

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSDOWN SCHOOL

Southend-on-Sea

LEA area: Southend-on-Sea

Unique reference number: 115442

Acting Headteacher: Anne Parsons

Lead inspector: Ian Naylor

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th June 2005

Inspection number: 268586

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:	3 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	80
School address:	Snakes Lane Southend-on-Sea Essex
Postcode:	SS2 6XT
Telephone number:	01702 505607
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Moss
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Kingsdown is a special school currently catering for pupils with predominantly physical and neurological impairment. The school serves the local town community and a wide area of southeast Essex. There are 77 full time and three part time pupils, six of whom have English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. Most pupils are white British and a few are Asian British. The school provides outreach support to 68 pupils of all ages in other local schools. It provides a range of integrated activities in local secondary, special and junior schools. It also has a recognised centre for supporting pupils with visual impairment (this is not part of the current inspection). There is a newly opened Child Development Centre on the same campus, with which the school has a very close liaison. The school is involved with many local and national initiatives, including those for Inclusion, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Provision for under 3s, National Physical Education and School Sport Professional Development Programme, and Trident Gold (Work Experience). It also provides community provision for family learning and support programmes, community use of facilities, drop in facilities and community outreach. The school recently achieved CAP status (Community Aids Project in ICT), and the Healthy Schools Award in 2003. The school is currently the subject of advanced local education authority reorganisation proposals.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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11041	Marvyn Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
22178	Kate Robertson	<i>Team inspector</i>	English Work-related learning
30243	Anne Heakin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage French Music
23390	Melvyn Blackband	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design Design and technology
1224	Graham Todd	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Information and communication technology
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3055	Clive Tombs	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education Geography Personal, social and health education English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school with many very good features. Despite impending reorganisation, the acting headteacher and staff maintain a wonderfully calm, very happy, secure and positive teaching and learning environment for pupils. Pupils thrive in their communication, social and independence skills as a result of the consistently good teaching and the very high quality of provision for welfare support, and they make good achievement across all the subjects and areas of the curriculum. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is excellent in physical education, and very good in personal, social and health education (PSHE), French, and music, and it is good overall. This is because of the frequently good, often very good, and sometimes excellent quality of teaching.
- Relationships across the school are excellent.
- Learning and care assistants (LCAs) provide superb support to pupils' medical and welfare needs as well as helping pupils to make the very best of all learning opportunities, particularly through the use of communication aids.
- The senior leadership team provides good leadership and very good management.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes, and behaviour is exemplary.
- The school has very effective links with parents, the community and other schools.
- The school provides a very strong outreach service to other schools.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of additional curriculum activities.
- The work-related curriculum for pupils in Years 10 to 12 is good.
- The curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage needs to be applied more consistently.
- Although a great deal has been achieved to improve and increase accommodation, there remain a few areas which inhibit the opportunities for learning.

All the areas for improvement detailed at the last inspection in 1999 have been successfully addressed and the school has remained effective in all areas of its provision. The school is currently in the process of reorganisation under a local authority scheme due to be completed in autumn 2006. This had led to some changes within staffing and there is at present an acting senior leadership team. Preparations by senior staff for a change in the school's designation and to its pupil population are well in hand. The school is working closely with the local authority to bring about the necessary changes and to ensure the minimum amount of disruption to pupils and staff.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11/12	Good	Very good

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

Achievement is good overall at the end of Years 6, 9 and 11. In physical education it is excellent across the school. In PSHE it is very good at all ages. In French in Years 7 to 8, and in music in Years 1 to 6, achievement was very good in the lessons seen. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art, design and technology, and religious education, and in the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. In

work-experience and work related learning, pupils in Year 10,11 and 12 make good progress. Pupils make particularly good progress in using communication aids. There are very good achievements in dance and drama. Pupils whose first language is not English make good progress in their communication skills. Relationships across the school are outstanding and make a very significant contribution to pupils' progress and achievement. Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Attendance is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is **good** overall across the year groups, and is often very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching was judged to be excellent in physical education, and in a sample of lessons seen in music in Years 1 to 6. It was very good in PSHE. Pupils' learning is particularly enhanced by the good use of communication aids and signing. It is also extremely well supported by the dedication and effectiveness of LCAs. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities and relevant activities. There are very good extended opportunities beyond the school day and by way of visits, cultural activities and residential trips throughout the school year. There is some excellent practice within the provision for pupil welfare, guidance and support, which is very good overall. The links with parents, local schools and the community are of very good quality and give invaluable support to pupils' learning. The school provides an extended outreach provision that is of high quality and greatly valued by recipient schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The temporary senior leadership team have managed to sustain a good quality of leadership by working successfully together, encouraging very good teamwork and giving good support to all staff during difficult times. There are very effective management systems and procedures in place. These include robust procedures and controls for financial management and administration. The governance of the school is good and is led by a very experienced and dedicated chair and vice chairman who are successfully helping to steer the school through the current organisational changes. The governing body meets all its legal responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of all that the school does for their children and believe the school to be a happy and safe place.

Pupils are extremely happy at the school and value the opportunities that staff create for them to express their views and make their own decisions.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant areas of weakness. The most important things the school should do to develop further are:

- Provide consistent opportunities for children to meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of Reception.
- Improve further areas of the accommodation, particularly in the library, the science facility, and space in some of the classrooms.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** across the school in each year group.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement against their individual targets shows a good rate of improvement from each year group to the next.
- Achievement is highest in physical, expressive and creative activities, and in personal development.
- Students in the senior part of the school make good progress in their work-related learning (WRL).

Commentary

1. Pupils make good progress in their individual achievements from the low level of achievement that most have on entry, to the scoring of grades at GCSE level by the time they leave school. Pupils make significant and consistent gains against their own personal targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs). As a result, achievement is good overall by the end of Years 2, 6, 9 and 11. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Despite their physical difficulties, pupils take part extremely successfully in a whole range of activities, both in the school day and beyond.

2. In physical education, achievement is excellent across the school and it is particularly remarkable in swimming and dance. There are very good achievements in dance and drama. For example, senior pupils take part in an inter-school performance alongside their mainstream peers. They participate successfully in the varied physical activities involved in the Kielder Challenge. Pupils with complex physical needs successfully follow an Integrated Movement Programme and make significant gains in their mobility and self-confidence. In PSHE, pupils of all ages make very good progress in their social skills. Pupils and students are proud to be members of the school council, and can make their views known. They have a very good awareness of environmental issues and of healthy living.

3. Achievement is consistently good and sometimes very good. Progress and achievement are very good in the lessons and in work seen, in French in Years 7 to 8 and in music in Years 1 to 6. In the other subjects there is similarly good picture, with pupils working hard in all that they do and meeting with good success. Achievement is good in English. Pupils make particularly good progress in using communication aids. This helps them not just with their literacy skills but also in the reading and writing and the expressive work needed for other areas of the curriculum. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, religious education, and in the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception.

