

INSPECTION REPORT

Crowdys Hill School

Swindon, Wiltshire

LEA area: Swindon

Unique reference number: 126549

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Tansley

Lead inspector: Sarah Mascall

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th September 2004

Inspection number: 268553

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:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	140
School address:	Jefferies Avenue Swindon Wiltshire
Postcode:	SN2 7HJ
Telephone number:	01793 332400
Fax number:	01793 331860
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Ian Webb
Date of previous inspection:	15 th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Crowdys Hill is a school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. Currently 140 pupils attend the school. When they start school pupils' attainment is below average and in the case of those pupils with more complex needs, well below average. The school was originally for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. However, over the last few years the special needs of the pupils has changed. Currently 66 per cent of the school population have moderate learning difficulties. Other pupils have more complex needs and this includes 22 per cent with emotional and behavioural difficulties, seven per cent who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and two per cent who are profoundly deaf. There are almost twice as many boys as girls. Pupils' homes are in Swindon and Wiltshire and a very small number travel in from Gloucestershire. Although their socio-economic circumstances are varied, overall they are below average. A very small number of pupils are from multi ethnic backgrounds although very few have English as a second language. Three pupils are in public care.

The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, Investors In People and a school's achievement award.

The school runs an Animal Husbandry Unit (AHU) which has a wide range of animals including a pony, goats, alpacas, pigs and a variety of birds.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20536	Sarah Mascall	Lead inspector	English
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Modern foreign language; religious education; history; geography; rural studies
10781	Robert Thompson	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education and citizenship; design and technology; music; physical education
23643	John Ward	Team inspector	Science; art and design
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Inspections Ltd
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
GL53 7JX

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Crowdys Hill is a **good** school. Teaching and learning are good and as a result the majority of pupils achieve well. Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff has ensured that the school is moving forward at a rapid pace. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher has a very strong commitment to the raising of standards throughout the school.
- Teaching in science and design and technology is very good and pupils make very good progress in these subjects.
- Pupils' personal and social development is good because the school has placed high priority on developing these aspects.
- Teachers' methods for checking the progress pupils make in most subjects is not sufficiently well developed to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils.
- The animal husbandry unit is a useful extension to the curriculum but it is not used to its full potential in extending pupils' learning opportunities.
- Strategies to help teachers manage the small number of pupils with challenging behaviour are not effective.
- Pupils are prepared very well in Years 10 and 11 for leaving school through the work related learning programme.
- Very good links with the community support pupils' learning well.

Since the last inspection in 1999 the school has made good improvements. It has developed information and communication technology (ICT) very well. Reports to parents are now satisfactory. The role of co-ordinators has improved and they are more involved in developing their subjects. Recording systems are better but are still inconsistent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good

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

Pupils' achievements are **good**. They are very good in science and design and technology¹. Pupils make good progress in personal, social and health education and citizenship, art, information and communication technology and religious education. In English pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress and satisfactory progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in mathematics. Girls and boys and pupils in public care achieve equally well. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment achieve as well as those pupils with moderate learning difficulties because they receive good support during lessons. The achievement of those pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties is satisfactory rather than good because the systems to support them are not always effective. The attitudes of pupils and their personal development including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are **good**. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

¹ Design and technology covers work in textiles, food technology and resistant materials.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning is **good** overall. It is very good in science and design and technology. In personal, social and health education and citizenship, art, information and communication technology, religious education and English for Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. In these subjects teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and lessons are well planned. Teaching is satisfactory for pupils in mathematics and in English for Years 7, 8 and 9 but planning is not sufficiently developed to meet the differing needs of all pupils. Although teaching assistants work well with individual pupils and support their learning well, teachers do not often involve them in planning and this reduces their effectiveness in lessons. Assessment is satisfactory overall but teachers do not always record pupils' achievements and the needs of individual pupils are not identified effectively. The curriculum is good and has been developed well to ensure that pupils have a good range of learning opportunities. There is a particularly good focus on developing pupils' independent skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have very good opportunities to learn about the world of work. Although the animal husbandry unit (AHU) is used well in science and rural studies, it is not managed effectively to ensure that pupils can develop their vocational skills and gain formal recognition for their work through accreditation. The care, guidance and support for pupils is good. However, strategies are not effective in supporting pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. Links with parents are good whilst those with the community are very good. Links with other schools and colleges are good overall and very good for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher has very high expectations and has, in the short period of time he has been in post, brought about a number of effective changes. He is well supported by the senior management team. Governance is good. There is a committed group of governors who know their school well and they have ensured that statutory requirements are met. Subject leaders are beginning to take on more responsibilities and develop their roles but at present they have insufficient effect on improving the work of their subject colleagues. School improvement planning is adequate but it is not sufficiently linked to the school's budget to enable the school to plan for long term developments.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents overall are positive about the school. They recognise that the pupil population is changing and consider that the school is working hard to meet the needs of the more complex pupils. As parents they feel more involved in decision-making particularly in setting targets for their children and appreciate the support they get from the headteacher and his staff. Pupils also have positive views of the school. They enjoy school and like all the different activities, especially the residential trips.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve methods of assessment to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met in lessons.
- Continue with plans to develop the AHU into a more effective resource that will have more of an impact on pupils' learning and development.
- Improve strategies to enable staff to better manage those pupils with severe behavioural difficulties.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables pupils to achieve very well in science and design and technology.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal and social skills because of the importance placed on developing their independence skills.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in a range of examination courses but there are limited opportunities for pupils with complex needs to have their work formally recognised.
- Systems for analysing pupils' examination results are being developed well.
- Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are good throughout the school.
- Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties do not achieve as well as other pupils in the school.

Commentary

1. During their time in school those pupils with moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and hearing impairment achieve well overall. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make satisfactory progress. All pupils including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties make very good progress in science and design and technology. Teaching is very good in these subjects and ensures that the needs of all pupils are met well. Pupils also benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge in art, information and communication technology, and religious education and as a result they make good progress.
2. Overall pupils do well in their GCSEs and Entry level examinations achieving GCSE grades of E to G in English, mathematics, rural studies and science. Pupils achieve particularly well in English, design and technology, textiles and art and design. At entry level the majority of pupils gain passes, with 18 per cent achieving distinctions. Pupils are also entered for the National Skills Profile in mathematics, communication and ICT and achieve well. There have been no other accredited courses for those pupils with more complex needs. However, the school is in the process of starting an ASDAN course in order that these pupils can gain formal recognition of their work.
3. The absence of a pupil from the examination meant that the target for mathematics was not achieved but in all other subjects the school met its targets well. The head of Key Stage 4 has worked hard in analysing pupils' results. He has produced a good range of data that identifies the percentage points achieved by pupils, their attendance, SATs results and other useful information. However, this data is not yet being used effectively to develop systems that will improve further what the school does to increase pupils' achievements.
4. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English. Achievements are good in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is better suited to meeting the needs of the present range of special needs in these year groups. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory, rather than good, progress overall because not all teachers ensure that the needs of individual pupils are being met. All pupils regardless of their special needs make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers in all subjects encourage pupils to contribute their ideas during lessons and as a result pupils are confident communicators. Pupils' progress in reading is satisfactory throughout the school. There are good initiatives to develop their skills. These include individual support from teaching assistants and the use of symbols and pictures to encourage pupils such as those with autistic spectrum disorder to communicate and read. However, these have yet to have an impact on improving pupils' reading ages more effectively. Pupils make good progress

in Years 10 and 11 in writing and expressing their ideas. By the time they leave school most pupils can write in sentences and the most able write in detail. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills.

5. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory but work is not well matched to pupils' abilities. Although pupils only have one lesson a week in information and communication technology they make good progress because teachers in all subjects make good use of ICT and extend pupils' skills well. Pupils develop good personal and social skills because teaching is good and all staff, throughout the day, encourage pupils to develop their independence skills. Considerable importance is placed on developing pupils' skills and this is reflected in the timetabling of lessons which ensures that all pupils have good opportunities to learn about personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers.
6. The school is gradually developing strategies to enable the needs of all pupils to be met. A number of initiatives have been introduced including vertical class groupings which are enabling those pupils with more complex needs to achieve well. However the targets set for pupils with more challenging behaviour are not specific or clear enough to enable teachers to be effective in meeting these pupils' needs. Teachers do not always manage these pupils well and as a result pupils do not always stay in lessons and their rates of progress are reduced.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also **good**. Pupils' attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good attitudes to learning and good behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve well.
- Relationships in school are good.
- Pupils know and understand what is expected because there is a clear code of conduct.
- Strategies to deal with pupils with more challenging behaviour are not always effective.
- The school provides good opportunities for the study of other cultures.
- The poor attendance of a few pupils accounts for a high level of unauthorised absence.

Commentary

7. Pupils clearly enjoy school. They participate well lessons and in the many extra-curricular opportunities and activities that the school offers. Pupils are enthusiastic about the lunchtime clubs and off site activities. They were particularly keen to talk about the residential week they had just returned from which had obviously been good fun. Pupils' social skills and relationships are developed well because they are encouraged to work together. For example in physical education pupils support each other as part of a team whilst in drama pupils decide together which is the best idea for a play.
8. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Pupils play amicably together in the playground and overall behaviour in the classroom is good. The school has worked hard in establishing a whole school "code of behaviour" which effectively keeps most pupils on task and helps them settle down to work. However, staff do not always have enough guidance in supporting pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour. As a result these pupils are not always dealt with in a way that defuses and deals with the situation effectively. Pupils know right from wrong and respond well to the high expectations that staff have of them. The pupils themselves comment that other pupils are mostly well behaved and friendly. The school has a comprehensive system of reporting incidents of bullying and pupils report that these systems work well.

9. Exclusions have been used to effectively support the establishment of the school's code of conduct. Detailed records of exclusions are kept and this sanction is only used for very serious breaches of the school's code of conduct.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	131	11	0
Any other ethnic group	9	1	0

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

10. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and take on responsibilities. These include learning to be independent in the home through their time in the school's "flat" and taking responsibility for caring for the animals in the AHU. They help clear away after lunch and in the classroom. Older pupils have more responsibilities and are encouraged to become as independent as possible as they move up through the school. For example, older pupils volunteer to greet visitors and do this in a very friendly and polite manner.
11. Both the school's ethos and the planned curriculum promote good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the previous inspection, promotion of the pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness was judged to be satisfactory. The school is more successful in promoting these areas. They now ensure that pupils experience the traditions of a wide range of other cultures by bringing relevant visitors into the school. Spirituality is developed well through subjects such as art and music. Religious education in particular provides pupils with many effective opportunities to reflect and consider others' and their own beliefs.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11.4%	School data	3.8%
National data	8.2	National data	2.1

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

12. Attendance is satisfactory when taken as a whole. The school's attendance level is adversely affected by a small number of, usually older, pupils who do not want to come to school; they account for much of the unauthorised absence. The school is well supported by the educational welfare officer in working with these pupils. The level of authorised absence is also high, but much of this can be attributed to the various medical conditions of the pupils, which may, for example as last year, include a pupil who has a prolonged stay in hospital followed by a long recuperation period. Parents let the school know if their child is away; the school knows where there are concerns and takes the appropriate action. The pupils mostly arrive at school and classrooms on time, so lessons start promptly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** as is the curriculum. The care, support and welfare of pupils is **good**. Links with the community are **very good**. Links with other schools and colleges are **good** as are links with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** and the assessment of pupils is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to make lessons lively and interesting.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils' individual needs are effectively planned for in their lessons.
- Good use of resources develops pupils' skills well.
- Although teachers annotate pupils' work the quality of this is variable and pupils' achievements are not recorded on a regular basis.
- Teaching assistants contribute a great deal when working with individual pupils, however, teachers do not make best use of them in lessons.
- Homework is used to support work done in school but this is not consistent.
- The very good relationships and use of praise encourage pupils to try hard

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1(2 %)	12(25 %)	22(46 %)	13(27 %)			

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

13. In a number of subjects pupils benefit from teachers' very good subject knowledge and as a result they make good and often very good progress in these subjects. This is particularly evident in science and textiles where pupils' work is of a very high standard. Teaching is enthusiastic and pupils are encouraged to work independently. Teachers are confident in their own ability and as a result plan well, encouraging, for example pupils to come to their own conclusions when carrying out experiments in science. Teachers make lessons interesting and fun. This was very evident in a Year 10 English lesson revising the work on "Of Mice and Men" where the use of competitions such as "Who wants to be a millionaire?" make the lessons enjoyable whilst still ensuring that pupils are learning.
14. Resources are used well so that all pupils are able to achieve. ICT is used well by all staff to support learning and improve presentation. Many teachers make good use of the Internet, encouraging pupils to find out information for themselves. Work is made interesting through additional resources, catching pupils' imagination and enabling them to succeed. For example an animated lesson based around a teddy bear captivated Year 7 pupils and enabled them to think of a good range of descriptive words.
15. Teachers in subjects such as science, art and textiles plan for the needs of the pupils well. They ensure that work is matched to pupils' ability and that pupils achieve the goals set for them. In other subjects teachers rely on the teaching assistants to support those pupils who need help to complete the work. There is very limited evidence to show that work is adapted for less able pupils and at times these pupils sit in lessons waiting for help because they do not understand what is expected of them.
16. Teaching assistants are not always involved in planning with teachers and as a result they are not always clear about what is expected of them. When teaching assistants work with small groups and help pupils learn to read, they support pupils' learning well. However, not all teachers have developed sufficient flexibility in their planning to change from class work to group work to make better use of the teaching assistants. For example in a mathematics lesson Year 11

pupils were trying to understand the use of data. They were at different levels of understanding and although one pupil was able to work independently the rest needed support and would have benefited from being placed in groups rather than staff trying to help each one individually.

17. Teachers do not give homework on a regular basis. Where it is given pupils are proud to have completed it and are keen to have their hard work recognised. However, parents are unsure of the procedures and this makes it difficult for them to support pupils when they are given work to do at home. Opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to read at home and so improve their skills further.
18. Teachers know their pupils well. Because of this their questions are structured in such a way to check what pupils have understood and, where time allows at the end of the lesson, the plenary session is effective in confirming pupils' understanding. Praise is used well to encourage pupils and nearly all are confident to answer questions in class because they know their responses will be valued. The trusting relationships between staff and pupils ensures that the majority of pupils behave well and respond to staff. However, teachers do not always manage the behaviour of more challenging pupils effectively as they still expect them to respond in the same way as those with moderate learning difficulties. When pupils do not do as expected not all teachers have developed adequate strategies to deal with the situation.
19. The quality of teachers' assessments is satisfactory overall. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is generally good because of the established procedures for GCSE, Entry level, and the National Skills Profile. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. The school is beginning to use assessment data to analyse pupils' progress over time and to help individual pupils to improve, but this use of data is at an early stage. Pupils contribute to the annual review of their statement of special educational need, and in this way reflect on what they do well and where they could improve. In a few subjects such as religious education, pupils are encouraged to assess for themselves how well they are progressing. There are inconsistencies in the types of records that subject teachers make of their assessments. It is difficult to check how well pupils are progressing on a day-to-day basis because in subjects teachers do not record the marks pupils have achieved. There are also inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and levelling of work, and in the extent to which they annotate pupils' work.

