

INSPECTION REPORT

Exeter House Special School

Salisbury

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126551

Headteacher: Mrs Gill Heather

Lead inspector: John Byrne

Dates of inspection: 7th March to 10th March 2005

Inspection number: 268563

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	91
School address:	Somerset Road Salisbury Wiltshire
Postcode:	SP1 3BL
Telephone number:	01722 334168
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Gallagher
Date of previous inspection:	15-Mar-1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Exeter House is a school for boys and girls aged two to 19. There are 91 pupils on the school roll and, because of their learning difficulties, attainment on entry is well below average. Two thirds of the pupils have severe learning difficulties that include autistic spectrum disorders and severely delayed communication skills. The remainder of the pupil population has profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). All pupils admitted to Exeter House have a statement of special educational need. The school, situated as it is close to Salisbury Plain, educates a significant number of pupils from service families. Three pupils at the school speak English as their second language, their first being Portuguese, Fijian and Bengali. Although the school's purpose built accommodation is not yet ten years old increasing numbers of pupils with complex needs has placed considerable pressure on space. As a result over the last five years a total of four mobile classrooms have been installed. Exeter House is recognised as an Investor in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21137	John Byrne	Lead inspector	Personal, social and health education and citizenship, history, geography
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, English, modern foreign language, art and design, music
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	Mathematics, religious education, design and technology, special educational needs
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Post 16, science, information and communication technology, physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Exeter House is an **effective** school with very good features. The good quality of teaching impacts positively on pupils' learning and, as a consequence, they achieve well. Leadership and management are effective and the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- School ethos, so successfully created by the headteacher and senior staff, creates a very happy atmosphere in which pupils very much want to learn.
- The Foundation Stage and Post 16 unit ensures that children and students are extremely well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education.
- The exciting learning environment evident in the majority of lessons results in pupils showing very good attitudes and displaying excellent behaviour.
- Procedures for judging the quality of teaching, learning and achievement lack the detail to effectively support school planning.
- The very appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' personal and social skills results in mature and confident learners.
- Lesson planning, particularly for pupils in Years 3 to 6, does not always identify what teachers expect pupils to learn.
- Very positive links with home include very good information for parents on how their children are getting on.
- The achievements of higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not appropriately recognised by current examination arrangements.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been good improvement in writing and developments in numeracy and science for pupils in Years 7 to 9, have been very good. The tracking of pupils' progress is now more effective. However, there are still weaknesses in how the school judges the impact of school improvement targets on pupils' learning. Because current procedures are so recent it is not possible to say if there has been an improvement in the way the school judges the quality of the curriculum available to pupils.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Very good	Very good

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

Pupils' achievement is **good**. It is very good in the Foundation Stage and Post 16. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 achieve very well in communication, science, physical education and in their personal and social education. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well in mathematics. In nearly all other subjects achievement is good. Although it is satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) the potential for rapid improvement is good because of recent developments. Data available to the school indicates that higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not sufficiently challenged by current examination opportunities. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they display

very good attitudes. Their personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Pupils clearly very much enjoy coming to school and consequently their attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides pupils with a **good** quality of education. Teaching is **good** and influences positively pupils' learning because they are motivated by the lively and imaginative activities provided for them. ICT is used particularly well to develop their skills and provide experiences suited to the individual needs of pupils. The very effective support provided by teaching assistants ensures that in most classes teamwork is very good. Although, overall, assessment is good there are weaknesses when there is an over-emphasis in planning on lesson content at the expense of what it is teachers want individual pupils to learn.

A range of additional activities and experiences that includes high quality residential opportunities very effectively extends the good curriculum. Pupils' total confidence in staff is the direct result of the very good care offered to them by all adults. The support and guidance available to pupils is good. However, because of inconsistencies in planning not all pupils receive appropriate feedback on how they can improve. Links with parents and the community are very good and provide effective support to pupils' learning and the curriculum available to them. The good links that have been developed with local schools support well pupils' personal and social development. However, there are not enough formal opportunities to seek the views of pupils for example, through a school council.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher and senior staff are committed to doing the best for their pupils and because of this they ensure that day-to-day organisation is very good. However, formal checks on how well the school is performing are not sufficient to support effectively whole school planning and judge the impact of decisions made on pupils' learning. Governance is effective. Committed governors provide good support to the school, ensuring that their main statutory responsibilities are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about Exeter House. They appreciate what the school does for their children and their attendance at annual review meetings, to discuss the progress made by their child, is very good. They are confident that when at school their children are happy and well cared for. Pupils indicate that they are very happy and very much enjoy the experiences provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that all lesson planning, particularly in Years 3 to 6, identifies clearly what it is teachers want individual pupils to learn.
- Introduce formal and consistent checks that will show the impact of whole school planning on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Provide higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 with a wider range of examinations that better reflects their achievement.

In addition to the above governors need to ensure that the school prospectus contains all the information parents are required to receive.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **good**. It is **very good** for children in the Foundation Stage and for students at Post 16.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good systems in place to track pupils' progress over time and so make valid judgements on their achievements.
- Pupils achieve very well in personal and social education, communication skills, science and physical education.
- Older pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved very well since the last inspection.
- The limited range of accreditation does not adequately reflect the achievement of higher attaining pupils at the end of Year 11.

Commentary

1. The use of National Curriculum levels and P Scales (nationally recognised criteria for the assessment of pupils not yet working at National Curriculum levels) is well established. This enables the school to make valid judgements on the progress that pupils are making over time. The reliability of this data is enhanced by the use of a commercial scheme which allows the school to identify the progress of those pupils who, because of their special needs, remain at the same level over a number of years. As yet, the school is not using the data available to monitor in detail the achievement of different groups of pupils, for example those educated in the TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication – handicapped Children) class. However, inspection evidence indicates that there is no significant difference in the achievement of for example, boys and girls or pupils with English as an additional language.
2. The very youngest children benefit from the expertise of their classteacher who has successfully established a strong class team that ensures children's needs are very well met. Learning takes place in a secure and motivating environment that encourages children to stay on task and achieve. The quality of record keeping is very high and enables valid judgements to be made on the very good progress pupils are making in all areas of learning. Students at Post 16 also achieve very well because they are provided with a curriculum that is relevant to their needs as they prepare to leave school and embark on the next stage of their education. Their very good achievement is recognised through certificates and in their files maintained for the Asdan 'Towards Independence' accreditation.
3. Pupils communicate very effectively because staff use a variety of strategies, including ICT, to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills in this important area. There has been good improvement in pupils' writing since the last inspection because of the efforts that staff make to ensure skills are practised across the curriculum. As a consequence of the opportunities provided for pupils very good progress is made in the development of their personal and social skills. Teaching rarely misses the chance to give pupils choices and encourages them to do things for themselves. Standards in science have improved significantly since the last inspection because of good teaching that encourages scientific enquiry and observation. The range of physical activities, the quality of the curriculum, and the effectiveness of teaching ensures that pupils achieve very well in physical education.
4. In most other areas of the curriculum pupils achieve well. However, in mathematics achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is very good. The progress they make is due to very effective teaching that makes good use of the structure provided by the National Numeracy

Strategy to plan lessons. The improvement since the last inspection in this particular area has been very good. Although pupils' achievement in ICT is currently satisfactory this represents good improvement. Recent initiatives in this subject indicate that the potential for rapid development is good.