4. In work experience and work related learning, pupils in Year 10,11 and 12 make very good progress. All pupils take part in work experience according to their abilities. For example, a girl had a very successful placement in a florist and gained in confidence and self-esteem from her contact with adults and members of the public. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of the adult world of work with the support of the local careers guidance service. Pupils make good progress and achievement when they attend link courses and 'taster-days' at the local further education college.

5. Achievement is good for pupils with additional special educational needs and for those whose first language is not English. Pupils' IEPs are carefully monitored and the progress of each pupil

with additional needs is efficiently tracked. These provide clear indication of pupils' consistently good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are **very good**. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are punctual for lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' behaviour is very good.
- The school has high expectations for pupils' conduct.
- The school caters very well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs.

Commentary

6. Pupils behave very well both in and out of lessons. They are extremely interested in school life and the many opportunities offered to them to be enterprising and take responsibility. They are enthusiastic in lessons, expect to work hard, and behave well. Pupils relish being members of the school council, being appointed 'buddies', acting as monitors and helpers, and engaging in many other activities which encourage them to develop their social skills and confidence.

7. Relationships between pupils, peer groups and staff are excellent. The school is a calm, warm and caring community. There is a complete absence of bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.

8. Pupils value the views and beliefs of others. This is because of the very successful personal health and social education (PHSE) programme and the positive example shown by staff. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils receive good counselling and support through difficult periods and this enables them to explore emotions, discuss their feelings and develop their empathy.

9. Pupils' curiosity, imagination and reflection are encouraged and are nurtured through the curriculum, out-of-school enrichment activities and acts of collective worship. Visits are arranged to a local synagogue, temple, churches and other places of worship.

10. Pupils' moral welfare is promoted well by the positive behaviour strategies introduced by the school. The school motto of "share, care and be fair" was devised by pupils and reflects the code of morality they uphold for their community. In school council, circle time or PHSE lessons, pupils are free to comment and express their views on a variety of moral and ethical issues. Pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility for younger pupils, and raise money for local and national charities.

11. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. Many school visits are arranged and there are many visitors to school, all of which extend pupils' experiences and social skills. Many are able to articulate their views and express their opinions with confidence.

12. The school ensures, through the teaching of PHSE and multicultural events, that cultural differences are recognised and celebrated as bringing richness to the community. The school has arranged a multicultural week where speakers from differing faiths and cultures come in to school to talk about their life experiences. Pupils study the work of artists and musicians. and pupils' own artwork and writing is displayed prominently in the hall and classrooms.

13. Attendance is good. There have been no exclusions of any type for many years.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. The curriculum is good and there are many very good extended opportunities available to pupils during and beyond the school day. There are excellent features within the overall very good provision for pupil welfare, guidance and support. The links with parents, local schools and the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **good** overall across each of the year groups, and is often very good and sometimes excellent.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 53 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (15%)	16 (30 %)	23 (43%)	6 (11 %)	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.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is excellent in physical education across the school, and in music in Years 1 to 6. It is very good in PSHE.
- Pupils' learning is particularly enhanced by the good use of communication aids and signing.
- Pupils' progress is extremely well supported by the teamwork of staff and the dedication and effectiveness of LCAs.
- The procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are good.

Commentary

14. The excellent teaching seen in physical education (PE), in two lessons in music, and in one lesson in food technology is the result of superb planning, very good subject knowledge and, in particular, the collaboration and teamwork between staff. The ultimate success of some of the lessons in music for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is due to the school's collaboration with other schools and the use of the specialist expertise of their staff. The school quite rightly prides itself on the very good way that personal development and social skills are taught across the school, a strength which also enables pupils to make very good progress in many other areas of learning. Teaching is rarely less than good across all the subjects and there is no teaching that is unsatisfactory.

15. This high quality of teaching is characterised by excellent relationships and respect between adults and pupils, and by a detailed knowledge of pupils' individual academic, medical and personal needs. It is also seen in the staff's ability to work as a team to give consistent support to pupils, enabling them to make the very best progress in their learning for whatever part of the school curriculum is being taught. Pupils' efforts and work are always praised and given high value by staff. This is evident from the many high quality displays of pupils' work in the school. Teachers meet regularly to review each pupil's progress to ensure their full access to the lesson activities. Pupils are made aware of their own specific targets, and older pupils are encouraged to contribute to evaluating their own success.

16. The role of the LCAs is pivotal in enabling pupils to communicate and therefore to gain the most from their lessons. In particular, this is shown by the expertise of LCAs in their consistent approach to the use of signing, the preparation, and the monitoring of the use by pupils of augmented communication aids such as Big Macs and 'talkers'. Teachers and LCAs ensure that those pupils using aids are given sufficient time to respond and that their views are listened to in discussions. The LCAs carry out their responsibilities for pupils' welfare extremely well and ensure that pupils are always comfortable and fully involved in every learning activity.

17. Teachers and LCAs follow good practice in regularly assessing the changing needs of pupils and sensitively adapting resources to ensure that they gain full access to the curriculum. Pupils are able to develop their skills in very small groups, for instance in 'Chatterbox' sessions where two pupils played guessing games, using their speech aids. The pupils were very motivated to develop their vocabulary and their speed in using the devices, and they made good progress in the session. All staff make good use of ICT to support learning and there has been an increase in staff knowledge and its use in the subjects since the last inspection. Increasingly, teachers are making good use of the electronic whiteboards to illustrate and enliven their subjects, and this provides a very good medium for pupil interaction and learning. They are greatly assisted in this by the very good skills of the ICT technician.

18. There is a good assessment and marking policy in place. The assessment records are thorough and well kept. Training has been provided for staff and they are implementing the policies well. For example, day-to-day assessments ensure that pupils are assessed against learning objectives, the results of which feed into teachers' planning.

19. The annual review is used very effectively to involve parents and professionals in the assessment of pupils' progress. The outcome of this review forms the basis for the new cycle on which pupils' IEPs are based. These are of a good quality and are monitored regularly by the co-ordinator and leadership team. They ensure that the targets are relevant to the individual pupil. The school is working hard to involve pupils more in the target-setting process.

20. A new computer program has recently been introduced to improve the accuracy of assessment. When it is fully implemented it should provide a more rigorous system of tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school.

21. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with complex special needs is very good.
- The curriculum is rich and varied, providing pupils with a good range of interesting learning activities.
- The provision for PSHE is good and underpins pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched through visits, visitors to the school, and a very good variety of out-of-school activities.
- Provision for inclusion is very good and that for pupils with English as a second language is good.
- There are shortcomings in the accommodation.

Commentary

22. The school provides a well-balanced and interesting curriculum that is planned carefully to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and to build on their learning as they move up the school. This enables them to achieve well in all subjects and other areas of learning. The school meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education, and for sex and drug misuse education. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils with complex physical, neurological and special educational needs to have equal access to all facilities, ensuring their inclusion in all lessons and aspects of school life.