The curriculum

The school plans a **good** breadth of learning and enrichment opportunities for pupils. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has worked hard to offer pupils a good range of subjects similar to mainstream schools.
- The programme for personal, social and health education is well planned and successfully contributes to pupils' personal development.
- A good range of activities helps to make learning interesting.
- Planning to meet the needs of pupils with sensory, physical, severe and complex learning needs is good.
- A number of interesting programmes have been introduced to enhance pupils' learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The accommodation has weaknesses that adversely affect learning.

Commentary

20. Pupils have good opportunities to study a range of subjects within Crowdys Hill. A number of subject options are in place to help make the timetables for pupils in Years 10 and 11 similar to those in mainstream schools. However, the amount of teaching time is short of that specified in national guidelines and one effect of this shortfall is that many lessons are rather short leaving little time for teachers to draw lessons to a satisfactory close. It also results in double lessons being timetabled either side of break and lunch times. Teachers have adjusted their planning to allow for this but at times pupils' learning is disrupted when they have to leave the work they are doing.
21. Pupils have access to a successful programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. Life skills are an important part of this programme for all pupils. Many activities are planned to promote these skills. As a result, pupils make good progress in developing their independence, mobility, personal care, communication and social skills. A relatively new initiative is the school council that is helping pupils to take responsibility and understand their duties as citizens. The school 'flat' and the animal husbandry unit are used effectively to promote pupils' social and personal development. Annual residential courses held in Wales and France enhance pupils' independence, personal and social skills.
22. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities including sport, music and the arts. The good range of visits and visitors to the school enhances the curriculum and extends pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy attending the variety of lunchtime clubs and the chance to participate in residential experiences.
23. The school plans well overall to meet the diverse learning needs of the pupils on roll. For example, pupils with hearing and visual impairment receive good support, as specified in their statements of special educational need. There are learning assistants skilled in signing for the deaf, and teachers make the necessary print enlargements for pupils with visual difficulties. The needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum and pupils with physical disabilities are also well met so that these pupils are able to achieve as well as their peers. Pupils who have difficulty communicating have good access to speech and language therapy.
24. Pupils are prepared very well for leaving school because of the way in which the programmes for Years 10 and 11 have been developed. There is a very good work related focus through the careers education and guidance programme, work experience placements, links with the community for pupils to experience community service, links with the national initiative 'Business Dynamics', and college courses. The range of externally accredited courses has recently been extended to improve opportunities for all pupils to leave school with certificates. ASDAN award, at bronze and silver challenge levels, has recently been introduced most effectively providing opportunity for pupils to gain certificates in work related learning, and in travel and tourism, for example. Pupils with significant learning difficulties now have the opportunity to attend college to study ASDAN 'Towards Independence'. Pupils also have the opportunity to gain GCSE and Entry level certificates and the National Skills Profile in communication, number and information and communication technology. Pupils can opt in Years 10 and 11 to take a GCSE examination in rural studies, or an Entry level examination in land-based skills, but there is no vocational skills course yet that is linked to the AHU.
25. There has been good improvement to the library and ICT suites. The medical room has been moved and is now more accessible. The resistant material room have been improved and there is a discrete room for art. However, there is a need to improve the disability access across the school. Many areas are inaccessible for non- ambulant pupils, staff or visitors. Although the school grounds are extensive there is a lack of play equipment available for pupils at breaks or lunch times. There is nowhere safe and secure for pupils to put their bags, books and property. The PE changing rooms are 100 metres from the school which means pupils have to cross the school yard and the car park to access the school hall for physical education after changing. The 'arrivals' area at the front of the school is unsatisfactory, as a small number of taxis enter

the school to pick up pupils and have to reverse while other pupils are leaving the school. This is an unacceptable practice.

26. Internally the school is well kept by the site manager and his staff. Classrooms and corridors are very effectively displayed with pupils' work indicating how staff value pupils' work. There is a good match of teaching staff to the curriculum. The number and match of teaching assistants is satisfactory. Learning resources are good in science, technology, ICT, art and personal, social and health education and citizenship. For other National Curriculum subjects they are satisfactory. Good use is made by the school of a wide range of visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures the health, welfare and safety of the pupils **well** overall. It provides them with **good** quality personal support, advice and guidance overall. Academic support is **satisfactory**. The school **effectively** takes the pupils' views into consideration.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good systems to ensure that pupils are well supported in their personal development.
- The school effectively ensures that the pupils are well cared for.
- Although pupils have targets to help improve their work, few of them know what these are.
- The pupils are given good opportunities to express their views.

Commentary

27. Staff know pupils very well and have a good understanding of their personal strengths and needs. Pupils say that there is always someone to turn to if they have concerns or worries and they know that they will be listened to. This helps them to feel secure and able to get on with their learning. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school and are themselves happy with the support and guidance provided. Support for pupils' achievements through the use of targets is not as effective. As yet the assessment information gathered on how the pupils are doing is not used as well as it could be to improve learning. The process of setting and using targets consistently by teachers is not yet routine. This is reflected in the fact that not all pupils know they have targets, and do not know what they are. Very good careers guidance is provided for the pupils that gives them the information they need to help them make choices about their future plans. Support from other outside agencies is good. Good and effective induction procedures are in place that help both the pupils and their parents to settle quickly into the routines of a new school.
28. The school has comprehensive child protection procedures and staff are made aware of them regularly, through for example, discussions at meetings. Other procedures to ensure health and welfare are good. First aid is carried out speedily and appliances, alarms and equipment are tested as required. Pupils with specific medical or personal needs are supported sensitively and sympathetically. The health and safety governor makes regular checks on the premises and pupils are well supervised throughout the school day.
29. Consultation with the pupils is enhanced by a newly introduced school council. The pupils speak of it enthusiastically and feel that it is a good way for them to express their views. They are confident to approach any members of staff, including the headteacher with any suggestions and these are always taken seriously. The pupils are involved in their annual reviews and this process helps them understand what they need to do to improve.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and its links with other schools and colleges are **good**. Links with the local community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works hard to develop good relationships with its parents; in turn they are supportive of the school and its work.
- The school uses the very good links with the local and wider community to enhance pupils' learning and experiences.
- The good links with the local schools and colleges enable the school to offer a good range of learning opportunities to its pupils.