5. The data that the school collects annually indicates that there are higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have been assessed as working at National Curriculum levels 2 and 3 in English, mathematics and science. The availability of pupils' work appropriately assessed using clear 'annotation sheets' supports the accuracy of these judgements. Although the achievements of these pupils are being recognised appropriately through Asdan's 'Transition Challenge' accreditation, this on its own is not sufficient to reflect their achievements in English, mathematics and science. They would benefit from having access to a wider range of examinations suited to their capabilities. This is a change since the last inspection which judged opportunities for external accreditation to be good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour is **excellent** and their attitudes are **very good**. The provision for pupils' personal development is **very good**. Punctuality and attendance are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond very well to the staff's very high expectations of good behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy the challenges provided by exciting learning environments.
- Pupils love coming to school and families ensure that pupils attend unless they are too ill.
- Social development is very good and pupils grow into confident and mature young people.
- Relationships are excellent and the school is a very friendly place.
- The pupils have very good opportunities to experience their own and other cultures.

Commentary

6. The school's strong moral code works well because of the consistent and high expectation of good pupil behaviour by adults working in the school. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the system of rewards; sanctions are very rarely needed. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in the classrooms and around the school and this has a very positive impact on their achievements. Successes are celebrated very appropriately through displays and in lessons and assemblies. The school successfully promotes an anti-bullying culture for example through whole class discussions and a presentation by a visiting theatre group. Pupils and parents say that there are no incidents of being bullied or 'picked on'. There have been no exclusions.
7. Adults create very successfully an atmosphere where pupils are willing to contribute their ideas and persevere with challenging tasks without fear of failure or ridicule. Pupils are very keen to participate in this stimulating learning environment and try hard with their work. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Years 8 and 9 pupils listened carefully to their teacher as she explained a new way of adding up numbers which were 'near doubles'. They were willing to 'have a go' at calculating difficult sums because of the teacher's assurance that they must not worry if they got it wrong. Their delight at their successful achievements had a very positive effect on their learning.
8. Attendance is very good when compared to similar schools and there are few unauthorised absences. The school's very positive ethos has a beneficial impact on attendance. However, not all teachers are marking correctly the reasons for absence in the registers. Pupils arrive promptly for the start of school and have very good relationships with their drivers and escorts.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003-2004

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.6
National data	8.5	National data	0.5

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

- As pupils move up through the school, they gain in confidence and become more independent. This could be seen in the way the youngest children greet their teachers and classmates. During break time and lunchtime pupils are reminded of their table manners and encouraged to socialise, for example, by asking each other about what they have been doing at home. Pupils welcome visitors into school and greet them warmly. Older pupils are very well prepared for their work experience, and any initial anxieties soon disappear as the pupils confidently cope with new situations such as working with customers, caring for animals in a pet shop and taking orders in a café.
- Staff show high levels of respect for the pupils and use humour to good effect. Pupils respond very well and develop very trusting relationships with their teachers and support staff. Pupils learn to share, take turns and play together. Pupils enter school in the morning with smiles on their faces and are very keen to communicate with staff and each other before assembly. Parents say that their children are very happy at school. When asked pupils said that they would not change anything about the school and one pupil commented that *'This school is perfect.'*
- The school's provision for cultural development is very good. Pupils' understanding is enhanced by hands-on experiences for example through a visit to a living rain forest and a visiting 'Roman gladiator'. In religious education lessons, pupils gain valuable insights into other world faiths and these are enhanced by visits to a variety of places of worship. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is developed successfully for example through visiting musicians and studying the life of a child during World War Two. Provision for spiritual development is good. Staff value pupils' feelings, showing them respect and assemblies provide good opportunities for worship and reflection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are all **good**. The standard of care is **very good** and pupils receive **good support** and guidance. Links with parents and the community are **very effective**; they are **good** with other schools.

Teaching and learning

Overall teaching and learning are **good**. They are **very good** in the Foundation Stage and in the Post 16 unit. Assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pace of lessons, together with a variety of lively and imaginative activities, motivates pupils and maintains their involvement.
- Very good use of resources, including ICT, enhances the learning experiences that pupils are provided with.
- Class teachers' effective management of adults who work with them as well as pupils' behaviour makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and the progress that they make.
- In the majority of lessons pupils are confident learners because staff understand their particular needs and acknowledge very well their responses.

- It is not always clear how teachers plan for and record the small steps that pupils make in learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	16 (38%)	18 (43%)	7 (17%)	0	0	0

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

9. In the majority of lessons the success of teaching is evident from the very positive responses of pupils that indicate enjoyment and motivation. Pupils are rarely given time to become restless. They stay on task because activities involve and interest them. The success of this approach was very evident in a science lesson for pupils in Year 6. Three higher attaining pupils listened intently to the teacher's introduction. They then became totally engrossed when clear instructions enabled them to investigate independently the properties of light gaining, as they did, an understanding of the terms 'opaque' and 'transparent.' Not a moment was lost as the teacher encouraged them to explore the effects of their experimenting and describe what was happening. The pupils recorded effectively the outcome of their work using a digital camera that was then linked to the Smart board so that all could share their findings. In this same lesson, lower attaining pupils and those with PMLD worked in the sensory room and in another part of the classroom. Activities for them were equally stimulating and they received very good support from the adults working with them. They too had the chance to share their successes when the teacher appropriately gave adults the opportunity to report back their achievements to the whole group. Very occasionally pupils' interest wanes when language used by teachers is over complicated, activities are rushed or when adults do too much for them.
10. The good quality and range of resources used by teachers to support learning is a feature of many lessons across the school. The competent way that they are used ensures that all pupils can be involved in activities at a level appropriate to their needs. At Post 16 students clearly enjoyed sorting food into fruit and vegetables. The wide variety of food available challenged higher attaining pupils to recall the names of items such as mangos or aubergines. They did this with considerable success. Meanwhile, tasting, feeling and smelling the various fruit and vegetables similarly involved lower attaining pupils. The session, because of the way resources were used, very successfully linked the curriculum areas of literacy, numeracy and science. A strength of teaching, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is the way ICT is used to support and extend pupils' learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are clearly at ease with the Smart board and take for granted the expertise of the teacher in its use. The way it was employed in a history lesson to sort toys according to age appropriateness was particularly impressive.
11. The success of teaching owes much to teachers' classroom management and the way it ensures that activities are appropriately matched to individual needs. In achieving this teachers ensure that pupil involvement in activities minimizes disruption due to inappropriate behaviour. However, where the behaviour of pupils is particularly challenging consistent behaviour management ensures that the class team manages it very well. In the Year 3 to 6 class, specifically for pupils with autism, very clear planning shows how behaviour will be managed. It is clear that plans are rigidly adhered to and rewards (bonus stickers) are not given out 'willy nilly' - pupils have to earn them. The teaching assistants do much to contribute to this consistency of approach. In addition, they provide very good support to individuals and groups ensuring that activities are well matched to need. Occasionally the use of teaching assistants is

not as effective as it might be. For example, there are missed opportunities to support pupils in the main part of the lesson and for reporting back on the outcomes of 1:1 sessions with pupils.

12. The progress that pupils make in the development of their personal and social skills is very much the result of the teaching that they receive. Opportunities are rarely missed to encourage independence through for example making choices or pupils trying things for themselves. The very youngest pupils enjoy the opportunity to hop unaided, even though they find it very difficult. Similarly, students in Post 16 appreciate very much being treated as mature young adults when their views are sought on news items in daily newspapers. These age appropriate activities and the responses that they illicit, do much to promote pupils' confidence as they move through the school. Responses are further enhanced when learning is directly linked to pupils' personal experiences. For example in a Year 9 history lesson pupils were particularly interested in 'granny's identity card' from the Second World War and in the picture of a relative who was 'a Desert Rat.' The responses that they gave displayed considerable confidence in their communication skills.
13. There are inconsistencies in the quality of planning and recording which make it difficult for teachers to determine accurately what pupils have achieved in lessons. Planning, particularly in classes for pupils in Years 3 to 6, in subjects such as literacy, numeracy and PSHE, emphasises lesson content. However, it does not always identify clearly enough what individual pupils or small groups are expected to achieve. Similarly when they do achieve, for example 'very good looking' responses are not routinely recorded. The absence of such information makes it difficult for teachers to come to valid judgements on progress within lessons. Where the intention of activities is clearly stated the impact of teaching on achievement is very evident. In the class for the very youngest pupils planning is very explicit, for example the physical activity in the hall is very closely linked to listening and using language learnt in the classroom in a practical context. The quality of assessment and recording for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the Post 16 class is guided by the Asdan schemes that are followed and as such are very effective.

