff are able to purchase suitable resources.
61. Pupils' achievements are recorded on the school recording system and these show an overall picture of good achievement. However, there is limited analysis of the rate of progress in mathematics of pupils with different special educational needs. Consequently, the mathematics department is not clear whether, as its population continues to have pupils with more complex needs, if all pupils are making similar progress.
62. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader has worked very hard to take on board national initiatives and to lead the introduction of these throughout the school. As a result, there has been good improvement in the provision since the previous inspection. She is a very good role model for her colleagues. She has ensured that the school has a good range of resources and that staff are following agreed procedures to record pupils' achievements. However, her timetable does not allow her sufficient opportunity to monitor or influence the work of her colleagues. This would also give her a greater opportunity to be aware of any differences in the achievements of pupils with different special educational needs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. 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. Examples of pupils seen during the inspection included lessons in physical education and science. There is, though, limited formal planning for how mathematical skills will be developed in other subjects. The subject development plan is seeking to address this weakness and staff discussions have already taken place.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy science and often have fun with the very practical approaches used.
- Good questioning by staff helps to extend pupils' knowledge and their understanding of scientific language.
- The scientific content of lessons at times is too limited and impacts on how well pupils learn.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Assessment procedures are good and are helping to raise achievement.

Commentary

64. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy the practical approaches used in many lessons and often have fun as they explore reactions to the experiments they undertake. For example, a good practical approach to recognising the pressure caused by gases, led to Year 7 pupils having fun as they watched the air in a bottle of lemonade escape and blow up a balloon.
65. Primary pupils enjoy learning about magnetism and are beginning to recognise the forces of attraction between magnets and magnetic materials. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder worked with staff to make a magnetic fishing game, and showed pleasure as they eventually succeeded in playing the game and 'catching' a fish. Secondary pupils benefit from good questioning that encourages them to think carefully about their investigations. Through practical approaches and enquiries, pupils are able to develop their investigative skills appropriately as they move through the school. For example, pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties are able to sort and classify a selection of leaves collected during a walk.
66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have sound knowledge of the topics they teach and extend pupils' skills through the good use of scientific vocabulary and modelling and demonstrating many experiments. Pupils themselves, though, do not always have enough opportunity to carry out investigations even with adult support which often results in them becoming passive observers rather than learning actively. This, in turn, reduces the rate of their progress.
67. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is linked to an accredited course in horticulture, which is appropriate both in relation to pupils' abilities and their special needs. Teachers do not always, though, ensure that there is sufficient science content in lessons. Occasionally, lessons focus for too long on 'talking' about the tasks, and not long enough on the actual enquiry, consequently limiting the amount of knowledge that pupils gain. Expectations of pupils' achievements are not always high enough and, at times, too little is prepared to keep pupils occupied for the whole lesson.
68. Assessment procedures are good and enable teachers to record systematically what each pupil achieves. This termly process results in good tracking of pupils' skills as they move through the school. Because these assessments are externally moderated, the school is aware that achievements in science are just below those in other similar schools. This has led to science being identified as a key area for improvement in the school development planning process. Although the subject leader is away at present, the subject is being appropriately managed and there are clear actions identified to improve provision and pupils' achievements. Currently, the accommodation for teaching science is unsatisfactory, but this will be addressed when the building work is completed.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Two lessons were seen. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and teachers' records were scrutinised. The use of ICT in other subjects was also considered.

Provision for ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership ensures that the school is aware of all new initiatives and the subject has a high profile within the school.
- Very good teaching is supported by very good quality planning of the work pupils will cover.
- Most learning support assistants offer effective guidance to pupils and there is a skilled computer network manager.
- ICT across the curriculum needs further development, but staff make excellent use of digital cameras.