23. The school continues to look at ways of improving individual planning for those pupils with more complex needs. It reviews and updates its curriculum regularly through a strong subject audit and development policy, which is consistently applied by all the subject leaders. For example, the

religious education curriculum is being amended to meet the requirements of the new Local Authority Agreed Syllabus, and yet to remain relevant and of appeal to the pupils. A good range of nationally accredited courses is available, so that all pupils are able to gain recognition for their success. Most recently, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses have been introduced to supplement the various levels of General Certificate of Secondary Education courses. Planning is appropriately adapted for pupils with additional special educational needs. Teachers have developed expertise in providing for pupils with specific language difficulties. Pupils are encouraged to communicate using signs and symbols, and more disabled pupils are taught how to use a variety of augmentative electronic speech aids.

24. The provision of PSHE is very good. It is achieved through regular, day-to-day interactions, stories, assemblies and class discussions, and in a planned programme of lessons each week for every pupil. Staff give particular emphasis to keeping pupils informed about the changes that are planned for the school, the progress that is being made and how they might be affected. The school fulfils its commitment to teach about drugs, sex and relationships. The school takes part in the Healthy Schools scheme and this is reflected well in the life of the school. Pupils are well prepared for the later stages of education. Work experience and good links with the careers service serve to ease the pupils' transition into the adult world.

25. The curriculum is extended very well. There is a very good number and variety of after-school activities as well as clubs at lunchtime. There is a substantial programme of day visits and residential experiences to broaden the pupils' horizons and enhance their learning opportunities. Visitors to the school are also used well to support the curriculum. Multicultural weeks make a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of other cultures. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn with pupils of other schools, and these include technology, drama, art, music and physical education lessons, as well as public performance at the Southend-in-Bloom Festival. A particular success is the school's participation in the annual Kielder Challenge.

26. The programme for inclusion is very well organised and jointly monitored by the acting deputy head and subject co-ordinators from Kingsdown School and senior staff from other schools. Extensive links with primary, special and secondary schools, built up over time, provide a large number of pupils with effective learning opportunities in various settings. These include drama with a local secondary school, dance with a local theatre company, and integrated lessons with other schools in physical education, music, art, and technology. The inclusion programme makes a very significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development and raises disability awareness with their peers in mainstream schools.

27. The six pupils for whom English is a second language are clearly identified and a teacher has responsibility for monitoring their progress. The curriculum offers enhanced opportunities for speaking and listening, including signing and the use of communication aids, and all staff provide effective models of spoken and written English. Classrooms provide a welcoming environment in which bilingual pupils feel confident to contribute. An interpreter is made available as required for meetings or annual reviews.

28. The uncertainty about the future of the school has meant that a number of part-time teachers are employed, but, significantly, teachers are well matched to the classes they teach by qualifications, training or experience. Supporting the teachers are experienced and well-trained learning and care assistants, who complement the skills employed by the teachers so that all pupils have very good access to the whole curriculum and other aspects of school life.

29. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. A great deal has been achieved to provide better facilities since the last inspection, for example the new annexe containing a music room and activity soft-play area. There are a number of specialist teaching rooms for practical subjects in the secondary department. However, some classrooms have little natural light or wall space for display. Further, several of them have to be used as passages for movement between classrooms. Some classrooms are too small for the wheelchairs and other specialist equipment to be comfortably arranged and to allow for easy movement around them. Similarly, some corridors are only just wide enough for wheelchairs to pass. The oldest pupils have a small social area, but this is not

sufficiently separate from the school to give them a real sense of independence. The school's sensory room suffers from being in dual use and is therefore not always available. There is no seating to encourage pupils to browse in the library during free time. Storage space is also at a premium. Resources for learning are good. The whole school is well maintained by the caretaker and cleaning staff, and decoration is kept in good condition.

Care, guidance and support

The standard of care provided for pupils is **very high**. The school has excellent procedures to ensure that pupils' work in a healthy and safe environment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' welfare, health and safety are very well promoted.
- The school involves pupils well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- Induction arrangements are very good.
- The school provides a very good outreach service to local schools.

Commentary

30. Staff recognise the specific difficulties that pupils have and respond to their individual needs extremely well. Individual education plans reflect the careful review of the pupils' specific targets. These are based securely on continual assessment of their progress. Teachers who are responsible for specific speech and language support record pupils' achievement effectively. There is good liaison between the specialist teachers and other professionals, and this ensures that all teachers are fully aware of the support required for individual pupils.

31. The child protection policy is comprehensive and detailed and it fully complies with Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The child protection co-ordinator and deputy headteacher are fully qualified, and appropriate training is given to all other staff.

32. The school has a full time nurse, a part time nurse and a nursing assistant to provide for pupils' medical needs. There is also an appropriate number of staff trained in first aid. Accidents are meticulously recorded and the nursing staff keep efficient records of medication administered and treatment given.

33. The school health and safety policy is detailed and comprehensive, and risk assessment is carried out to a high standard by all departments. The local authority has arranged an annual health and safety survey of the building. All school visits are very carefully monitored to ensure that risk assessment takes place.

34. Relationships at the school are excellent. The school offers very good help, support and advice to pupils. Pupils feel well cared for and they know whom to go to for advice and help. They feel that all staff are very approachable and concerned for their welfare.

35. The school has very good arrangements for the induction of pupils. Prior to admission, pupils are introduced to the care and support staff; therapists visit homes, and key workers for all new pupils are appointed.

36. The school has very good arrangements to involve pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The school council is a lively forum where pupils themselves chair meetings, take minutes and set the agenda. Council decisions are adopted by the senior management team, and they have included the changing of school uniform, improving school meals, and the issue of special ties for council members. All pupils are encouraged to give their views to staff and are listened to with respect.

37. The specialist staff are particularly effective in adapting their skills to provide for Kingsdown pupils who have additional special educational needs. Pupils are provided with a high degree of expert support in augmentative communication, using signs, symbols and electronic aids.

38. The school offers a very good standard of advice and help to pupils on further study or careers opportunity.

39. There is a long tradition of outreach work provided by the school, and this is valued by local schools and the local authority. This provision is of a very high quality, provided largely by specialist advanced skills teachers. The school provides support to mainstream schools and pupils in literacy work and in work for pupils with specific language difficulties. Staff are able to advise mainstream teachers on the use of computers and other electronic aids to ensure that pupils gain full access to the curriculum. Other teachers give support to pupils with difficulties in mobility and co-ordination. In addition these teachers provide valuable training opportunities for mainstream staff and parents. The service is held in great esteem by local schools and parents.

40. Outreach teachers carry out a thorough assessment of the needs of pupils referred to them by the local authority. Teachers then make good use of their expertise in advising and negotiating with mainstream staff over suitable programmes for each pupil. The outreach teachers maintain a close involvement with pupils and teachers and regularly review and evaluate pupils' progress.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information to parents about the school and about pupils' achievement and progress is of high quality.
- The school involves parents well through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- The school has very good procedures to ensure satisfaction and to deal with any complaints or concerns

Commentary

41. The school gives all parents a very high level of support. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and who attended the parents' evening thought that: the school is well led and managed; pupils achieve well; parents receive good information about their children's progress; the school deals sensitively with any concerns they have, and pupils' behaviour is very good. The inspection findings confirm these positive remarks.