The curriculum

Provision for the curriculum is **good** and enrichment of the curriculum is **very good**. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular opportunities in all areas of the school are good, and are very good in the Foundation Stage and for students over 16.
- Curriculum planning, particularly in Years 3 to 6, is not sufficiently detailed.
- Provision for pupils with visual difficulties is very good.
- The personal, social and health education programme is very good, leading to very positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good curriculum enrichment through additional experiences provides many exciting opportunities for pupils.

Commentary

14. The commercial scheme adopted by the school is used well as a basis for curriculum planning and the provision of tasks that are usually well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. However, the level of planning in lessons is not always linked well enough to what individual pupils are expected to achieve. This means that tasks can be too difficult for some pupils and not challenging enough for others. This is particularly evident in Years 3 to 6, and impacts on pupils' overall achievement in those classes. The curriculum for the very youngest children in the school is very good, as is provision for the oldest students in Years 12 to 14. In these classes, work is tailored precisely to pupils' individual targets and consequently, they achieve very well in lessons.

15. Pupils with additional special needs are catered for well. For example, those with visual disabilities benefit from the very good expertise of the teacher with specialist qualifications. This has led to very good provision for this group of pupils because staff are fully aware of their needs stemming from their disability. Other groups are well provided for. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from good therapeutic approaches and the close links that exist between the various therapies that ensure their needs are well met. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders benefit from good provision in the TEACCH class, and the good levels of expertise that staff possess about their range of needs.
16. Pupils' personal, social and health education is very well catered for and this results in the very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour observed during the inspection. Pupils are given daily opportunities to develop their own confidence and self-esteem so that they become mature and responsible young people by the time they leave the school. Their responses in lessons and around the school contribute to the very positive ethos that exists.
17. Pupils benefit very much from the many additional experiences provided for them. The regular excursions into the local and wider community enhance the curriculum available to them. Visits to local shops to practise social and number skills are a regular occurrence, as are trips to places of local interest, such as the park, the cathedral and a local mosque. Such experiences enhance pupils' understanding of the world around them and the many visitors to the school extend pupils' awareness of other cultures and the world of work. There is very good involvement in local sports and arts activities and coaching from professional coaches helps to improve pupils' physical skills. The very good opportunities for residential experiences are a major strength providing a very good basis for the improvement of personal and social skills. All pupils, including those with additional special needs, are offered residential experiences depending on their ability to benefit from the activity. Consequently there is good equality of opportunity.
18. The school is well staffed with teachers and support assistants who have a range of skills that are suited to the delivery of the curriculum. The expertise of teaching staff is enhanced by the provision of good professional development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of the school. The building is very well maintained and creates a good learning environment. Increased pupil numbers are putting a strain on the communal areas of the school and have led to excessively large classes for pupils in Years 7 to 11. There is very good specialist provision for hydrotherapy, a good food technology room and a good sensory room. Resources for learning are good. The introduction of interactive Smart boards is having a very positive effect on teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Provision of support, advice and guidance is **good**. Involvement of pupils is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff demonstrate high levels of concern for pupils' welfare and pupils know that they can rely on them for help.
- Although pupils receive very good support for their personal development and specific needs, staff do not always give them enough reminders about how they can improve their work.
- There are good procedures to ensure that pupils new to the school settle in well.
- Students are well prepared for leaving school.
- Although staff value pupils' views they are not given enough opportunities to improve school life.

Commentary

19. Exeter House is a school that regards everyone to be of equal worth. Consequently staff work hard to meet the needs of all pupils. They are so successful in their efforts because they have a very good understanding of pupils' special needs. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that pupils say what they like best about school are the teachers 'because they are so kind and helpful'.
20. Staff and governors endeavour to provide a healthy and safe environment for the pupils. In the absence of a school nurse, staff work hard to foster the pupils' physical and emotional well being. However, senior managers have to spend valuable time on routine medical procedures and nursing care plans have not been completed for most pupils. The arrangements for first aid are good and good records are kept when medication is given. Staff work closely with a range of health professionals to support pupils' particular difficulties, for example through the work of a clinic which helps match communication equipment to pupils' needs. Two senior members of staff have had relevant training in child protection and carry out their duties effectively. Staff are aware of the school's child protection policy and know to report any concerns to the co-ordinators. There are good arrangements in place for pupils in public care.
21. Teachers support pupils very well in their personal, social and emotional development. For example, older pupils have written their own ideas about how they can improve their table manners and they use these targets to remind them about how they can improve. Staff are skilled at encouraging pupils in lessons but inconsistencies in planning means that they do not always give pupils detailed guidance about the next steps in their learning. The support available to pupils with visual impairment is very good. There is a qualified teacher of the visually impaired on the staff who, as well as working with individual pupils, offers valuable advice and support to staff across the school. This provision, together with the quality support provided by therapists working in the school, ensures that all pupils are fully included in lessons.
22. Parents value the way their children are settled into school. Through visits, meetings and parents staying with their children, pupils and parents quickly become familiar with school routines. Year 11 pupils and their parents are given good support and impartial advice on their choice of Post 16 placements. Similarly teachers and the Connexions service offer Post16 students good advice about local colleges. The school successfully encourages students to make the most of its careers convention, organised visits to colleges, the college taster days and summer schools. These opportunities enable families to make informed choices about the next stage of education.
23. Staff listen to and watch pupils carefully and take note of their views and preferences. In lessons and around the school pupils are offered choices and their decisions are respected. They are also given good encouragement to evaluate their achievements and comment on what they are good at and where they need more help. Where appropriate, pupils are given good opportunities to contribute to their annual review. However, the lack of formal arrangements for pupils to make contributions to school life, for example through a school council, restricts the opportunities for the school to act upon pupils' views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are **very good**. Links with other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The communication between school and home is very good.
- The school provides parents with very good information about how their children are doing, although information in the school prospectus is not of the same high standard.
- Pupils deepen their understanding of the wider world through the very good range of visits and visitors.

- The school has established a beneficial partnership with other local schools which enable pupils to have contact with mainstream pupils.

Commentary

24. Parents feel that staff are very approachable and are always willing to give their time to talk with parents and carers if there are concerns. The home-school books are used as a very effective means of communication between teachers and parents. New parents receive good information about the school through visits and meetings. However, the prospectus is not informative or easy to read nor does it contain all the required information. The school invites parents to frequent and beneficial support group meetings where they can share experiences and gain useful information about how to help their children. Regular newsletters give parents timely information about future events but do not always celebrate the school's successes. Parents enjoy attending concerts and help on visits. The parent staff association works hard to organise social and fundraising events. The parents receive very good information about their children's progress. Individual education plans are sent home at least three times a year and give parents clear information about how their children are getting on as well as valuable information about how parents can help their children at home. Reports for the annual review are very detailed and contain very good information about how pupils can improve their work. Nearly all parents attend the review meeting and their views are respected and acted upon.
25. Pupils benefit both socially and academically from the school's links with the community. Visits to the ice-skating rink, the railway station and a science centre deepen pupils understanding of the world outside school. Visitors such as musical groups and the fire service share their expertise with the pupils and enrich the curriculum. The annual school journey to Wales is a highlight of the school calendar and offers pupils the opportunity to experience a variety of outdoor pursuits. Pupils and parents are very enthusiastic about the exciting residential visits to Europe and Canada, and these options are only available due to the generosity of staff who volunteer their time and support. The school has a very good rapport with its transport company and pupils enjoy being taken on an annual treat to a local farm attraction at the company's expense.
26. Pupils are encouraged to develop their social and communication skills through working alongside pupils from mainstream schools. Links with the adjacent infant and junior schools enable pupils to experience whole school discussions in each other's classrooms. Secondary school pupils who are studying for a sport leadership award help older pupils in physical education lessons. The school has established links with a range of colleges and staff give pupils very good support as they make informed choices about their future through college visits and summer schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is **good**. Management is **good** as is governance of the school

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management is very effective in developing positive attitudes in all pupils.
- The headteacher and senior staff have been successful in establishing effective teams that contribute very positively to pupils' learning.
- Procedures for judging the impact of aspects of school provision on learning are not rigorous enough to make an effective contribution to school improvement planning.
- Management ensures that the day-to-day running of the school is very good.
- New systems for curriculum management currently lack the clarity to enable valid judgements to be made as to their effectiveness in the future.