Commentary

30. The school's good partnership with parents is demonstrated in the positive views expressed by them in both the inspection questionnaire and the school's own leavers' parents' questionnaire. Overall, parents are happy with the school. They consider it to be approachable, to set high expectations for their children and teach them well. They raised two concerns, one about homework, the other about information. The school is aware of the need to clarify and use the homework policy more consistently. The concern about the information provided was also raised in the previous report. Whilst the quality of reports is now satisfactory, parents are still not provided with information about what their children are studying. This makes it hard for them to support their children's learning. Parents do have the opportunity to request a home book to help overcome any communication difficulties.
31. The school makes full use of the local community to support pupils' learning. Pupils make visits, for example, to the local shops and supermarkets and into the community to interview people about, for example, their reasons for coming to Swindon. These activities all give them an awareness of their local area. The school enjoys the support of local businesses. For example, one helps through a reading mentor system and another helps with the upkeep of the animal husbandry unit. A local songwriter and an 'Artist in Residence' have given pupils exciting and tangible experiences that contribute well to their learning.
32. Links with other schools have been very productive. One particularly good link gave a pupil the opportunity to study GCSE Italian. Purposeful links are being built with other schools at senior levels and the headteacher plans to develop these further. College links are well established and the school and the Connexions service are fully informed about new initiatives and courses. This helps them to provide pupils with up to date information. College taster and link courses give those pupils who plan to continue in education good opportunities to decide where and what they would like to study.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides good leadership and has a very clear vision for the way he wants the school to develop. School governance is good. Management of the school is **satisfactory**.

- The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction for the school's work, based on a strong commitment to the raising of standards and high expectations for staff and pupils.
- The school improvement plan covers all aspects of the school but provides too little guidance on the actions for development and is not sufficiently linked to budget planning.
- Governors offer good support to the school.
- The role of subject co-ordinators has improved since the previous inspection but does not include the checking of teaching and learning in their subjects and throughout the school.
- There is a very well organised staff development programme which is beginning to have an impact on improving teaching.

33. Since his appointment in September 2003, the headteacher has worked hard to increase the effectiveness of the school. He has created a positive climate for change, motivating staff, gaining the confidence of parents and securing the commitment of all to school improvement. He is supported well by the deputy headteacher who manages developments well within subject areas and in ensuring day-to-day systems operate smoothly. A senior leadership structure has been established with senior managers who make a significant contribution to the development of a positive climate for learning. However, their effectiveness is hampered by their substantial teaching commitments.
34. The management of the school is satisfactory. The subject leaders' role is not yet fully developed though they have made good attempts to lead and manage in each of their subjects. Opportunities for subject leaders to monitor teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility or to work more effectively across the school by sharing teaching skills have yet to be planned. The impact of this is reflected in the need for further development of skills and the sharing of good practice to meet the broadening range of complex difficulties of the pupils coming into the school.
35. The headteacher has established, in consultation with staff and governors, a school improvement plan that identifies priorities for development and targets agreed for staff as an outcome of their performance reviews. Although the headteacher has a clear vision for the way forward, this is not always reflected in the current improvement plan which is only for one year, dealing with immediate priorities. Many of the actions lack detail to support the implementation and monitoring of the targets and the developments are not consistently evaluated in terms of costs.
36. There is a significant commitment to all staff developing their expertise and the good results of this are evident amongst the strengths seen in teaching. The system of performance management is effectively linked with opportunities for continuing professional development and training which is well targeted to support priorities.
37. The observation of teaching by the head and deputy and the sampling of teachers' work have also given an increasingly clear picture of strengths and weaknesses. A computer based system has been purchased to monitor the progress of pupils in subjects and to aid target setting. This is a good development and will assist in judging the effectiveness of provision for pupils with particular needs such as those on the autistic spectrum or with medical conditions.
38. Governors are committed to the success of the school and are closely involved in its work. Duties are carried out with efficiency and the close attention given to responsibilities ensures that statutory requirements are being met. The governors play a real role in decision making and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have ensured that the issues from the previous inspection have been mostly dealt with. They are well informed through a variety of means. There has been extensive first hand monitoring by a number of governors and staff attend governors' meetings to inform them about their subject responsibilities or specific initiatives. Through a process of identifying their own strengths and weaknesses governors participate in relevant training programmes and attend meetings in school, for example, on identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to identify priorities. This builds their knowledge base further.
39. Financial planning is satisfactory. Subject co-ordinators have carried out audits of their subjects and have used this information to make bids for resources which are included within their action plans. The balance carry forward from March 2004 was substantially higher than it should normally be because of the significant amount placed in contingency for the incoming headteacher. The large carry forward budget is reducing and projected to be significantly lower in March 2005 as the impact of reduced pupil numbers and a new system for allocating funds to schools takes effect. However, the headteacher and governors have taken effective steps in minimising this in their recent discussions with the local education authority about funding. The budget is well managed by administration staff and overseen by senior management. The

governors regularly monitor projected spending against actual spend and are given accurate information about the budget. Overall, the leadership and management of the school have made good progress since the previous inspection and it is positioned well for still further improvement. In the light of the pupils' good achievement and the good quality of education, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1459228	Balance from previous year	126681
Total expenditure	1458725	Balance carried forward to the next	127184
Expenditure per pupil	9117		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work related learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work related learning, and careers education and guidance, are very well planned and being continually developed.
- Pupils learn very well about the world of work through work experience and through an extensive and well established careers education and guidance programme.
- Leadership and management of work related learning and careers education and guidance are very good.
- The subject leader has rightly identified that the animal husbandry unit could be better used as a resource to support work related learning.

Commentary

40. The new statutory requirements for work related learning in Years 10 and 11, and for careers education and guidance from Year 7, are in place. The programmes for work related learning, and for careers education and guidance, are carefully tailored to meet individual learning needs. There are very good links with colleges, training workshops, local employers and businesses, and with the local community, to support work related learning. Programmes are dynamic and continue to evolve because of the enthusiasm and dedication of the subject leader.
41. In Year 11, pupils have two week work experience placements in, for example, supermarkets and shops, restaurants, homes for the elderly and playgroups. Pupils are prepared well before starting, and have plenty of opportunity to discuss their experiences on their return to school. Pupils also embark on fifteen hours of community service. Those with more severe learning difficulties have sheltered work experience at training centres. They learn, for example, office and warehousing skills. Through carefully negotiated college placements, pupils with moderate learning difficulties have the opportunity to develop skills such as hairdressing, painting and decorating and car mechanics. Pupils with more severe learning difficulties improve their independence skills at college through the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' programme.
42. The school meets the new requirement to provide careers education and guidance from Year 7. This aspect is well taught. It makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning about the world of work, and about education, training and work possibilities after leaving school. Pupils make good

use of computer programmes, well matched to their learning needs, to help them make choices about job possibilities. Pupils also use computers to find out about jobs available in the locality, for example, as part of the school's citizenship programme. Through work related learning, careers education and guidance, and independence training, pupils are prepared very well for leaving school. The school has very good links with the Connexions service to provide pupils with personal advice and support from Year 7. A personal adviser from Connexions attends the Annual Reviews of pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs from Year 9. The service also provides teachers with valuable support on the teaching of careers education.

43. The subject leader is very forward looking and creative in generating ideas for new developments to improve the school's provision for work related learning. Recent developments include involvement in the national 'Business Dynamics' project, where the school links with businesses in the community for enterprise activities. The school is also working very well towards accreditation for its programme and management of careers education and guidance. The introduction of ASDAN bronze award and silver challenge last summer is a good development to provide all pupils in Years 10 and 11 with opportunity to gain externally accredited certificates for the skills they develop through the work related learning programme.
44. The animal husbandry unit is a very good resource but as yet this is not being used to its full potential. The subject leader for work related learning is planning to make better use of this facility, in conjunction with other staff, to develop an accredited vocational course for land-based skills.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Seven lessons were seen in English. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers and pupils. In French only one lesson was seen and there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about provision in French.