42. Information provided for parents about the school and about their children's progress is of a very high standard. This includes the school brochure and regular newsletters. The governors' report to parents is well presented and contains all statutory information. Annual pupil progress reports are well written and give good information to parents on areas studied, progress made and targets set for further improvement.

43. Parents are fully consulted in annual reviews of their child's individual education plan and are invited to contribute to target setting. There are regular parents' evenings where all parents are invited to attend to discuss their children's progress with staff and carers. There are workshops to give parents information on how they can help to improve their child's learning. Recent courses for them have included Internet safety. Teachers have also successfully provided information and training for parents in signing and in using communication aids. Teachers and parents keep in contact with one another about a child's progress by means of a home-school book. Pupils are able to take the speech aids home for additional practice.

44. Parents are actively encouraged to help in school and some take the opportunity to do so. They help in the integrated movement programme, hydrotherapy pool, assisting in classrooms and acting as escorts on school trips. Parents are invited to all school events, including harvest festival, carol concert, Celebration Day sports day and the Easter assembly.

45. The school has arranged monthly coffee mornings for parents, with differing speakers on topics which enable them to become more involved in their children's education. The school regularly contacts parents by telephone or letter if it has cause for concern over pupils' conduct or work or if it wishes to praise them.

46. The school actively seeks parents' views by sending out an annual questionnaire, and has adopted parents' views on school meals and nursing cover. A working party including staff, parents and governors has been set up to analyse the results of the parents' questionnaires and to produce an action plan to improve school policy.

47. The school has an active parents' association that arranges a large number of successful fund raising and social events.

48. The school has very strong links with the community. Community groups use the school premises for a variety of purposes. Local businesses not only provide work placement opportunities but also raise substantial sums of money for school use. Many speakers come in to the school from the community to give talks about their life experiences, and pupils take part in local community events such as drama and arts festivals, a local theatre company and the Leigh Arts Festival.

49. The local Primary Care Trust arranges for multi-disciplinary clinics to be held at the school. The school has worked extremely closely with the local health authority to plan and provide a new child development centre on the school site, and is exploring ways of working together. The healthy schools week and multicultural events involve many visiting people from the local community. The school runs six support groups to serve the local community, all of which are well attended.

50. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. These include the many links with local primary schools as part of the school's outreach provision. Pupils take part in the Kielder Challenge with pupils from the local high school in the national outdoor educational experience. They join local primary school pupils in a multicultural dance programme, and pupils from many year groups attend mainstream schools for sessions, including drama, dance, music and sports.

51. The school has very good methods for the transfer of its pupils. Full liaison takes place with receiving schools to provide documentation and discussion regarding specific needs. Each pupil has a personal transition plan, which begins in Year 9 and is built on year on year until they leave. Parents, social workers, Connexions staff and therapists all contribute to the plan. Arrangements are made for link courses and 'taster' visits to colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good**. Management is **very good**. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior leadership team work together very well.
- There are very good management systems and procedures.
- Future strategic planning for the new pupil population under reorganisation is limited in vision and direction.
- Governors exercise their responsibilities well and give good support to staff.
- Financial planning and controls are good.

Commentary

52. The acting headteacher has used her depth of experience and expertise well to sustain the good quality of education and uphold the long and successful traditions of the school. She has successfully held together the staff team in difficult times. She works in close harmony with the other senior team members. The members of the senior leadership team, together with the advanced skills teachers, show good leadership, for example in the way they set very good role models and inspire staff confidence. This is especially important to the newly qualified and newer members of staff.

53. There is a very high quality of management. Senior staff are very well organised, work together well, have a clear view of the current school priorities, and have worked hard to complete earlier developments. Very good work continues in the school's provision for outreach and its commitments for staff training and guidance to other local schools and teachers. Staff induction, training and well-being are well directed and organised to make the best use of staff skills and to extend their areas of expertise. This is best exemplified by the consistently high quality of work and flexibility shown by learning and care assistants. It is seen in the good performance management arrangements. Additionally, it is evident in the systems introduced for the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and in the very early introduction of the workforce reforms which allocate appropriate planning and preparation time to teachers.

54. Subject leaders from primary and secondary parts of the school prepare subject action plans and make reports to the governors on the achievement of pupils and the quality of the curriculum. These roles are well defined and subject leaders have some allocated time for monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, staff expertise has not been markedly affected by changes caused by recent staff turnover. This is because the senior leadership team has been creative and constructive in the recruitment and deployment of staff.

55. Planning has begun in school for the reorganisation in 2006. A great deal of work has been completed on a new staffing structure. Roles, responsibilities and staff training needs have been identified, together with job descriptions and personal specifications for all (including newly created posts). This has taken place in conjunction with the five-year funding plan, plans for a new build, re-designation, and a new admissions policy. Work has also begun on curriculum development. The senior leadership team have worked hard not to let this planning overshadow the needs of current pupils.

56. Management of the pupils with additional special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator keeps very good records of pupils' progress and monitors provision efficiently to ensure that planning is adapted appropriately and that pupils have access to the extra support they require.

57. Although the local authority provides funding for most of the work of the outreach service, the school gives extra support to schools, which is paid for from the school's budget. The headteacher manages the service efficiently. Specialist teachers have considerable freedom to manage their own time and caseload and they have developed their skills to a high level. They are very well supported and the head teacher monitors the workload regularly.

58. A small core of governors are very active in their work for the school. The chair and vice-chair of governors in particular are very experienced and have given the school support and commitment for many years, especially with improvement to accommodation and with financial management. However, there are vacancies for governors at present, particularly for parent governors. The governing body is actively seeking to fill these vacancies as soon as possible. Governors have good procedures for their committees and carry out their roles and responsibilities well to meet all legal requirements. The acting headteacher and governors have worked hard to keep parents fully informed about the forthcoming changes to the school's designation and pupil intake.

59. The school spends its allocated funds efficiently and pupil costs are within generally accepted national parameters. The amount carried forward in the budget is considerably larger than the previous year, mainly as a result of extra income devolved from the local authority for the changes

under redesignation. The school's finances are well managed by an efficient administrator and are suitably monitored by the acting headteacher and local authority finance managers. There is an efficient and well led governors' finance committee which scrutinises documentation and whose meetings the school administrator attends. Governors are kept well informed, make good spending decisions and are in a strong position to advise and challenge the senior management of the school over the school budget. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,491,393	Balance from previous year	88,496
Total expenditure	1,391,815	Balance carried forward to the next	188,074
Expenditure per pupil	16,374		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for WRL is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work-related learning (WRL) is not identified in all areas of the curriculum.
- Positive links with the Connexions Service support well the pupils' preparation for life after school.
- Students with complex needs are included in the good work experience opportunities.