Commentary

27. At Exeter House school pupils matter and, as was the case at the last inspection, the headteacher leads by personal example, maintaining a close involvement with all pupils and with the day-to-day operation of the school. This, together with a very good emphasis on including all pupils in lessons, ensures that pupils enjoy school very much and are motivated to learn and achieve. The governing body contributes to the success of this approach by providing strong support and by taking a keen and active interest in school life. They are justifiably proud of the very positive ethos that exists. They visit frequently to observe normal classroom activities as well as special events. An expectation of each governor's involvement is the reporting back to the governing body on a specific area of the school's work or its plans for development.
28. The close personal contact that the headteacher and senior managers maintain with all staff generates a high level of commitment and a strong team spirit. This is successful at a whole school level and is also evident in classrooms, where the teamwork between teachers and support staff is of very high quality. This enables the individual needs of pupils to be met efficiently whilst providing them with very good role models.
29. Staff have good opportunities for professional development; linked for teachers to satisfactory performance management procedures and for support assistants to individual appraisal meetings with the headteacher. For teachers a good range of training events is held on school closure days, but such opportunities for support assistants are restricted by their limited contracted working days. The school has satisfactorily achieved the first stage of a national agreement to improve the work-life balance of teachers and has good plans to develop future work in line with statutory requirements.
30. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. However, its capacity to improve is limited by the lack of robust information to influence effective strategic planning. Although staff and the governing body agree satisfactory plans for improvement the processes used to inform these decisions lack rigour. For example, not enough attention is given to developing formal processes to evaluate the quality of teaching. The frequent informal visits senior managers make to classrooms are appreciated by staff and do enable ongoing praise or assistance to be given. More formal observations provide satisfactory information for teachers' annual performance management meetings. However, these arrangements do not provide the detail of information required for future planning that can be achieved through frequent formal lesson observations that look closely and consistently at specific aspects of classroom practice. The school does gather good information on pupils' achievements, but this is not yet analysed with enough rigour. It is not used, for example, to see if new teaching or curriculum approaches are successfully impacting on pupils' learning, or to determine if the achievements of any particular group of pupils or students are a cause for concern.
31. The school has recently introduced a new system to ensure that pupils are provided with access to a balanced and relevant curriculum as they move through the school. The whole school co-ordination of subjects, identified as an area for development in the last inspection, has been replaced by 'phased planning'. This means that teachers working with particular age groups plan the curriculum together. Although the majority of teachers are enthusiastic about this development it is too early to make a judgement on the effectiveness of the new arrangements. As yet, there is no clarity as to how the school will, in future ensure the quality of curriculum provision available across the school. The negative impact of a lack of a whole school overview of the curriculum available to pupils is reduced considerably by the diligent way in which teachers follow the commercial scheme adopted by the school.
32. The day-to-day management of the school, overseen closely by the headteacher, is very effective. Financial management is very good. The administrative manager puts major decisions of the governing body into operation very effectively. The large underspend reported at the end of last year consists of capital grants saved for major improvements to the building and grounds. Annual allocations of funds are made to each class, according to the number of

pupils, and good funding is provided for planned developments in curriculum subjects. When making purchases, governors and senior managers pay good attention to obtaining competitive prices. Considering the outcomes for pupils against costs, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,022,524
Total expenditure	981,840
Expenditure per pupil	11,551

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	7,6302
Balance carried forward to the next	116,986

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good links with the Connexions Service for all pupils from Year 9 onwards, ensuring good continuity of support.
- Although the number and variety of work placements for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very good monitoring of these is currently limited.
- Links with parents and the community are very good but currently there are no links with a college of further education.
- The Business Enterprise scheme for pupils in Years 12, 13 and 14 is very good and contributes very well to personal, social, health and citizenship education.

Commentary

33. The good support offered by the Connexions Service is used very well to ensure that students and parents are fully aware of the options available to them post school. The process starts as early as Year 7, when pupils begin to think about the skills they are good at and the things they like doing. Personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes significantly to these early thoughts and ideas, helping pupils to clarify their own expectations. Links with the local community are very good. Regular meetings take place for parents and employers so that all are well aware of the opportunities available to them. Currently, for reasons beyond the school’s control, such links do not include a local further education college. This is a weakness as a number of pupils are capable of accessing the vocational courses provided by colleges.
34. The range and variety of work placements provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is impressive and helps them to develop a very good awareness of the world of work. Pupils are well prepared in the classroom for the experiences they are about to undertake. As a result, they show confidence and independence as they embark on regular weekly work-related experiences in the local community. Discussion with workplace managers at firms such as Debenhams and Argos show that they appreciated pupils’ very positive attitudes describing their willingness to ‘have a go’ and complete a variety of tasks. At Argos, for example, one student had undergone health and safety training in the workplace as required for all employees. Higher attaining pupils undertake their work experience independently, while lower attainers or those with additional special needs, are supported by teaching assistants, thus ensuring very good equality of opportunity for all. The monitoring of workplace employment is at a very early stage of development. School staff do not visit pupils on a regular basis and weekly reports are not provided on how they are getting on. This impacts on the prompt resolving of any minor difficulties that may occur.
35. A very good Business Enterprise system is in place for older students in Years 12 to 14, enabling them to understand the many complex issues associated with producing something to

make money. They regularly provide coffee mornings, cook snacks for staff and pupils, grow and sell plants, and make birthday and Christmas cards, which they sell, for a profit. They are naturally very proud of their achievements.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Four lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was also gathered from children's work, observation of a variety of activities and discussion with staff.

The school makes **very good** provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very stimulating and nurturing ethos ensures that the children are happy and highly motivated.
- Children have access to a very rich and varied range of learning experiences.
- Lessons and activities are very well organised and enlivened by the imaginative use of good quality resources.
- Work set is very well matched to the particular needs of individual children.
- Learning support assistants provide very good support so that all children achieve success.
- Very good links with parents help children to settle at school and support their learning.