Modern Foreign Language (French)

45. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have one French lesson a week. In that time they learn, practise and repeat simple vocabulary, for example, greetings, food and drink, shopping, and visiting a café. At the end of Year 9 pupils travel to France for a residential visit. This event gives pupils a valuable opportunity to hear authentic French spoken and practise their French skills. The residential visit also makes an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
46. There is no specialist teaching but pupils become accustomed to hearing the French language because an adequate amount of French is spoken by the staff. Pupils are motivated to speak and read the names of fruit and vegetables in French. Their listening and repeating skills are better developed than their reading and speaking skills. The subject leader is keeping a record of the achievements of all the pupils, but has not set targets for individual pupils in order to ensure that each pupil makes progress. It is difficult, therefore, to monitor whether the achievements of individual pupils over time are better, the same, or worse than expected.
47. The school ensures that requirements for the new national 'entitlement curriculum' in Years 10 and 11 are being met. One boy requested an Italian course. In order for this pupil to complete a GCSE course in Italian, the school arranged for him to study at a local comprehensive school. The partnership was successful, and the pupil achieved well, gaining GCSE Grade A at the end of Year 10.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of accreditation ensures that most pupils leave school with passes in nationally recognised examinations.
- Pupils have the confidence to contribute to lessons and achieve well in speaking and listening.
- New initiatives have been introduced to develop pupils' reading skills at a faster rate.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and as a result lessons are interesting.
- Not all teachers ensure that the different special needs of all pupils are met in their lessons.
- Resources are good and used effectively particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' work is marked by teachers but pupils are not given sufficient information to know how well they are achieving.
- There have been good developments in the subject but insufficient support has been given to those teachers who are less experienced at teaching English.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They gain passes in GCSEs at E and F level. At Entry level and in National Skills Profile tests pupils achieve passes with many getting higher level grades at Entry level. However, the school has recognised that the range of accreditation does not meet the needs of those pupils with more complex difficulties and is introducing the ASDAN course. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills. There

has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Although at that time achievements were judged to be good the school has done a considerable amount of work to improve resources and this is beginning to have an impact on improving standards.

49. Teachers in all subjects encourage pupils to contribute to discussions and, because their responses are valued, pupils are keen to put forward their ideas. In English because teachers know their pupils well they ensure that the questions asked are matched to pupils' abilities and enable pupils to be involved in discussions. Pupils are confident communicators and enjoy the opportunities they are given to put forward their ideas. In a few lessons boys sometimes dominate conversations but teachers are quick to recognise this, and ensure that girls also have chances to answer. This was the case in a Year 9 lesson when the boys were answering all the questions about the poem "The Highwayman" and the teacher, recognising this, directed her questions to the girls. As yet there is not much use of objects of reference to help pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to communicate, although staff have developed appropriate signing skills for use with profoundly deaf pupils.
50. The school has collected a range of data that shows that the majority of pupils improve their reading ages over the time they are in school. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in improving their reading the school has recognised the need to develop its system for improving pupils' reading. A number of initiatives have been introduced including a commercial scheme led by classroom assistants, ICT programmes and the development of symbols and signs. There is an over reliance on the present reading scheme which does not meet the needs of pupils with more complex difficulties. In Year 7 though, a member of staff is using a new reading scheme which is designed to better meet the needs of the pupils who have very limited reading skills. Pupils clearly enjoy the books they read. Year 10 pupils show a very good understanding of the characters Lennie and George in "Of Mice and Men" and the events in the first few chapters. Pupils have good opportunities to study poetry and comment on the work of Michael Rosen and Benjamin Zephaniah.
51. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory progress in developing their writing skills. Pupils are encouraged to write stories and respond to questions. More able pupils write imaginative descriptions for example about the "banana bird" and older pupils write horror stories about the plant that ate their teacher. However, spelling is a weakness and although pupils initially remember how to spell words they do not correct their work when they make mistakes. Pupils make good progress in writing in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils have a good grasp of punctuation and grammar and know when to use full stops, capitals and speech marks.
52. Pupils in the vertical group make satisfactory progress overall. They benefit from a great deal of support and the teacher is confident in teaching such a range of abilities in one class. However, the size of the group and layout of the desks means that pupils do not have opportunities to work together in groups with more focused support by teaching assistants, and this reduces the progress they make.
53. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good for pupils in Years 10 and 11 because it is better matched to meet the special needs of these pupils and satisfactory for those in Years 7, 8 and 9. There are many strengths in teaching not least the enthusiasm teachers have for their subject and lively teaching methods. Lessons are made enjoyable with the use of games and competitions and humour ensures that most pupils stay on task well. This was very evident in a Year 10 lesson when pupils were expected to make a statement and they would lose points if they started with "um". When one boy had a real problem with this, the teacher handled the situation very well and despite the boy's own frustration he finally achieved his target. Teaching is particularly good for the least able pupils in Year 7. The teacher has recognised that there is a need for work to be more suitably matched to the needs of this group and has introduced new reading books and effective teaching methods. In a lesson with this group very good progress was made in developing their understanding of descriptive words through the use of good resources which captured pupils' imagination and kept them involved for the whole lesson.

54. The main weakness in teaching is the fact that not all teachers plan sufficiently well to ensure that the different needs of pupils are met. This was evident in a number of lessons and the work that pupils have done. Evidence shows that pupils are expected to respond to the tasks set regardless of their ability. For example a Year 7 pupil with a very low reading age was expected to write a story called "my naughty parents". The pupil had a great deal of support from a teaching assistant. However, it was clear that the pupil struggled with the task and would have benefited from a more structured piece of work linked to his ability. On a small number of occasions the pace of lessons is slow and uninteresting. This was the case in a Year 11 lesson when pupils with more challenging behaviour react and are not managed effectively. As a result they refuse to contribute to the lesson or they leave the class.
55. Assessment of the progress pupils make is satisfactory. It is better in Years 10 and 11 where teachers meet the requirements of the examination courses pupils are undertaking. In years 7, 8 and 9 teachers moderate a piece of each pupil's writing once every half term in order to assess the level they are working at and what their target should be. Pupils' work is corrected by teachers who make helpful comments at the end. However, there is not always sufficient detail about how much support the pupil has had or how the work can be improved. There is no recording of pupils' achievements other than once every half term and no records maintained of the grades they have achieved during the year.
56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is a subject specialist who has used her expertise well to ensure that the range of reading books is good. There is an awareness of the need to ensure that teaching better meets the needs of all pupils and new initiatives go some way to supporting this. However, there has not been sufficient monitoring or support of non-specialist staff and good practice is not shared. Although staff have looked at the data concerning pupils' reading ages there has not been any clear analysis of why some pupils make good progress whilst others make none.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. There is satisfactory provision in developing pupils' language and literacy. Teachers make good use of key words such as in mathematics and ICT and display them for pupils to see. There are appropriate expectations that pupils will use relevant vocabulary in their responses, for example "key board", "font", "text". Worksheets are used in a number of subjects but in the majority of cases there is an expectation that pupils will write detailed responses and as a result pupils develop confidence in putting pen to paper.

MATHEMATICS

Five lessons were observed, pupils' books and displays of work were scrutinised, planning and other documents were examined and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinators.