Commentary

69. Pupils are achieving very well in ICT as a result of very good teaching, particularly from the subject leader. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection, where progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. Pupils are also enabled to make very good progress through the very effective use of the resources available. Although at this time, there is no ICT suite, there will be when the building work is complete. Many staff make very good use of the interactive whiteboards in lessons to ensure that all pupils are able to learn new skills.
70. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this well to plan interesting lessons. Their planning ensures that there are clear aims for what pupils will learn in individual lessons. As a result, pupils' attitudes to ICT are very good. They enjoy the lessons and are very enthusiastic about using the interactive whiteboard and the computers. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson for a group of mainly ASD pupils, pupils were able to use the interactive whiteboard for 'cause and effect' and by the end of the lesson, all pupils were able to use the icon on the whiteboard to switch to a new slide. Learning support assistants have taken advantage of the training available and, as a result, can offer pupils effective support.
71. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are studying for units in a nationally recognised course. All pupils have a portfolio of work and are eager to talk about their achievements. Very good use is made of email and audio conferencing and, in an excellent Year 7 lesson, pupils were able to talk to pupils in a school in Australia.

Pupils were involved in audio conferencing with a school in Perth, Australia. Pupils were well prepared and had their questions, word processed, ready on a card, to ask their Australian friends. Pupils eagerly exchanged their questions and showed real interest in the responses. For example, an Australian pupil asked whether they had French lessons, and all the pupils confidently counted to ten in French and said "bonjour". The pupils in Australia clapped enthusiastically. One of the pupils asked their Australian friends about food and said that he did not like to eat rabbit. The teacher displayed a slide on the interactive whiteboard of a rabbit being spit roasted in Australia. The whole experience provides pupils with a valuable insight into another way of life and is no doubt an experience that children from both continents will remember for a long time.

72. The leadership of ICT is excellent. The subject co-ordinator is very well informed and has made sure that he attends all relevant training opportunities. He is determined that the subject will have the best possible standards and has a clear vision as to where the subject needs to go in the future. He is able to identify areas for improvement and seeks the support of outside agencies to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum. For example, he is successfully piloting the new nationally recognised materials for lower attaining pupils. Management of the subject is good, but the co-ordinator has limited time to monitor teaching

and learning in other classes, or to ensure examples of good practice are shared. In addition, he has insufficient time to oversee the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum. The subject is very well supported by an ICT technician, who acts as the network manager and has produced a very effective intranet.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, but it is not used consistently well by all staff. ICT is used well in subjects, such as mathematics and geography. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils were very enthusiastic about matching shapes and counting their sides on the interactive whiteboard. There is also very good use of ICT in mathematics when pupils access the website of another school and use their Advent Calendar to practice counting. In a geography lesson, one pupil was able to work independently on a presentation and could show how he found images on the intranet. There is also good use of ICT in music and art. In music, the use of the microphone is a key strength in enabling pupils to hear themselves and promotes very good responses. However, the use of ICT is only satisfactory in English and science. The use of the digital camera in all subjects for the recording of examples of pupils' achievements is excellent.

HUMANITIES

History and geography were not inspected as part of the inspection. One lesson was seen in geography. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, displays and teachers' planning. There were no lessons in history during the inspection week. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, displays and teachers' planning.

History

74. The history curriculum file shows details of what is taught and a clear action plan for improvement. The planning is good and the work in the subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' cultural development. Teachers use role play and sensory experiences well to enable pupils to understand historical events. For example, an effective display on the Vikings shows pupils pretending to be archaeologists and digging in the sand for artifacts. Pupils have dressed up as Tudor kings and queens and have experienced being in the stocks. They have role played sailing from Norway from Dartmouth, one pupil wearing 'Thor's' hammer for protection. Pupils in Year 7 have studied World War II and are delighted with a presentation they have created on the computer showing the major political figures, bombed houses and evacuees. Very good use is made of pupils' own families to help pupils appreciate the passage of time; pictures of grandfathers and great grandfathers who took part in the war are displayed. Pupils have enjoyed a number of relevant visits, including a recent one to Exeter museum.

Geography

75. Work in geography is well planned and the subject leader has clear plans for improvement. Displays around the school show that younger pupils learn about how to get around the school and have done a playground orienteering course. In the lesson seen, Year 3 pupils were eager to find their name in certain areas of the school and were able to understand that a link exists between a real object and a pictorial representation. Pupils in Year 7 have prepared books about the river Dart and one pupil has produced a computer presentation about the river, using text and images. The subject leader is enthusiastic about improving the use of ICT in the subject. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural awareness, email links with a school in the north of England and the school in Australia are used effectively for comparing different environments and how people live.

Religious Education

Inspectors saw two lessons. Work and displays were analysed and inspectors looked at teacher's records.