Commentary

36. There are five children currently in the Foundation Stage. They are placed in a specialist class with the three youngest pupils from Year 1. The class is managed by the assistant headteacher who is very experienced and has very good skills in working with young children with severe and complex needs. She provides a very good role model for the support staff and consequently all staff work very well together as a seamless team.
37. The Foundation Stage class is a very positive and effective learning environment where children thrive and make very good progress. The teacher and learning support assistants are highly sensitive to the needs of particular children and give them very good individual support. This means that children generally focus very well on activities and in lessons and achieve success. Staff are calm and consistent in managing the behaviour of those children who find it more difficult to conform to class routines. As a result, the children learn to follow adult direction and lessons are not disrupted. The teacher, who is a qualified teacher of the visually impaired, gives excellent support to a Foundation Stage child who is registered blind. Extremely sensitive management and very well planned activities ensure that he participates fully and feels very secure. This enables him to make very clear progress in understanding the world around him.
38. There are very good links with parents to ensure that children make a strong start at school and settle well. Families are encouraged to visit the class and detailed home-school books give parents thorough and helpful information about what children do and the progress that they make. There are good links with the infant school on the same campus. Once a week a group of children from the reception class at the infants join the Foundation class for a literacy session. This gives the children opportunities to mix with mainstream peers and promotes their communication and personal and social development well. In the past, children from Exeter House have joined some mainstream lessons. Although this has lapsed, it is about to resume for those children who are felt to be ready for it.
39. There are very good records available to show the progress children make. A strength of these is the many photographs, carefully labelled, to show exactly what children have achieved and the support required to achieve it. The teacher makes regular notes to show the progress children make towards the targets set in their individual education plans. These are used to inform the very comprehensive reports which the teacher prepares for children's annual reviews. However, at the present time, learning support assistants are under-used to record the small steps that children make in lessons and activities.

40. Teachers and support staff promote **communication, language and literacy** very effectively because they use a range of strategies very well matched to the needs of individual children. A variety of very lively and imaginative activities are used to stimulate children to communicate. An example of this was observed during an excellent water play session where the children and the teacher poured water into bottles with holes in and watched the result. The children loved watching the water squirting from the bottles and tried very hard to communicate what was happening. Staff are very skilled at supporting children to communicate using switches, pictures, symbols and signing. Communication books ensure that parents can build on the work done at school. Consequently, children make very good progress in communicating using vocalisation and signing. A few children use signs spontaneously to comment or respond to questions. Records indicate that one child has learned to understand and use approximately 30 Makaton signs. Children have very good opportunities to share stories and they enjoy looking at books. They become very involved when the teacher reads *'Mr Grumpy's Outing'* demonstrating their understanding by giving the names of the animals in the story.
41. All staff use every opportunity to encourage children to develop their self-help and social skills. Consequently, they make very good progress in **personal, social and emotional development**. Relationships are excellent and children are extremely well motivated to achieve tasks set. They make very good progress in learning to select activities and resources because they have very well planned opportunities to make choices. There is a very good emphasis on encouraging children to be as independent as they are able. An example of this was in a very good gross motor session in the hall where children were prepared to attempt tasks independently because they were given very clear instructions and a great deal of encouragement.
42. Children's **mathematical development** is extended very well through stimulating practical activities and through using number wherever possible. For example, staff use every opportunity to get children to count up and learn the number names. Consequently, children make very good progress. For example, records indicate that one child can identify written numbers to five pointing to the correct number when it is called out.
43. Children make very good progress in their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. There is a good collection of cause and effect toys and children use the computer in the small room adjoining the classroom. The teacher is particularly skilled at developing exciting activities to help the children to learn about cause and effect. For example, they make very good progress in understanding that some materials, such as salt, disappear when they are put in water whilst others change or stay the same. This is because they are highly motivated by very good opportunities to experiment with objects and water.
44. Children's **physical development** is very effectively catered for through a variety of activities such as horse riding and hydrotherapy. They thoroughly enjoy the gross motor sessions in the hall and learn to use the apparatus. There is a good range of large play equipment for the children to use at playtime. Because the Foundation Stage class has its own fenced area of the playground, the children feel secure and use the equipment confidently.
45. Very good opportunities for children to use paint and other media, and to participate in musical activities, promote their **creative development** very well and ensure they make very good progress. For example, they enjoy painting with sponges. There are plenty of opportunities to join in singing action rhymes and number songs and children learn how to control the sound beam. Children enjoy dressing up. For example, they dressed as Romans during 'Roman week' and explored 'Roman' pots and pans. One child's records describe how he was mesmerised by a visitor who brought tap and ballet shoes and danced in school as part of the topic on 'shoes and socks'. The child was fascinated and copied the foot and hand movements. That evening he was able to tell his father through signing and miming that he had been watching tap dancing. This amply demonstrates how effective the teacher is in planning activities which stimulate children's interest and promote their creative development very well.

46. It is not possible to make a judgement about improvement since the last inspection as provision for the Foundation Stage was not reported on previously.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4 and POST 16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

A judgement on provision has not been made as no lessons were seen in a modern foreign language. However, evidence was obtained from looking at pupils' work and an observation of 'snack time' for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Eight lessons were seen in English. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers and pupils.

Modern Foreign Language

47. Pupils are provided with good practical opportunities to experience aspects of French life. For example, a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties has visited a 'French market' and bought a variety of French foods. She has then tried the foods and staff recorded which foods she liked the best. The daily mid-morning snack time is used very effectively to promote spoken French for Year 10 and 11 pupils. Each pupil is given 6p to spend on snacks which must be requested in French. This motivates the pupils very well and they make considerable efforts to use French vocabulary.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from appropriate use of communication aids and consequently make particularly good progress in developing speaking and listening skills.
- The school has implemented effective strategies to raise pupils' achievement in writing.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in the different subjects of the curriculum.
- Teachers are skilled at using good quality resources, including Smart boards, to make lessons interesting.
- In lessons assessment and recording of the small steps that pupils make lack detail.
- There is an insufficient range of examinations available to higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve very well in developing their skills in speaking and listening because all staff place a major emphasis on supporting communication using vocalisation, symbols, signing, and communication aids. Consequently, all pupils make very good progress in communicating what they want and expressing simple choices. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 can follow a simple story showing understanding of words such as 'igloo' and 'polar bear'. They can make statements such as 'It is melting' to describe what is happening and can follow classroom instructions. By the time they reach Year 11, higher attaining pupils use a good range of descriptive words and communicate effectively in a variety of situations. This includes being able to initiate conversations and using appropriate language when communicating with the general public during work experience sessions.
49. Many pupils have detailed speech and language targets drawn up by the speech and language therapist that are reviewed regularly. High quality individual communication books are used to ensure that all staff working with a pupil use the same strategies to promote communication. The books are also used in the pupil's home so that the family can support the work taking place at school. A pilot AAC (Augmentative Alternative Communication) clinic has enabled a

small number of pupils to have a very detailed multi-disciplinary assessment to determine their communication needs and plan the best equipment and methods for meeting those needs. Although symbols are used in school, not all staff have had training in strategies such as Picture Exchange Systems (PECs) to develop their skills in using symbols. The school is aware that this needs addressing, particularly in the class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, where symbols are widely used.