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics.
- The level of challenge in lessons does not always meet the range of needs and abilities of all pupils in a group.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always help them to see what they have to do to improve their work.
- The subject co-ordinators do not monitor teaching and learning sufficiently well.

Commentary

58. Standards of achievement and progress in mathematics are satisfactory overall. This is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. The majority of pupils are interested and enthusiastic and they work conscientiously in lessons. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of a range of skills including basic number skills and knowledge of the properties of various shapes. Pupils have regular opportunities to consolidate their learning of adding, subtraction, multiplication and division although at times there is an over reliance on worksheets. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop their skills, solving problems involving perimeters and distance. They can identify different angles using the correct language such as obtuse and acute. Pupils stay on task well even when faced with tasks they find difficult such as statistics although at times they are over reliant on the support of staff rather than trying themselves.
59. The quality of teaching throughout the school is at least satisfactory. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in managing and motivating pupils. Elements from the National Numeracy Strategy have been implemented well throughout the school. In practical mathematics lessons emphasis is placed on applying the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in practical situations, and on the completion of the required coursework for the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Teachers check that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and ensure that pupils understand key words that are used. Activities to start each session help pupils to improve their accuracy in mental arithmetic. For example, in a good Year 9 lesson the teacher delivered a well-paced introduction with clear questioning that ensured that all pupils were learning effectively. However, the marking of pupils' work is not always effective. Comments made in pupils' books indicate how hard they have worked but give no indication as to how they can achieve more. At times work is not challenging and those pupils who have behavioural difficulties react negatively to this. Not all teachers are confident in dealing with challenging behaviour and do not manage these situations well. For example in a Year 8 lesson a pupil exhibiting challenging behaviour completed the task set and received a merit but this was only half way through the lesson and the teacher had to work hard to encourage the pupil to do any more work.
60. In Years 7 to 9 teachers base their planning on the National Numeracy Strategy yearly programmes. Years 10 and 11 work on the syllabus requirements for the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Pupils' progress is reviewed each term and at the end of the year when progress is recorded against National Curriculum levels. However, the use of data to track individual progress over time is under-developed. Assessment is not carried out in sufficient detail to enable teachers to ensure that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged and lower attaining pupils are able to complete work without extensive support.
61. The mathematics co-ordinators have provided satisfactory leadership. They have monitored the planning of work throughout the school. However, there has been no checking of teaching and learning and good practice is not shared. Resources are satisfactory overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Although there are good examples of mathematics skills being developed across the curriculum, opportunities for pupils to apply and reinforce numeracy skills in lessons in other subjects are satisfactory. In geography pupils use bar charts and line graphs to indicate rainfall and temperature measurements. However, opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are not routinely featured in the plans and lessons of subjects.

SCIENCE

Eight science lessons were seen during the inspection. Additional evidence was obtained from planning documents, classroom records, samples of pupils' work and discussions held with staff and pupils.

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm contribute well to the very high quality of teaching.
- High expectations and detailed lesson planning enable all pupils to achieve very well.
- The subject is very well managed.

Commentary

63. Pupils make very good progress because they are taught very well and encouraged to investigate and ask questions. They understand that science investigation is based on experimentation and also the value of testing out hypotheses. By Year 9 most pupils understand that copper and iron rods go orange and red when heated and the reasons why metals are used as cooking pots. Higher attaining pupils become more familiar with technical terms and scientific principles. They are aware that metals have a high melting point and that it takes a lot of energy to melt metal. All pupils reinforce their understanding of the topic by selecting answers from a relevant computer based quiz which are printed for them to keep as a record. In Year 11 pupils follow a nationally published programme leading to a recognised award and GCSE. In 2003, 30 pupils gained Entry Level Certificates and the success of 6 pupils in GCSE science also reflects their very good achievement.
64. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and this enables them to provide interesting experiments and enable pupils to be inquisitive and ask questions knowing that staff will have the answers. Support staff understand when their skills are needed and they ensure that all make progress. Relevant materials are readily available and good use is made of models, for example the different component parts of an eye, to reinforce information and newly acquired knowledge. Teachers are good at enabling pupils to arrive at correct answers without actually giving them the answers. This helps the pupils to learn the facts, and also to develop their learning skills. All topics are supported by a good range of centrally held resources and by the use of well matched video and computer programmes. Good relationships mixed with humour ensure that pupils' attention and interest are maintained and they are keen to tell what they know.
65. Good quality planning ensures that the science curriculum is adapted successfully, so that it is accessible to pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. Lessons build on previous learning in order that pupils link earlier work to the current topic. At the end of most lessons there is an effective assessment of what has been learned that builds a clear picture of the progress each pupil has made.
66. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject is managed well by two teachers who are experienced subject specialists. They have ensured that the subject has been developed and improved well since the last inspection when standards were judged to be good. Longer term planning is good and shows how concepts are introduced, developed and consolidated across the five school years. A recent audit of the subject outlines plans for further improvements which are very appropriate. The accommodation and resources are good, contributing significantly to what is taught and how it is taught.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Judgements are based on three lessons seen, scrutiny of the work previously undertaken by pupils and the records of the ICT co-ordinator. The use of ICT in the teaching of other subjects was also considered.

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good quality leadership and management have improved learning opportunities for pupils.
- The amount of time allocated for pupils to have lessons specifically for ICT is low.
- Good accommodation and resources provide a good learning environment.
- The use of ICT in the teaching of other subjects is good.

Commentary

67. Pupils' achievement is good in ICT. In the previous inspection, progress in ICT was judged to be unsatisfactory; therefore the rate of improvement has been very good. This is because the subject is very well led and managed and the school has prioritised development in accommodation and resources. Staff have all completed the training supplied by the New Opportunities Fund and they are more confident in using computers to support pupils' learning in their lessons. As a result, despite the fact that pupils only have one 35 minute lesson a week for ICT, pupils make good progress because of the range of opportunities provided in other subjects to develop their skills. However, the amount of curriculum time allocated to specific ICT is insufficient to enable pupils to make better progress in their skills. By Year 9, pupils can reliably log-on at their computer and enter, save and retrieve their work. Older pupils use ICT to generate, develop, organise and present their coursework for the Certificate of Educational Achievement.
68. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good. Teachers plan lessons well and provide varied tasks, so that pupils show interest and work productively. They use a range of teaching styles and are secure in their knowledge of the subject. Records of work show that, over time, in each year group pupils increase the range of their understanding of information and communications technology, and in particular, their competence in using computers. However, to meet the pupils' wide range of learning needs target setting and assessment needs to be on a more individual basis.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. The ICT co-ordinator is very successful at monitoring and encouraging the use of ICT in the teaching of other subjects and in supporting other teachers and assistants as they acquire new skills in these areas. As a result, ICT is used well in other lessons. For example, in a very good Year 10 citizenship lesson pupils were able to access the Internet and look up what qualifications are required for a variety of professions.

HUMANITIES

Three full lessons and one part lesson were observed in religious education. Pupils' written work was analysed. There were discussions with the subject leader. Only one lesson was seen in each of history and geography and not enough evidence was collected to make an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. However pupils' books were examined and discussions held with staff and pupils.