Commentary

60. The programme for WRL is still developing but the range of activities already available to pupils and students is good. Enterprise activities, such as making and selling cakes and biscuits to sell at break times, give pupils and students some understanding of business activities. Teaching is good and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and preparation for life after school. The school's programme provides a wide range of experiences, but not all subjects identify contributions to WRL in their planning.

61. Pupils and students have good career guidance, which begins when they are in Year 7 and includes interviews with the Connexions service. Guidance on career and Post-16 opportunities is good. Students also benefit from the opportunity to visit workplaces beyond the school for some carefully monitored and supported work experience. The school provides a dedicated room for the use of Connexions staff, and their advisers meet students regularly to help them plan for future educational or career opportunities. All Year 10 pupils attend work experience, and the school has provided a good range of literature on careers and future education. Within the school community there are also opportunities to take on the responsibility of receptionist. The result of this provision is a broadening of the opportunity for first-hand experience that enables students to reach their full potential. The school has identified a good range of employers, and placement is assured for all those students for whom the school considers work experience to be appropriate. Preparation and debriefing arrangements are good and all pupils and students are carefully monitored and supported during their time at work.

62. There are currently no vocational courses offered to pupils during their last years in school. Students are able to attend link courses at local colleges where opportunities for increased social interaction and access to specialist courses are provided. These prepare them well and contribute to decisions as to which courses will be suitable when they leave school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in personal and physical development is very good.
- Teachers and LCAs work very well as a team.
- The level of care is very good.
- There is a lack of consistency in delivering the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Commentary

63. Owing to reorganisation within the local education authority and health service, the provision for Foundation Stage pupils was unusual at the time of the inspection. The new Children's Centre run by the health authority was set up at the beginning of the summer term, sharing the school campus. Children and staff from the school moved to the new centre. At the beginning of the 2005 autumn term the school will have a new Foundation Stage class. In the meantime, for this term only, the school is providing education for four children who will be in the new school-based Foundation Stage class. This is a sensible decision as it means that this small group of children, three of whom attend part-time, can stay in a familiar building rather than have the turmoil of changing buildings in consecutive terms.

64. The four Foundation Stage children are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. This is difficult to manage because the curriculum is different for the two age groups. The school has tried to adapt the National Curriculum to the needs of the nursery and reception children, but this practice is inconsistent and at times there are not enough practical or play-based activities based on goals they are expected to reach by the end of Reception. The school acknowledges this short-term deficiency and anticipates that the new provision will reflect a consistently appropriate curriculum.

65. Teaching in all areas of learning is good and often very good. Owing to the interim nature of the provision, two teachers share the teaching commitment. The team of LCAs provide continuity in relationships and link the strands of learning between different lessons. The level of care is very good; at all times teachers, LCAs and other care staff ensure that children are comfortable, taking their physical and emotional needs into account. This very effective teamwork ensures that children achieve well throughout the day.

66. High focus is placed on children's **personal, social and emotional development**; staff show suitable affection to the children but remain firm and purposeful in managing their behaviour. The consistency provided by the adults results in children learning the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The regular use of verbal and physical prompts encourages children to be aware of each other and to understand the concept of turn taking. Children achieve very well in developing relationships and becoming more independent. The high level of staffing means that children can frequently benefit from one-to-one interactions. This has a good impact on children's achievement in **communication, language and literacy**. Adults use signing as well as verbal communication, encouraging even the most reluctant children to communicate. Children can seek attention and respond to known adults. They show an interest in storybooks, pointing to pictures, turning pages carefully and listening with interest to simple stories.

67. Children achieve well in **mathematical development**. In a very good lesson, children became totally involved in exploring sand and containers to learn the concepts of 'full' and 'empty' 'heavy' and 'light'. A more sensory approach is successful for children with more complex difficulties; they sit in the sand, feeling the sensation as the learning and care assistant sprinkle sand on their feet and hands, talk to them, and provoke reactions such as smiling and reaching.

68. As part of **knowledge and understanding of the world**, a recent visit to the zoo was used effectively to stimulate interest in animals; digital photographs of the visit are used well in class to give children an idea of the past and present. The growing of cress and sunflower seeds in the classroom provides a good opportunity for children to experience the world of nature.

69. Children achieve very well in **physical development**. This is due to the very effective Integrated Movement Programme. This is a multi-disciplinary approach to children's physical development. Teachers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, rehabilitation assistants and a range of support staff work together to improve children's ability to sit, stretch or stand. The high level of staffing provides an adult for each child. This individual attention, combined with very good relationships and very well planned activities, results in children enjoying their session and participating fully. This aspect of the curriculum, based on children's specific individual needs, is a strength of the Foundation Stage provision.

70. Wall displays of children's work in painting, collage and model-making demonstrates successful work and good progress. With the help of verbal and physical prompts from staff, children achieve well in **creative development**. The children who attend in the afternoon are able to join the excellent music lessons provided by the link school. In the drumming activity they are attentive and very well supported by LCAs, participating in performance and learning to listen to others.

71. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The school has had to contend with a very difficult and unexpected situation, and staff have done their best to work in the interests of the children. Owing to these changes it is not feasible to comment on improvement since the last inspection. Despite any inconsistencies in planning and record keeping, all staff know the children very well and focus their attention appropriately on children's individual learning needs. The LCAs are a very effective team, providing excellent support for teachers and children.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3, 4 AND POST 16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements in English are good by the end of Years 2, 6, 9 and 11.
- The curriculum for English is good, particularly for developing pupils' communication skills and reading.
- Drama enriches the curriculum.
- There is consistent use of augmentative communication systems and increasing use of signing to support pupils' learning.
- The teaching of English is good.
- Leadership and management is good.

Commentary

72. Although there is a wide range of ability in each year group, pupils make good progress. When the pupils enter the school, their attainment in English is very low because of their learning or physical difficulties, and many are at early stages of communication. However, the staff provide effective teaching, a good range of learning opportunities and good assessment, documenting pupils' progress and skills. Good planning introduces pupils to a wide range of literature, from simple stories to Shakespeare. It identifies the resources and skills needed to access books and the Internet for information and is enhanced by drama sessions that culminate in performances for parents and friends. Consequently, pupils' achievements in English are good across the school. Their achievement is best in speaking and listening and reading. Opportunities for accreditation have been improved since the previous inspection with the introduction of ASDAN for lower ability pupils and students. GCSE and entry level accreditation ensures that there is a good level of challenge for higher ability groups.

73. By Year 2, pupils make good progress in their communication and literacy skills. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils speak in simple sentences and others use a mixture of phrases, signs, gestures and new technology to comment on their learning or share their work. In Years 7 to 12 there is strong support for pupils' self-expression, so pupils steadily expand their vocabulary and the ways in which they communicate with others. This means that all students receive accreditation by the time they leave the school. The good progress shown by pupils throughout the school, particularly those with communication difficulties, owes much to the school's very effective development of alternative communication methods for pupils and students with more complex needs. Speaking and listening, reading and writing are all supported by the use of a range of electronic communication aids, enabling pupils with additional learning difficulties to make good and sometimes very good progress.

74. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. The common approach to planning, which is based on national literacy strategy guidelines, ensures a consistent learning environment in which pupils respond to familiar routines. Learning and care assistants (LCAs) make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning. They have clearly identified roles, engage pupils very well and show a high level of care for them.

75. Progress in written communication is also encouraged as pupils learn to form then sequence sentences, to give information, retell a story, or make a request. The use of word processing programs that use symbols makes a very positive contribution to the development of pupils' reading and writing skills. This is because it provides both the motivation and the means to produce longer pieces of writing, with connected sentences. In a very good lesson, for instance, Year 4 pupils wrote a series of sequential sentences based on the *Dear Zoo* book, using a text and symbol grid very successfully. This is just one of several ways in which ICT is very effectively used by staff in the teaching of literacy.

76. The primary and secondary co-ordinators have a clear vision for the development of the subject and the commitment to achieve it. Management is good, with a growing consideration for the introduction of a sensory curriculum to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils. The assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do is good overall, moderated by the co-ordinator, and the information gained is beginning to be used more effectively in planning.

77. Teaching for the six pupils for whom English is a second language is good, and they therefore make good progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

78. In all aspects of the school's life and within other subjects there is strong support for literacy and for communicating, speaking and listening. Staff reinforce pupils' communication skills and are highly sensitive to them in all lessons. Similarly, they use symbols and books very well to support pupils' interest and involvement. The site of the library, however, is not conducive to quiet reflection, reading or research, despite being well stocked with both book and non-book resources.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently very good.
- The curriculum is imaginative and relevant.
- The use of communication has a good impact on the achievement of pupils with more complex difficulties.
- Opportunities for pupils to enjoy first-hand experiences in a foreign country are limited.

Commentary

79. French is taught to pupils from Year 7 to Year 12; all pupils within this age group have good opportunities to learn French and to appreciate aspects of French culture. Pupils achieve well in reading and writing. Samples of work show that they match words to pictures, respond in English to written French text and write answers to oral questioning in French. Achievement in speaking and listening is very good and this aspect of the curriculum is given high priority. Pupils respond very well to questions in French, showing their recall of numbers and their ability to describe themselves and their families in simple sentences. Older pupils develop a more sophisticated vocabulary in a good range of topics. There are good opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation in French. A few pupils achieve GCSE grades and the majority of pupils achieve Entry Level qualifications in French.

80. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. Lessons are very well organised, with a good range of activities and topics to maintain pupils' interest. The teacher makes very good use of multi-media presentations, video and audiotapes. These make the lessons suitably motivating. For example, pupils enjoy the challenges to discuss in French the problems of pollution and the hole in the ozone layer. Simple card games and bingo style activities are used very well to enable pupils to consolidate their new learning. The teacher uses repetition very effectively to encourage pupils to talk with confidence. Pupils enjoy the challenges, are prepared to ask questions and are sufficiently confident to attempt words or phrases, even if they do not get them right the first time. Pupils who have more complex learning needs benefit from the good range of communication aids that ensure they can participate fully in their French lessons. The LCAs are invaluable in supporting pupils in their physical needs but also in supporting the teacher by making resources such as card games and word cards.

81. The subject continues to be well managed. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The specialist teacher is developing more alternative forms of assessment. This will enable pupils to acknowledge their own learning and ensure they are clear about the next topic or skills to be learned. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural awareness, and pupils get occasional opportunities to travel and apply their language skills in shopping or ordering food in a real French environment.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.
- Greater care is needed to ensure that sufficient time is allowed to assess and consolidate learning.
- Good teamwork between the teachers and support staff ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are effective.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively to support, reinforce and extend learning.

Commentary

82. Achievement is good at the end of Years 2, 6, 9 and 11. Results in nationally accredited courses in 2004 show that pupils achieved well. Six pupils gained grades between D and G at GCSE.

83. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and have a range of techniques for making it interesting for the pupils, whose needs they understand very well. Thus, in a very good lesson, the pupils were engrossed in their learning and anxious to move on to each activity. Clear language and practical demonstration were used to reinforce learning and explain the processes involved in understanding 'turn'. Teachers show high expectations of their pupils. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged and all questions are matched to age and ability. This is particularly true for pupils in Years 10 and 11, where lessons are interesting and relevant so that effective learning takes place. As a result, pupils' motivation to work at their accredited courses and examinations is very good. Teaching is not so effective when teachers leave themselves little or no time to assess and consolidate learning. Teachers and LCAs work very well together, and the wide range of needs is very well catered for by suitably adapted activities and recording strategies. Learning and care assistants (LCAs) make a very good contribution to all mathematics lessons. They know the pupils very well and are confident when working with small groups.

84. Assessment procedures are very good and the tracking of pupils' progress is well developed. A good assessment tool has pupils regularly using an ICT program for about twenty minutes at a time during lesson, and this holds their interest and helps them to check how well they have done and to gain an understanding of their progress. Using the same program, the teacher is able to track pupils' attainment and compare standards with national averages.

85. The subject is well led and managed. The quality of teaching and lesson planning is checked regularly. An effective audit of mathematics provision has identified key areas of development. Targets are set for mathematics in individual education plans and pupils know them well and have a good understanding of what they should do to improve their work. The number and type of accredited courses and examinations meet pupils' needs well. The National Numeracy Strategy is adapted and used effectively to meet pupils' needs. Although good in some classes, teachers' marking and their use of comments to guide pupils' learning is inconsistent. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. There are several examples where mathematics is used effectively across the curriculum in practical and relevant situations. Pupils weigh and measure ingredients for a recipe in food technology as part of their ASDAN course. They interpret tally charts, pie charts and pictograms in

information and technology lessons. They use the Internet and a spreadsheet to compare prices at local supermarkets. However, the promotion of numeracy across the curriculum is less well developed and not yet included in planning in all subjects.

SCIENCE

The provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and excellent support from learning and care assistants.
- Leadership is good and the co-ordinator is keen to raise standards of achievement.
- The specialist accommodation is small, cramped and not very suitable for wheelchair users.

Commentary

87. Throughout the school pupils achieve well in science and make good progress with their learning. Several higher attaining pupils attained good results in the 2004 GCSE examinations. The good progress of lower attaining pupils owes much to the dedication and excellent support from the learning and care assistants.

88. Teaching is consistently good and some very good teaching was observed. The best features of the teaching are the high expectations of teachers and the investigative work where pupils learn to predict and develop their enquiry skills. Teachers plan and prepare carefully; this ensures that the lessons engage the pupils who, in turn, find learning enjoyable and fun. Although the use of ICT is satisfactory, the school is aware of the need to increase the amount and range of software for lower attaining pupils.