50. Since the previous inspection good progress has been made in improving the teaching of writing and extending pupils' skills in this area. Pupils of all ages are given good opportunities to record their work in ways well adapted to their particular needs. For example lower attaining pupils are supported to cut up and stick symbols and words to make sentences. Older, higher attaining pupils, make initial draft copies and then use fountain pens to produce high quality finished pieces of extended writing. They achieve well in learning how to adapt their writing style for different purposes such as imaginative and descriptive writing and writing letters. There is a good emphasis on teaching handwriting skills. For example, in a short weekly session, pupils in Years 7 and 8 practise forming letters correctly and writing their names. The teacher is expert at using resources such as writing slopes and the Smart board to support the pupils. Consequently, they all make good progress in learning to write legibly and neatly.
51. Pupils are heard reading regularly and progress is recorded carefully in their reading records. There are good opportunities to share books in lessons, consequently pupils achieve well in developing skills in reading. There is a pleasant library with a good collection of reading schemes, 'Big Books' and fiction and non-fiction books including multi-cultural books. However, there are insufficient easy reading books with an interest level suitable for older pupils.
52. Overall teaching in English is good. Teachers in the secondary department are very skilled at using Smart boards and well-chosen resources to make lessons interesting. In the best lessons, they plan very carefully and specify clearly exactly what individual pupils should achieve. This provides a very good framework for learning and allows the teachers to assess how well pupils are achieving. An example of this was in a very good lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 8 where pupils read together and wrote about the story of 'Shrek'. Work was very well matched to the needs of individual pupils and all pupils, including those with PMLD, made very good progress in achieving their targets. Where teaching is only satisfactory, for example in lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6, it is because teachers are not sufficiently clear about what they want pupils to achieve and do not record adequately the progress pupils make towards their targets.
53. Pupils' progress is monitored through P Scale assessments but the school does not administer additional tests in reading or spelling to guide the teaching of literacy skills. Older pupils' achievements in English are recognised through their Asdan awards. However, these awards do not adequately demonstrate the achievement of higher attaining pupils. A number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have achieved Level 3 of the National Curriculum in reading, writing and speaking and listening. This means that they have the skills to enrol on Entry Level or GCSE courses.
54. The new phase management systems have not been in place long enough to evaluate the impact on raising standards in English. The previous English leader improved delivery of English through developing the curriculum, policy and record keeping. There has been satisfactory improvement in English overall since the previous inspection. There has been good improvement in pupils' achievements in writing. The standard of teaching has been maintained but procedures for assessing pupils' progress are still under-developed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening are promoted well across the curriculum. The school has worked hard to raise standards in writing and pupils have many good opportunities to write for different purposes in all subjects of the curriculum. Written work on display and in pupils' records is well presented. Pupils have good opportunities to use

computers to record. An example of this is the word-processed reports, which go in pupils' Asdan files. Staff ensure that pupils develop their speaking and listening skills through good questioning and use of key words. For example, in science pupils make good progress in using relevant vocabulary such as 'opaque' and 'transparent'.

MATHEMATICS

Six lessons were seen in mathematics. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, in Years 7 to 11, ensures pupils achieve very well in mathematics.
- Currently examination opportunities for higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not challenging enough.
- The National Strategy has been implemented well in Years 7 to 9 and this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils' learning, ensuring that those with additional needs achieve equally well.
- In lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6 the focus on what pupils will achieve in a lesson is not always clear in planning.

Commentary

56. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in all aspects of mathematics. In Years 1 and 2 they begin to recognise familiar objects by name and learn to count. They work with numbers to five and beyond, and a few pupils can order their numbers accurately. There are many good examples of pupils exploring capacity, length and shapes. They learn to match their colours and, by Year 6, many work with numbers beyond ten. Higher attaining pupils undertake simple addition and subtraction to ten correctly and can put shapes and colours into sets, describing them accurately. In one lesson, for example, they could estimate correctly how many spades full of sand it would take to fill a bucket. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties also achieve well in Years 1 to 6. They benefit from some good multi-sensory activities that give them the opportunity to explore resources for themselves. In Years 1 and 2 they learn to repeat actions to cause an effect and explore tactile shapes and objects with high levels of support, which helps them make sense of their tasks. Pupils with autism achieve well in lessons due to good teaching that includes very good behaviour management.
57. At the time of the last inspection there were issues about the quality of provision in mathematics for older pupils. This is no longer the case as pupils make very good progress in mathematics and achieve very well from Years 7 to 11. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7, for example, can order numbers to 50 and beyond, and create sets to ten quickly and efficiently. By Years 10 and 11, they can add and subtract accurately to 100, checking their answers and showing good independence in learning. The data the school has on pupils' achievement at the end of Year 10 indicates that a number of pupils are working at relatively high levels. This, together with their predicted achievement at the end of Year 11, indicates that the current accreditation available to them, on its own, is not sufficiently challenging. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autism work closely with teaching assistants as they begin to recognise and find particular colours and numbers using computers in Years 7 and 8, and sort and match colours and shapes by Year 11. They achieve very well because of high levels of support and the very good range of experiences offered.
58. Undoubtedly, the implementation of the National Strategy in the older classes is having a very positive impact and is ensuring that there is a clear structure to lesson planning. Very effective use of Smart boards keep pupils focused and interested, and very good

demonstrations aid pupils' understanding. Learning is regularly checked and reinforced before the lesson ends. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 although good is less consistent. In Years 3 to 6 the absence of planning highlighting what individual pupils are expected to learn is a weakness. However, the impact on learning is reduced because teachers' knowledge of pupils ensures that tasks set are usually matched to pupils' abilities.

59. In all lessons teaching assistants are very well used to promote good inclusion for all pupils. They contribute well to pupils' learning by working closely with them helping them to understand and complete their tasks. The support provided to those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders is particularly effective. Consequently, achievement of these groups is almost always good.
60. Given the recent introduction of phase planning, it is too early to make a valid judgement on the quality of leadership in the subject. However, it is evident that leadership prior to the change had a positive impact on the provision and on pupils' achievements. However, currently insufficient monitoring has led to inconsistencies in the quality of provision across the school, and to a shortage of allocated time to the teaching of the subject in Years 1 to 6. The accommodation and resources for mathematics are good overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Overall the use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities are taken to extend skills but these are not specifically planned for and so do not have a significant impact on achievement. In design and technology, for example, pupils use their numeracy skills to measure paper and card used to make models, and to weigh ingredients for their cooking activities. In science, there are a few examples of pupils collecting and presenting data, and weighing and measuring as part of simple experiments.

SCIENCE

Six lessons were seen in science. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers and pupils.

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers help pupils to achieve very well by introducing scientific concepts through interesting practical work.
- Pupils of all abilities are catered for well because teachers choose activities that challenge them at a level appropriate to their need.
- Science lessons make very good use of ICT.
- Opportunities are taken well to develop and extend scientific skills in other subjects.

Commentary

62. Pupils at all age groups achieve very well in science. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection. Higher attaining pupils make significant gains in their scientific knowledge. They learn how to look closely at their environment, carry out their own experiments, and make predictions about what might happen in a particular circumstance. For example, pupils in Year 5, experiment with objects to determine which will allow light to pass through. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are able to name all the parts of a living plant and place them correctly. Lower attaining pupils achieve very well by increasing their experience of materials, forces and living things. For example, Year 6 pupils experience the effect of light shining on different surfaces and pupils in Years 8 and 9 touch and smell plants and listen carefully to the names of their different parts. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to have their achievements reward through the Asdan 'Transition Challenge' module. However, this, on its

own, is not sufficient for those higher attaining pupils whose records indicate that they are achieving at a relatively high level.

63. Pupils achieve very well in science because of the very good teaching across the school. Teachers are very good at explaining difficult ideas in simple ways. Their use of very clear language is very effectively reinforced by the use of Smart boards when, for example, the structure of a living plant is taken apart then re-assembled by pupils on the board. The Smart board is also used very well to show recordings made by Year 5 pupils using a digital camera. Pupils with more complex needs who have communication difficulties are helped to contribute to lessons by a range of aids, ranging from simple switches to devices that produce spoken words.
64. Teachers provide a very good range of tasks in each lesson, thus ensuring the very good inclusion of all pupils. All are stimulated and challenged by very well prepared practical activities that encourage experimentation. Pupils in Years 8 and 9, for example, make their own cardboard plants then get them to stand up in a pot by adding root systems made of pipe cleaners. There is a very good emphasis on encouraging pupils to work as independently as possible. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, are expected to write their own records of the lesson about parts of plants, in rough draft first. Lower attaining pupils are helped to stick appropriate words and pictures into their record books.
65. The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection by the introduction of a nationally recognised scheme of work for pupils who have severe learning difficulties. As one of the first subjects to be reviewed, as part of the new phase management arrangements the planning and delivery of the science curriculum, particularly for older pupils, has recently been improved. This has resulted in very good opportunities being taken to re-enforce scientific learning in other subjects. For example, in design technology, Year 3 pupils experiment with different loads to test out the floating capabilities of the boats they have designed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Two lessons were seen in information and communication technology. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils.