History

70. History is offered to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils gain historical knowledge beyond their living memories through the study of the Romans, the Medieval Period, the Tudors, the English Civil War, and Britain in 1750-1900, the two world wars, and study of Native American Indians. Pupils develop the skills of using a range of source materials to find out about the past, for example, newspapers, photographs, books and film. Pupils clearly distinguish between past and present. By using time lines, about their own lives, for example, they demonstrate this sense of chronology.
71. Resources are used well and capture pupils' interest effectively. In the lesson observed the pupils learnt about life in Tudor England. They showed an understanding that four hundred years ago events were chronicled not by television and photographs but by paintings and scrolls, for example. A video of the National Portrait Gallery was used most effectively to help pupils recognise different sections of a portrait of Sir Henry Unton. Dramatic reconstructions on the video enabled pupils to see what life was like in Tudor England, prompting them to ask questions.
72. Too many worksheets are used in history lessons. They are difficult for pupils to read. The same worksheets appear to be used for all pupils in a class, irrespective of their various learning needs and provide very little opportunity for pupils to do their own extended writing. The small amount of written work that pupils complete is checked regularly, but there is not enough annotation to indicate how much help a pupil has received.

Geography

73. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop their knowledge of the local environment. They make observations about the physical and human features of the environment, developing their awareness of environments beyond their immediate surroundings. Pupils learn, for example, about places in England, France, Africa, North and South America, and Antarctica. In their studies of the National Parks in England, they show an understanding of how tourists can affect the environment. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 identify the different types of houses present in their local environment. They are beginning to understand the meaning of words like bungalow, flat, cottage, and detached and semi-detached houses. By Year 8 pupils compare their lives with those of children in Kenya. Pupils make good use of photographs, maps and charts to help them in their studies but only occasionally use their number skills, for example, when finding information from bar charts and line graphs about rainfall and temperature in Kenya. Pupils use geographical vocabulary through their studies of places, weather, rocks, and coastal erosion. Extensive use is made of worksheets that provide limited opportunity for pupils to engage in much writing. Work sheets are, however, suitably adapted for pupils who have difficulty reading and seeing.
74. Support staff are used well for example in Years 7 and 8 one teaching assistant used her signing skills very effectively to enable pupils with hearing impairment to have as good an opportunity as other pupils to complete the tasks. Pupils with challenging behaviour completed their tasks without fuss because teaching and support staff managed these pupils effectively. There are not enough three-dimensional resources though to support the learning of this group of pupils.
75. The school is meeting its new legal requirement to provide a humanities course for pupils opting for this area of study in Years 10 and 11. A group of pupils has chosen to study Travel and Tourism. This is a course that leads to an external qualification at Entry level and through ASDAN. In Year 11, for example, pupils are developing their interviewing skills. By interviewing shopkeepers and members of the public, they have produced a pack of information about a local town as a tourist destination. Pupils have carried out interviews at a local rail and bus station about their journeys. They have visited a tourist information centre and local parks and museums to find out about tourist attractions. Through this course pupils extend their

understanding about the impact of people visiting tourist areas. The Travel and Tourism course not only develops pupils' geographical skills but also makes a good contribution to the development of their personal and social skills.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress, first by learning about different faiths then, as they get older, learning to discuss increasingly challenging moral and social issues.
- Pupils are interested in their work and are prepared to discuss sensitive and difficult ideas in a mature and sensible way.
- The subject leader's specialist knowledge and enthusiasm ensures that pupils learn well.
- The assessment of pupils' achievements who have complex learning difficulties is better than the assessment of how well pupils with more moderate learning difficulties have improved.

Commentary

76. Pupils achieve well in all years because they have a knowledgeable teacher who is enthusiastic and motivates them to learn; the content of lessons is interesting; and difficult behaviour is managed effectively. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
77. The youngest pupils learn mainly about the traditions and ceremonies of Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. They begin to develop their skills in learning to reflect and value spiritual occasions. For example, in Year 7, although pupils did find it challenging, they succeeded in focussing quietly on a lighted candle in their darkened classroom, listening to music, and reflecting on why candles are used in churches. One boy recalled how a candle was lit when his grandmother died. Another boy said that lighted candles 'lift your spirits'. As pupils get older they are increasingly challenged to reflect on and talk about difficult moral and social issues. In Year 8, whilst studying the work of Mother Teresa, pupils learn the value of helping people who suffer. They consider the meaning of forgiveness and repentance. In Year 9, pupils learn well about justice and fairness, discrimination and prejudice, about helping the homeless, arranged marriages, and about death and burial. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils achieved a good understanding about how crime not only affects individuals but also society. The oldest pupils also discuss the sanctity of life, and present arguments for and against abortion, suicide and euthanasia. They talk about greed, selfishness, helping others and the work of charities like 'Christian Aid'. However, no pupils are entered for an examination at the end of Year 11, so their good achievements are not recognised through public examination.
78. Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons and keen to offer their views. They are mature and sensible in group discussion about crime and punishment, in Year 11, for example, and in Year 8, when discussing the importance of caring for the environment. In a Year 9 lesson on Judaism, a well-chosen video generates much thoughtful discussion about the Brit Milah baptism ceremony for baby boys. The high quality of the pupils' responses to increasingly challenging issues results from their interest in the subject and good quality teaching.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in all years. All pupils benefit from enthusiastic, specialist, up to date teaching. The teacher is not afraid to introduce controversial topics to encourage pupils to engage in mature discussion to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Resources are particularly well chosen to stimulate discussion. The quality of questioning, and the verbal support that pupils receive in lessons, meet pupils' varied learning needs well, but tasks on worksheets are not always adapted well enough for pupils with the most learning difficulties. Assessment is satisfactory. There is a procedure for pupils to assess for themselves how well they are achieving and this is a good

development. Pupils' communication skills, and their contribution to group work are also assessed effectively. A nationally recognised scale, known as 'P' levels, is used to record the achievement of pupils with the greatest learning difficulties. There is no procedure, however, to assess the progress of average and higher attaining pupils. This is because assessment levels, equivalent to National Curriculum attainment levels 1, 2 and 3, have not been produced. The progress, therefore, made by these pupils from year to year, cannot be checked effectively.

80. Leadership and management is good because the subject leader has a clear vision of what needs to be done, there is an achievable plan of action, the learning programme is well planned, based on the locally agreed syllabus, and the subject leader keeps up to date with new developments.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Two lessons were seen in art and design. Additional evidence was obtained from discussions with pupils as well as a scrutiny of their work in files and on display. One music lesson and two drama lessons were observed. Videos of pupils' performances were looked at and discussions held with staff and pupils. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in music or drama.

Drama

81. There is an expectation that all pupils will develop their skills in drama and the subject is well organised to enable teachers to teach a range of skills. Work supports English well for example pupils re-enact a market scene from Romeo and Juliet.
82. Pupils, regardless of their ability, gain confidence in working together in groups. For example when deciding upon a drama project they consider everyone's ideas before voting for the project they will work on together. Higher attaining pupils recall phrases such as "paper location" and pupils understand the idea of a plot in a drama, for example a murder in a village. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and benefit from enthusiastic teaching. They are creative and contribute their ideas for example suggesting what the story would be behind certain newspaper headlines. Warm-up time is used well to focus the pupils and through good questioning pupils are able to recall the work they have done from the previous lesson. Pupils are managed well because there are very high expectations of their behaviour. Teaching staff are used well to work with pupils.