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well; there are very good opportunities for pupils to experience the beliefs of other cultures.
- Very good resources are used well to enliven lessons and support pupils' learning.
- The subject leader is enthusiastically looking to develop the subject further.

Commentary

76. The school has maintained the good provision reported in the previous inspection. Pupils continue to make good progress in religious education. All pupils are fully included in the lessons, because teachers ensure that there are experiences that will suit all abilities. The very good range of resources is used effectively and lessons often include very good sensory experiences. As a result, pupils are interested and enthusiastic and learn well. For example, in a lesson on the feast day of St Nicholas, pupils enjoyed dressing up and acting out the story, especially putting the money down the chimney. This lesson, with its stress on being kind, made a very good contribution to pupils' moral development.
77. Work in the subject is based on the Devon Agreed Syllabus and linked to a commercial scheme for personal and social development. Lessons are very well planned and there are clear aims for what pupils should learn. Good use is made of the county website, which includes exemplars of work for lower attaining pupils. However, the programme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is limited and needs to be developed further. These pupils are currently looking at religions with one God and so far have studied Judaism and Sikhism.
78. Topics covered ensure the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils are able to look at the beliefs of their own and other religions. For example, a wall display on rites of passage shows the equivalent of the Christian christening ceremony in other religions. The very good link with the local church is used well to widen pupils' experiences. Pupils used the church to act out a wedding. They all dressed up to perform in a range of roles. A mock "christening" has also been held in the church recently.
79. The leadership and management of the new subject leader are good. She has a good insight into the subject and knows where improvements are needed. She has looked at the planning of other teachers, but has not yet had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in other classes.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and Technology

No overall judgement can be made. One design and technology lesson was observed in Year 9 and curriculum documents were scrutinised.

80. The curriculum for design and technology is well planned so that pupils have an appropriate range of activities and build on their past experiences. Photographic evidence shows that pupils of all ages have a range of food technology opportunities covering planning, shopping, preparing, eating and evaluating their work. In discussion, pupils are able to talk about the importance of hygiene and know how some germs spread. There are good plans for the improvement of space and resources for the subject when the building work is completed.

Physical Education

Physical education was not part of the focus for the inspection and insufficient information was gathered to make a judgement on provision. Parts of a gymnastics and rebound therapy lesson were observed as well as a session in the hydrotherapy pool for younger ASD pupils.

81. All pupils in the school have good opportunities to take part in physical education. In the lessons seen, Years 9, 10 and 11 pupils were fully involved in an energetic warm up and individual and partner work in performing balances on mats. There were very good opportunities for pupils to make choices, such as in the warm up when individual pupils were able to decide what exercise all pupils should attempt. Pupils' literacy skills were well supported by key words being on display and the teacher reminding pupils of these as the lesson progressed. The new hydrotherapy pool is an excellent addition to the school's resources. The session observed involved many pupils with physical difficulties. They were very well supported by staff and a parent volunteer, who all successfully encouraged pupils to splash and jump around in the water. Pupils' physical development is also supported well by pupils taking part in an annual organised walk on Dartmoor (known as the Ten Tors). Pupils, with staff support, experience extreme conditions and face a real endurance challenge. Because of their excellent preparation, they are all successful and gain considerable self confidence from their achievements. Similarly, the many pupils who have the opportunity to go horse riding also boost their confidence through these experiences.

Art

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils across the school achieve very well in art and design due to very skilled teaching.
- The very good range of experiences offered makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural and spiritual development.
- Very good use is made of the resources, including contributions by local artists.
- Leadership is very good and ensures that art and design has a high profile in the school.

Commentary

82. Provision for art and design has improved since the last inspection. In the primary classes, pupils enjoy experimenting with a good range of materials as they develop their confidence and creativity. Year 3 pupils, for example, are able to create individual Christmas wrapping paper using a 'marbling' approach. They focus very carefully on the tasks set for them and are very proud of their finished results. Older pupils in Years 8 and 9 make very good progress in the work they do with textiles. In a lesson observed, they were experimenting with paints on silk to create a patchwork silk hanging for the classroom. Because the teacher used a past piece of work by an older pupil, all were keen to get started and try to emulate the work. The results were outstanding, showing very good skills in colour mixing and a very good response to the original idea.