Provision for information communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is being rapidly developed through very strong leadership.
- Training opportunities for staff and the curriculum followed are not yet having the desired impact on pupils' achievement over time.
- Expenditure on very good resources and equipment ensures that the use of ICT is evident in the majority of subjects.

Commentary

66. There has been good improvement in the provision for ICT since the last inspection. The new subject leader has very appropriately focused on getting information and communication technology established in all classrooms to be used in all lessons. As a consequence a very good range of equipment and resources is now established, including interactive Smart boards, digital still and video cameras, personal computers, controllable toys, numerous switching devices (including those used as communication aids), and electronic communicators. For general use there is a sensory room and a sound beam. Although a very good range of staff training opportunities is provided to complement the resources available as yet this has not yet had its full effect on pupils' achievements over time.

67. Although the development of ICT as a subject is currently satisfactory the potential for further rapid improvement is at least good. The present provision varies from class to class ranging from satisfactory to excellent and depends largely on the skills of particular teachers. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher has very clear objectives for what pupils will learn, has excellent ICT skills and a clear plan of how the lesson's activities will be organised. This clarity of purpose and planning is lacking where teaching is only satisfactory.
68. There is a satisfactory curriculum for ICT, based upon a scheme of work designed for pupils who have severe learning difficulties. However, this is not fully serving the needs of the pupils and the subject co-ordinator has very good plans to improve it. Currently, the progress made by pupils in ICT, as shown by the school's assessment data, is satisfactory. During the inspection, pupils demonstrated good or better ICT skills in a range of subject lessons. They input data and move images around the Smart board, use switches and other devices to communicate, word process their lesson notes and use cameras. However, as yet these skills are not being developed in a planned, progressive way that leads to good achievement over time.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good. Classteachers are making effective use of ICT. In particular, the use of the Smart boards and digital cameras to support teaching by helping to explain difficult ideas to the pupils and reinforce learning is often very good. For example, in a science lesson where Year 5 pupils explore the properties of light, they record their findings using a digital camera and then show them to the whole class on the Smart board at the end of the lesson. Computers are also very well used, for example, to word process work (often adding pictures taken with the digital camera), and also to research a project by searching for information on the Internet.

HUMANITIES

Only two lessons were seen in history, both of which were for pupils in Years 7 to 9. In geography no lessons were seen therefore it is not possible to make a judgement on provision in these subjects. Comments are based mainly on pupils' files and a scrutiny of their work. One lesson was seen in religious education. A judgement on provision, based on scrutiny of work and records, has been made in this subject.

History

70. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was good. The sessions were lively and the teachers were very careful to ensure that the topics covered related directly to pupils' personal experience. In the activity, where Years 7 and 8 pupils were looking at life patterns, very good use of ICT encouraged pupils to match toys suitable for use with children at various stages of development from baby to a ten year old. They achieved very well in this task and learning benefited from the teacher's references to pupils' own brothers and sisters. There was great enjoyment when the pupils learnt that the picture of the child, at various stages of development, was in fact their teacher!
71. The lesson, for Year 9 pupils, focusing on the Second World War was effective because of the range of artefacts used to support pupils' learning. Higher attaining pupils were very interested in examining the identity cards used by people they knew and lower attaining pupils enjoyed handling and smelling the old newspapers of the time. However, the highlight of the lesson was the opportunity they had to try on a gas mask. The impact of this lesson on pupils was evident when, on the playground, they wore proudly around their necks the gas mask boxes they had made during a previous lesson.
72. Scrutiny of work indicates that pupils are given access to a broad and relevant range of experiences in history that are appropriately supported by 'focus' weeks. This provides them with an understanding of the past and to experience times beyond their living memory. The

recent 'Roman Week' was obviously enjoyed by all the school at a level that was appropriate to age and need. Work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 included preparing and eating foods that the Romans enjoyed (stuffed dates) whilst pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefited from the visit of a 'Roman' soldier. Practical activities for pupils in the primary part of the school have included a visit to Bournemouth to make comparison between the age and upkeep of Boscombe and Bournemouth piers.

Geography

73. The evidence available indicates that the curriculum for geography is well planned and provides pupils with a range of appropriate experiences. As is the case with history, 'focus' weeks contribute significantly to the quality of work in this subject. The recent Countries week enabled pupils of all abilities to experience what a different climate is like. It is impressive that open afternoons enable pupils to share with parents the work undertaken in these weeks. Other work in geography has included work on India that has involved pupils dressing up in clothes, dancing to Indian music and preparing food and drink. These are valuable experiences that contribute very much to pupils' understanding of a culture different to their own. It is clear that work in this subject is appropriately enhanced by residential visits to different countries and by day visits to, for example, a local seaside resort.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, that provides pupils with a range of rich experiences, motivates pupils to learn and achieve well.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and cultural awareness.
- Although lesson content and language is sometimes difficult for pupils to understand, opportunities are appropriately taken to develop pupils' writing skills.

Commentary

74. Pupils in all year groups achieve well in religious education in all areas of the school. This is a similar finding to the last inspection. The very youngest pupils participate in and enjoy a good range of celebrations from many different faiths. For example, they have undertaken special cooking activities to celebrate Diwali and Christmas. Older pupils in Years 3 to 6 have learned about the story of the Chinese New Year, using skills learnt in other subjects to create a large model of a Chinese dragon. They learn about caring for others as part of their religious education lessons and, as such, the subject contributes well to the development of their personal and social skills.
75. Older pupils in Years 7 to 11 study many different faiths. Higher attaining pupils learn about some of the famous people from the Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Islamic religions. Evidence is available showing that work undertaken in the past has included visits to local churches as well as to a mosque. Pupils have also experienced celebrations such as Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat, as well as a very special Remembrance Day service. Such activities enhance their cultural awareness and ensure that lower attaining pupils are appropriately included in lessons. The local community is used well to support learning in religious education with visits from local church leaders who help to lead assemblies and tell stories.
76. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage lessons well. This, together with the exciting activities that they plan, ensures pupils stay on task, actively participate and behave very well. Teachers take care to develop literacy skills in lessons encouraging higher attaining pupils to write about the stories and celebrations that they

learn about. For example, in pupils' books in Years 10 and 11, there are some good extended pieces of writing about the stories of the Creation, Noah, and Moses. Just occasionally, the language and content of the subject is too complex and not enough attempt is made to aid understanding through the use of clear signing.

77. Currently changes are being made to the way the school monitors provision in this area of the curriculum therefore it is too early to make a judgement on recently introduced arrangements. However, teaching is based on a well respected commercial scheme that ensures pupils are provided with a range of work and experiences that ensure their understanding develops in a way appropriate to their age and need.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

One lesson was observed in design and technology. A judgement about provision in this subject is not being made.

78. Pupils' work in design and technology is well displayed around the school, showing that the school community takes pride in their achievements in this area of the curriculum. This, together with evidence from past work, indicates that a broad and balanced range of activities are planned and taught. Good focused tasks allow pupils to learn about designing, making and evaluating their own work. In the younger classes, for example, pupils have made Easter baskets from card, using scissors and glue well. There are good links with a local school and joint lessons take place regularly. Food technology is a major component of the subject and older pupils in Years 5 to 9 have been making their own vegetable soup as part of a healthy diet unit of work. They have undertaken research into the ingredients of tinned soup, resulting in good understanding of healthy food, linking well to their PSHE lessons. The accommodation and resources for design and technology are good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In art no lessons were observed and only one was observed in music therefore no judgements have been made about provision in these subjects

Art and Design

79. Art work on display shows that pupils follow a stimulating curriculum with opportunities to work in different media. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 9 have designed stained glass windows and hand painted their designs onto glass using glass paint. Photographic evidence shows that pupils enjoy working with clay and paint and using different materials to make collage pictures. Pupils learn to work in the style of different artists. An example of this is the drawings in the style of Wassily Kandinsky which have been completed by Years 10 and 11. The work is well executed and the pupils have produced carefully drafted pieces of extended writing about their pictures.