Music

83. Pupils clearly enjoy music. In Year 9 they enthusiastically sing songs they know, listen to new ones and break into small groups to write 'rap'. Pupils showed good attitudes to music and enjoyed their work. They were keen to write and even keener to perform their 'rap' to their peers. In performances such as the music festival and Christmas play pupils are confident to sing in front of an audience. They sing in tune and clearly enjoy themselves. Analysis of music work, discussion with the co-ordinator, discussion with pupils, reports to parents and records show that pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Good photographic records are kept of pupils' achievements in music. Many of these are mounted in the hall to make an attractive display of pupils' work.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject knowledge and enthusiastic teaching results in pupils of all abilities achieving well.
- There is a good range of resources available to pupils.
- The good quality relationships pupils have with the teacher impacts positively on their learning.

Commentary

84. Art and design are taught well by an enthusiastic teacher with imagination and flair who motivates pupils to have confidence in themselves. This enables pupils of all capabilities to make good progress with resultant high achievement. In Years 7 to 9 pupils experience and experiment with colour, shape, form, space and pattern and to explore different processes and materials. Pupils achieve well and have good opportunities to paint on tiles, work with clay and use the Internet to research their ideas. The school has maintained its standards since the last inspection.
85. The highest attaining pupils achieve standards similar to those expected in mainstream schools and achieve well at GCSE. The good quality of work displayed around the school illustrates the wide range of work undertaken by the pupils. After studying the work of a variety of established artists, such as Picasso and Georgia O'Keefe, pupils experiment and develop their own ways of working in similar styles. Pupils confidently work in two-dimensional and three-dimensional form, for example with paint, plaster and textiles, and are currently making impressive wall hangings from their own designs.
86. Teaching and learning are consistently good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and matches it appropriately to the needs of pupils. Pupils learn to work independently and how to take their ideas to a higher level. What happens in lessons is planned well and effective opportunities are often provided for promoting pupils' competencies in the use of information and communication technology. Well planned visits, for example, to the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums add interest to topics on shoes and African masks and contribute positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships with staff and between pupils are good. They contribute to pupils' interest, enjoyment and motivation to achieve and in what they and each other create.
87. The leadership and management of art are good. The curriculum is sharply focused on what is best for pupils to learn in order to achieve well and good assessment procedures keep close track of their progress. Resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory though the room is cramped when there are large numbers of pupils which limits the range of activities available.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (INCLUDING FOOD TECHNOLOGY AND TEXTILES)

Five lessons were seen. Discussions were held with pupils as well as a scrutiny of their work in files and on display. Discussions were also held with the co-ordinator and staff. Additional evidence was obtained from teachers' planning documents and records. A range of work was seen in design and technology, food technology and textiles.

Provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning ensure that pupils achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed and consolidated very well.
- Opportunities are taken to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and enhance their personal and social development.
- The coordinator's insistence on high standards ensures that pupils achieve well.

Commentary

88. There have been very good improvements in design and technology since the last inspection. At that time aspects of resistant materials, design and technology were deemed to be unsatisfactory. All aspects of technology are now very good. Teaching and learning are consistently very good, as a result of lessons being well prepared and planned. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils for their work and behaviour. Because of very good relationships in classes, pupils respond very positively, work hard and behave very well. By Year 11 many achieve the Welsh Board GCSE or Entry Level accreditation.
89. By Year 9 pupils have developed a good understanding of the health and safety requirements of working in a workshop. They are able to plan their ideas and design outlines of stencils. By Year 11 pupils know how to measure in metres and millimetres to make joints and use the computer to illustrate different types of joint. Pupils work well together to measure the resistant materials room, record their measurement and draw a plan view of the room. In textiles, pupils produce very high quality cushions and wall hangings. They select their own designs and choose materials to match their ideas. Pupils show great pride in their work and are keen to discuss their work confidently with visitors. In food technology Year 7 pupils, show good awareness of hygiene and health and safety as well as preparation skills. Pupils respond well and improve their skills preparing drinks and a snack safely and tidying away after themselves. Support assistants work well with the pupils, for example, supporting two pupils who needed signing to complement their communication and one delicate pupil who needed extra help and support throughout the lesson. This extra support was given unobtrusively without pupils being aware of the extra support they needed. As a result of this support, pupils with additional educational needs made as good progress as their peers.
90. Within lessons, staff take every opportunity to enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of ways. Pupils read work sheets prepared at an appropriate level. They use their number skills in all lessons, measuring, weighing, counting, timing, looking for shapes and designs. ICT is used effectively by pupils searching the Internet when researching topics, such as 'logos'. Design and technology makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
91. The subject is very well led and managed. The staff's enthusiasm and insistence on high standards ensures that pupils achieve well. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils achieve at least one external accreditation.

Physical Education

One lesson was seen. Judgements on physical education were not made because insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection.

92. Lessons are well planned to ensure that all pupils participated as much as possible. In the lesson seen less able pupils are developing their ball control skills using small balls and a large parachute. The more able pupils develop their football skills well. Because of good relationships in classes, pupils respond well and enjoy their lessons. Lessons are organised effectively so that staff are used well. For example in swimming Year 7 pupils are divided into three ability groups. This ensures each pupil works at their own level. Good use of praise and encouragement enhances pupils' confidence and ensures that all pupils succeed. Pupils improve their social and personal skills by undressing and dressing at the end of the lesson as independently as possible. The school has good links with outside clubs including Swindon football club. Pupils participate in local competitions in football and basketball. A good range of activities is offered to all pupils. Extra curriculum activities, such as cross country competitions and the Millennium Youth Games enhance the physical opportunities of pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHECZ)

Six discrete lessons were seen across the school. A variety of other lessons and activities were observed and contributed to the judgements made. Discussion were held with the co-ordinator and pupils about their work.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for PSHECZ permeates all the work of the school and is supported well by very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The planned programme is very broad and is supported very well by initiatives such as the animal husbandry unit, the school flat and the introduction of the school council.
- The subject is well led and managed, and as a result, pupils' achievement is good.

Commentary

93. Pupils' individual needs are very well planned for and met. Very good opportunities are provided during the day to promote pupils' independence, social and personal development. As a result pupils' achievement in personal and social development and in their awareness of the important concepts of citizenship are good. This is good improvement since the last inspection.
94. The gains pupils make in the lessons in personal, social and health education and citizenship are supported very well over the school day, but especially through innovative opportunities offered in the animal husbandry unit and the school flat and reinforced through assemblies, lunch times and the extra activities offered as lunch clubs. The very good relationships between staff and pupils make a powerful base from which advice, guidance and encouragement are offered. By the end of Year 11, pupils are offered a very wide range of extra opportunities to develop their social, personal and independence skills such as child care, life skills, and travel and tourism. Lessons in other subjects help reinforce learning in the planned programme very well. For example, lessons in religious education provide additional information on citizenship when studying the effects of crime and punishment. Physical education lessons reinforce the need for hygiene and improve pupils' ability to dress and undress independently.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good; as a result, pupils make good progress in developing their personal and social skills in understanding issues to do with society, health and safety. The work experience programme provides good support for the planned programme. The school council is relatively new, but provides an opportunity to be involved in discussion and debate leading to decision making.
96. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well. She has audited the subject and as a result, improved the programme by ensuring that Year 10 and 11 pupils have a good range of discrete PSHE lessons, citizenship lessons and careers lessons. This has had a positive impact on the achievement of pupils. Assessment is satisfactory and is linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. However, the co-ordinator has identified the need to introduce a new commercial assessment programme which will give more accurate detail of pupils' achievement and will be linked to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons throughout the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

*Inspection judgement**Grade*

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
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	3
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.