83. The quality of teaching and learning in art and design is very good and leads to the high standards achieved by pupils. The very good use of high quality resources results in exciting lessons. Often teaching is typified by precise demonstrations followed by pupils having the chance to try things out for themselves. The very good range of experiences offered leads to high quality enrichment of the basic curriculum. Specialist arts weeks annually provide many opportunities for the study of other cultural influences and contribute well to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. A very good contribution to the subject is made by the links established with local artists who regularly work with pupils of all abilities and ages. These experiences

have included work with puppeteers, story tellers, portrait painters and work in a range of textiles.

84. Very good leadership ensures that art and design has a high profile in the school and community. Pupils' work is regularly displayed in the local Council offices and local galleries. A very good school portfolio has been established, showing the very good progress in art and design skills of pupils as they move through the school.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve very well in music due to very good teaching and a very good range of activities.
- Specialist teaching successfully integrates pupils with more complex difficulties into lessons.
- Music contributes very well to improving pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Leadership of the subject is very good, ensuring that the subject has a very high profile and pupils benefit from exciting opportunities.

Commentary

85. Provision for music has improved since the last inspection. Younger pupils in the primary classes have many very good opportunities to explore sounds, work with instruments and sing simple songs. They begin to learn how to create sound effects and learn about many of the instruments of the orchestra. The use of a microphone in one lesson was very successful in encouraging non-communicating pupils to interact and enjoy the sounds they made. Pupils were able to play simple, untuned percussion instruments to accompany a piece of music and they enjoyed listening to the teacher play the violin and the piano.
86. Older pupils in the secondary classes show very good performing and singing skills as they take part in concerts and competitions. In one lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties showed very high levels of enjoyment as they worked with the music teacher to develop their communication skills. They showed that they were able to make a choice of instruments and take part in an imitative drumming activity in which they themselves took the lead role. Their very good achievements in this lesson were linked exclusively to the very specialist teaching skills that enabled them to succeed.
87. Leadership of the subject is very good, keeping the subject vibrant and establishing very good links with musicians and local performers. The subject leader has also ensured that, despite the difficulties created by the building work, pupils continue to make very progress. Music activities contribute very well to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence, particularly as pupils take part in regular school shows and performances. Videos of past concerts shows how all pupils are included, they perform independently and all thoroughly enjoy the experiences.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

Five lessons were observed at all stages. In addition, teachers' planning was examined and a detailed scrutiny made of the coordinator's records and the subject development plan.

Provision throughout the school for PSHCE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers identify good opportunities to develop pupils' personal and social skills within lessons.
- The subject leader sets very high standards in the quality of her work.

- Pupils' responses show how the work in PSHCE is helping them become mature.
- Citizenship is a well established element of the PSHCE curriculum.

Commentary

88. PSHCE underpins the work of all staff within the school. In all subjects, staff are good at identifying ways in which pupils' knowledge of safety, independence and issues within society are raised and dealt with. Thus, much good work is carried out, at all ages, on health and safety, the environment, personal development and how people can help others. Lessons in PSHCE pull together all this essential information. Teaching is very good and ensures that pupils make very good progress. Primary pupils develop a clear understanding of what is required to work and play together. As they move through the school, they are taught and learn how we develop physically, with a strong emphasis on independence and being safe. Pupils' views are always sought and incorporated within lessons, but the PSHCE curriculum places a very strong emphasis on good advice concerning how to live a useful and healthy life. To help enable this approach, staff receive good support from outside agencies such as Youth and drugs specialists. Issues relating to drugs, sexual development and personal hygiene are dealt with very well.
89. The subject has gained a number of awards for the school and these are thoroughly deserved. Much of the success arises from the commitment and hard work undertaken by the subject leader.
90. She is a very good practitioner and has ensured that all departments within the school have good planning, review the subject well and regularly add to the resources available to stimulate pupils.
91. Each level of PSHE has an element of citizenship and this is developing well. The success of this area of the curriculum is most noticeable in the mature and accepting attitude displayed by pupils in their final two years at the school. This was emphasised during the inspection by the mature manner Year 10 and 11 pupils accepted an inspector into a lesson dealing with AIDS. Pupils were well aware of the sensitivity of the issues and showed great maturity not only in their welcoming of a visitor, but also in their discussion and understanding of issues relating to how to be safe.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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.