Music

80. In the lesson observed, pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoyed singing action rhymes and number songs. All pupils, including those with PMLD, were able to join in the actions because they were given good individual support. Pupils benefit from the good links which the school has developed with professional musicians such as the Salisbury Chamber Orchestra. The orchestra work regularly with the pupils who then join mainstream schools to perform at the Salisbury City Hall. Pupils also participate in the Swindon and Wiltshire Special Schools Music Festival. These good opportunities to perform promote pupils' confidence and self esteem very well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Three lessons were seen in physical education. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' records and discussions with teachers and pupils.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are very well matched to the needs of the pupils and promote personal improvement very well.
- All pupils take part in a very good range of physical and sporting activities.
- The curriculum is appropriately enhanced by the opportunities pupils have to attend a residential outdoor pursuits centre.

Commentary

81. Pupils' achievement is very good. The school places a very strong emphasis upon physical education and ensures that pupils participate in a wide range of physical and sporting activities, whatever their special educational needs. As a consequence the very high standards reported on at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
82. Pupils of all ages achieve very well in relation to their individual level of physical development. In gymnastics, for example, although pupils vary considerably in their ability to use climbing and balancing equipment, they manage to take their turn and achieve personal success. Pupils with complex physical needs also achieve very well in their individual programmes. Many pupils, in Years 10 and 11, have skills in physical education that come within the normal range for their ages. They are able to participate very well in games, such as basketball and football, alongside their peers in a local community college.
83. Very good teaching focuses very clearly on encouraging every pupil to succeed. This is achieved by very careful planning of activities so that they match the individual needs of pupils, along with very good individual support that gives each pupil as much independence as possible. Pupils who have more profound difficulties receive very good teaching and support. They follow the same lessons as other pupils but activities are adapted for their needs and staff work with them individually to help them make movements with targeted parts of their bodies.
84. Apart from the range of activities provided within lessons, pupils take part in a wide range of additional sporting activities, including horse riding, a basketball tournament, a football festival, and athletics as part of local youth games. Also they have received coaching from members of a local football team. Each year pupils attend a residential outdoor pursuits centre, where they experience, for example, walking, climbing, caving, archery, and canoeing. The school also places particular emphasis upon promoting pupils' achievements in swimming. The subject has been managed well in the past to maintain its high standards. Recently, the responsibilities for curriculum management have changed and it is too early to judge whether the new approach is being successful.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Evidence from discrete lessons in this curriculum area was limited to one during the inspection. However, it is possible to make a judgement on provision as a result of scrutiny of work, the observation of pupils and their responses in lessons across the curriculum and in activities such as snack and lunchtime.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults' very positive responses to pupils give them the confidence to make choices without fear of failure.
- Opportunities, both formal and informal, are taken to develop and extend pupils' personal and social skills.
- Pupils are provided with a rich and varied curriculum at a level appropriate to their age and need.
- The quality and range of experiences provided for older pupils places a very appropriate emphasis on citizenship and preparation for leaving school.

Commentary

85. The emphasis placed by all adults on pupils' personal and social development is a strength of the school. Opportunities are rarely missed in lessons to encourage pupils to undertake tasks and to make choices. Staff are genuinely interested in the responses that pupils give, even when these appear to be off task, and this provides pupils with the confidence to develop and extend their skills. The success of these strategies is evident in the impressive way a Year 5 pupil spontaneously answers the phone, showing excellent social skills, and in the way a Year 11 pupil tolerates and responds sensitively to the unwanted attentions of a younger pupil in assembly. The very good progress that pupils make in the development of their personal and social skills is also clearly demonstrated in the P Scale and National Curriculum level data collected by the school. This is supported by well-annotated evidence in pupils' file. However, the one lesson observed for pupils in Year 3 was judged to be satisfactory because it was not clear what the classteacher hoped to achieve in terms of learning outcomes.
86. The opportunities that snack and lunchtimes provide to develop pupils' skills are integral to school routines. At these times staff are very keen to promote the importance of healthy eating and provide pupils with choices, for example between fruit or a piece of raw carrot. Although one pupil made a point of informing the inspector that they would much rather have sweets it was impressive the way pupils in Year 7 and 8 accepted what they were offered. During these pleasant social occasions pupils invariably sit quietly, demonstrating very good manners appropriate to their age and ability. At lunchtime pupils between Years 7 and 11, who have the capability, are encouraged to determine their own targets which are mainly concerned with development of personal and social skills. They recount with confidence what their targets are, stating with much pride that their lunch box contains the required piece of fruit. They are clearly motivated by the ownership that they have of their targets.
87. Pupils' annual review reports, annotated evidence sheets and classroom displays demonstrate very clearly the impressive range of work that is undertaken in this area of the curriculum. Pupils cannot fail to benefit from the range of extra curricular activities that enhance the curriculum and the impact that residential trips have on personal development should not be underestimated. For example, the excellent experiences provided for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to visit the French markets in Salisbury or visit Europa Park in Germany is something that the school can justifiably be proud of. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to benefit from such valuable experiences and, in addition, have access to a curriculum that includes science fairs looking at 'microbes and dirty hands,' safety in the home, personal hygiene and healthy eating. In Years

7 to 9 the quality foundation established in previous years continues with an entirely appropriate curriculum that includes modules on friendships and relationships. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 benefits very much from the structure and focus provided by the Asdan 'Transition Challenge' module. This prepares pupils very well for the challenges that will face them in early adulthood and includes sex education, citizenship and work experience.

88. Although it is difficult, because of recent changes in curriculum arrangements, to make a judgement on leadership and management it is clear that commercial curriculum followed by the school has provided the basis for very good provision in this area. Resources for learning in PSHE are good. As this subject was not reported on at the time of the last inspection it is not appropriate to make a judgement on improvement since then.

Post 16

Provision for Post 16 students is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are provided with age appropriate activities in a way that very effectively extends basic skills and encourages personal development.
- Very effective leadership engenders a strong team spirit which ensures that students' needs are well met in a sensitive way.
- Students are very well prepared for leaving school.

Commentary

89. Students achieve very well in the Post 16 unit, particularly in the projects that they work on for a nationally recognised award. Their work is very carefully presented, making very good use of word processing skills and digitally produced photographs, Swimming and other sporting certificates in Records of Achievement folders indicates that provision in physical development is very good.
90. Teaching and learning are very good. Activities are appropriate to the ages of the students. The day is well planned to provide order and consistency. It begins appropriately with seated activities that create a calm atmosphere in which core skills of literacy and numeracy are extended alongside the development of personal skills. Staff balance the students' need for support against their need for maximum independence very successfully. Consequently the tasks given to students within lessons are very well matched to their individual abilities, being adapted where necessary. Very effective teamwork ensures that support with tasks is targeted very accurately to where it is needed. Behaviour management is very good and appropriate to the ages of the students. Staff are more likely to reason with students than give them orders.
91. The Post16 class is very well led and managed. The provision for students is very tightly organised. The role of the leader as a senior manager of the school gives additional status to the provision. The curriculum is very relevant to the needs of all students and provides an interesting range of activities, at school and in the local community. The enterprise scheme is highly successful. It covers a wide range of skills, gives students a very good view of the world of work and enables them to contribute funds to the school and to charitable causes. The support given to pupils and their parents regarding the transition to adult provision is very good. Prior to leaving school, students engage in visits to their new establishment and receive visits from the prospective members of staff that will be working with them in the future.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
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	2
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	3

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 Exeter House 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.*