89. Assessment is good. The scrutiny of pupils' work and targets confirm the good progress pupils are making. However, to raise standards further, there is a need for a closer analysis and better use of the data available to teachers.

90. Subject leadership is good. The primary co-ordinator is relatively new to the school. She has already had a very positive impact on the development of the curriculum and is working hard to raise standards of achievement. She has recognised the need to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and has arranged for time to be allocated for this purpose. The accommodation has improved since the last inspection. However, the room is still very cramped and is unsuitable for classes where there are more than two wheelchair users.

91. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist assessments are helping pupils with complex needs to improve their communication skills.
- Among staff there is an increasing awareness of the new technologies and of how they can be adapted and used to enhance pupils' learning.
- A wider range of software is required for lower attaining pupils.

Commentary

92. Throughout the school, pupils are achieving well. Several of the higher attaining pupils gained creditable results in the 2004 GCSE Entry Level examinations. The school has developed very good assessment expertise for pupils with more complex needs. Specialist assessments are administered through the Communication Aids Project. Very good examples were seen of this project, with the therapists and teachers working closely together. Their work is enabling these pupils to improve their communication skills and gain improved access to the curriculum. As a result, they are achieving well.

93. Teaching observed was found to be consistently good. Teachers are using ICT effectively to enhance pupils' learning and to make lessons more interesting. An example of this was the use of the Internet to find different items of clothing and to compare the prices of each. There has been a significant improvement in hardware and software since the last inspection. Teachers use ICT effectively for planning, lesson preparation and captions on displays. Teachers, together with LCAs, are now more confident when guiding and helping pupils in the use of the new technologies such as the Internet, digital cameras and whiteboards. Digital pictures are extensively used to celebrate and record pupils' achievements. The majority of teachers are well trained and at ease when using ICT; however, a few require further training. The school has recognised that the changing school population means a need to ensure that there is a range of software and peripheral devices suitable to meet the needs of pupils with more complex needs. Members of staff receive effective support from the ICT technician.

94. Subject leadership is good and the co-ordinator gives effective support to colleagues. However, in order to confirm standards of achievement, there is a need to monitor the quality of teaching across the school. The co-ordinator and another teacher have been engaged in developing an outreach service. This involves giving advice to the staff of other schools and arranging some ICT assessments for pupils in the local area who have complex needs. The sensory room in the school is badly situated and requires updating.

95. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

96. The use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is developing well, but in a few subjects it requires further emphasis. Good examples were a multimedia presentation about cities in France and spreadsheet modelling to compare the prices of food in two supermarkets. A program on castles, in a history lesson in Year 4 and 5, gave pupils a clear idea of how people used them in the middle ages.

HUMANITIES

97. Only one lesson in history and one in geography were observed. These subjects were not a focus of the inspection and therefore no judgements can be made on the quality of provision or standards in teaching and learning

98. In **history**, the one lesson seen in Years 4 and 5 was very good. The teacher successfully used an electronic whiteboard with a program about castles to enliven the topic and create discussion. Pupils went on to plan and construct their own miniature versions of castles from cardboard. They showed good understanding of the different parts of a medieval castle and their uses. Pupils' workbooks are indicative of good progress by the end of Year 6. Pupils participate well in a range of activities centred on learning about famous people in history. By Year 11, students take part in Entry Level GCSE Humanities examinations and achieve well. In **geography**, there is a similar picture. The lesson seen was good. The school provides a raft of opportunities to make learning stimulating, practical and creative for pupils. These include a host of carefully planned visits to places of historical and geographical interest, including museums, castles, and the seaside. The pupils take part in residential field trips to places such as the continental battlefield

sites of the First World War. They participate in drama activities that enact scenes from history. Older pupils use the Internet and carry out their own research, using web-sites that give information about historical events and places and countries of the world. From the subject planning documents, it is evident that leadership of the subjects is at least satisfactory, with great value given by staff to pupils' work in the way that it is attractively displayed in the school.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards the study of religious education and apply themselves well.
- Visits to places of worship add significantly to pupils' understanding of different faiths.
- There are good opportunities for accreditation.
- Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

99. Religious education is taught to all pupils, which gives them an insight into religious beliefs and promotes their spiritual understanding well. As a result of good teaching, pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of world religions.

100. Pupils' achievement is good because of the good teaching. Teachers help pupils to understand difficult concepts by providing simple and practical activities. LCAs support the teachers very well in enabling pupils to take a full part in all lessons. Pupils develop an awareness of values and respect for themselves and others. By the end of Year 6 pupils have an understanding of the purpose of festivals and symbols associated with the more familiar Christian celebrations. They also recognise and name some symbols from other religions. Older pupils begin to understand about the different viewpoints in religion and broader ethical issues, such as the moral issues of right and wrong. Teachers encourage discussion and ensure that all can voice their views. Visits to the local church, synagogue, mosque and Hindu temple also provide good support for pupils' learning. Pupils show interest and generally present their work well. Assemblies complement work in religious education, encouraging reflection and thoughtfulness for others.

101. Provision for accreditation is good. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 follow the GCSE short course or the Entry Level Certificate. Lower attaining pupils now have the opportunity of completing nationally accredited courses through the ASDAN certificate.

102. The subject is soundly led by a new co-ordinator who has already made a subject audit to guide the development action plan. The local education authority has recently approved its Agreed Syllabus, which has been adopted and used by the school with modifications to meet the particular needs of the pupils. There are suitable resources. There has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the previous inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision for art is **good**. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning of work is good and gives good support to learning.
- Pupils consistently redraft and improve their work. This has a significant effect on their achievement.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

103. Lessons are planned well on how they can help to address individual needs, and this enables pupils to learn appropriate skills and to develop artistic appreciation. Teachers make good use of examples from the work of established artists to help pupils to understand various elements of style and technique. In Year 2, pupils paint using the style of Monet. They make consistently good progress in learning about colour and shape and in applying their skills through drawing and painting and in more adventurous work with pastels and textured material. Pupils in Year 6 complete sensitive paintings of moonshine on the sea, inspired by memories from their recent residential trip. Older pupils effectively build on these skills. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study the work of modern artists and show good achievement to produce collage, demonstrating an understanding of the artists' intentions and styles. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the art deco designs of well-known artists and work in ceramics to produce glazed pots. They show good achievement when using clay, glazing techniques and elements of design. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 have exhibited their work as part of the Leigh Arts Trail, where local artists show their work, for instance in shops and waiting rooms.

104. Teaching is good. In Years 7 to 11, teachers expect pupils to evaluate their own work and redraft it until they are satisfied with the final product. Pupils experiment and practise skills in their sketchbooks. These are carefully assessed and annotated by the teacher so that pupils understand how they can improve. Teachers and LCAs have very good relationships with pupils, to whom they give good support and encouragement. This inspires their confidence and helps them to respond well. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual awareness. Older pupils, for example, have worked with the support of the teacher to express their own feelings and awareness of themselves in very personal paintings.

105. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator, who is a subject specialist and professional artist, provides good support for other teachers. Resources are good but the accommodation for older pupils is cramped and there are inadequate working surfaces and storage facilities.

106. **Design and technology.** This subject was not a focus for the inspection, although three lessons were observed in the upper school. These lessons were well taught and pupils made good progress. In one very good food technology lesson, pupils in Years 10, 11 and 12 were given excellent opportunities to develop their independence skills as they made food for Celebration Day. The subject is well planned, and photographic evidence suggests that pupils enjoy the subject and achieve well. Pupils have followed appropriate design processes in making simple but attractively designed clocks from brightly coloured acrylic. This project forms part of the pupils' coursework towards an accredited Certificate of Achievement in resistant materials. The pupils have also developed their food technology skills, for instance in peeling vegetables and buttering bread. Their ability to use household appliances such as a kettle and a toaster has been assessed and celebrated.

107. **Music** was not a focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to make valid judgements on provision, teaching, learning or achievement. The school continues to teach music to pupils of all ages and there have been good developments since the last inspection. The school now has an attractive purpose built music room, well resourced and providing a very good setting for practical lessons. A further development, which reflects the school's commitment to links with the local community, is the relationship with a particular local high school. This partnership is mutually beneficial, extending the range of educational opportunities for both establishments. An

excellent lesson had the music teacher from the link school teaching the primary aged pupils. Specialist expertise, combined with sensitive management and excellent attitudes from pupils, resulted in pupils achieving very well. With excellent support from the LCAs, pupils performed individually and in groups. They played percussion instruments with enthusiasm and developed their experience and understanding of tempo and mood in music. Pupils sang and played very well, taking great delight in making music. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. There is a good lunchtime recorder group.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is excellent, particularly in dance and swimming.
- The teacher is a specialist who brings quality, rigour and high expectations to the subject.
- Pupils show a real commitment to learning and work really hard to improve their performances.
- Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding.

Commentary

108. Pupils' achievement is of a consistently very high level. In swimming, for example, more able pupils can swim distances up to one mile. Their achievements are accredited through Amateur Swimming Association Distance Awards. Younger and less able pupils learn basic water skills. They become confident and experience the effect of buoyancy because of the very good and trusting support that LCAs provide in the water. In dance, senior pupils perform intricate and synchronised moves in wheelchairs in response to music, and take part in dance productions with pupils from local secondary schools. Pupils with complex needs make very good progress when they follow an Integrated Movement Programme supported by an inter-disciplinary team of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, teachers and LCAs. These provide one-to-one support for pupils, who are positioned for comfort, using a variety of supportive aids. In these lessons pupils maintain and develop fine and gross motor skills in sitting, stretching, lying, rolling and bending. The quality of interaction between pupils and adults and the care taken over the handling and moving of pupils are quite outstanding.

109. The quality of teaching is of an exceptionally high standard. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging. The teacher is calm, reassuring and positive. She gives clear, effective instructions and demonstrations so that pupils know what to expect. Her good observational skills enable her to provide critical but encouraging feedback so that pupils' performance improves within a lesson. In addition, she encourages pupils to evaluate their own and other pupils' performance. In lessons there is an appropriate balance between the introduction and practice of new skills and the consolidation of previously learnt skills. Very good relationships based on mutual respect underpin all lessons. Throughout, there is a focus and an expectation of quality and rigour in all activities. In this way, ambulant pupils and those in wheelchairs learn how to give and pass a basketball properly or hand over a relay baton efficiently when moving at speed. The astute, patient and sensitive intervention and support of LCAs ensures that all pupils are included and are successful.

110. Pupils thoroughly enjoy physical activities and are very proud of their achievements. They change appropriately into PE kit, reflecting the high standards expected in this subject. They are well motivated and confidently strive to improve skills and movements through practice and repetition. In dance, for example, they never complain about the number of rehearsals required to perfect the routine. In swimming they work with sustained concentration to build up their stamina and improve their stroke technique. They listen carefully to instructions and respond readily to

suggestions on how they might improve. They work well in small groups or as a team and show an awareness of fair play and sportsmanship in competitive activities. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal, social and moral development.

111. The knowledge, skill and enthusiasm of the subject leader are excellent. She provides the driving force behind a curriculum that is varied and challenging, and which meets well the pupils' different needs. Activities include gymnastics, dance, football, basketball, cricket, athletics, outdoor pursuits and the Kielder Challenge. The latter is a national, annual and unique outdoor adventure for teams of pupils between 13 and 16 years of age, with and without disabilities, and is open to schools and youth groups across the United Kingdom.

112. Accommodation for physical education is satisfactory. It includes the use of two halls, an adequate hardcore area, grass playing fields, and a small hydrotherapy pool for pupils who require active or passive movement experience in warm and relaxing water. Good use is made of community facilities to provide appropriate challenge. Storage space is at a premium. Resources for the subject are very good and engage and motivate pupils. The subject has maintained the highest standards noted at the previous inspection.

PERSONAL SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong PSHE and citizenship programme contributes very well to the whole school ethos.
- School routines and systems promote pupils' personal development.
- Very good links with schools and the community support the development of pupils' personal, social and life skills.
- The subject has a powerful and positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

Commentary

113. The strong emphasis on PSHE and citizenship in all aspects of school life contributes significantly to pupils' progress in this area. The quality of relationships and support ensure that pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem and develop good personal and social skills as they move through the school. PSHE/citizenship is taught to younger pupils through topics, assemblies, themes of the week and 'circle time'. For example, in Year 6 'circle time' pupils learn about anger and the ways of expressing it. Older pupils follow an accredited course that includes appropriate attention to sex and relationships, and drug and alcohol misuse. In addition, the subject is well supported in many other areas of the curriculum. Examples are in physical education, with the self-help skills of dressing, in science when diet is being discussed, and in religious education when the pupils are studying other cultures.

114. The subject is significantly enhanced through communal activities during the day. For example, pupils enjoy the social aspects of eating together at lunchtime and sharing one another's achievements in assembly. Pupils new to the school are looked after and helped to settle through the use of a 'buddy' system, which gives older pupils an understanding of social responsibility. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to contribute ideas to the running of the school, such as the introduction of lunchtime clubs, and it too makes an important contribution to pupils' self-development.

115. Extensive links with local primary, special and secondary schools, which are mainly for social and sporting reasons, give pupils every opportunity to develop skills of enquiry, communication, participation and responsible action. The acquisition of life skills, independence and personal development are all reinforced by visits to places of interest, field trips in history and geography, residential trips, work experience, community projects, extra-curricular activities, lunchtime clubs

and visitors from the community. Part of the PSHE and citizenship programme addresses the important aspect of enjoying a healthy life style, and as a result the school has been awarded the Healthy Schools status.

116. Teaching in PSHE and citizenship is good and often very good. Teaching methods are imaginative and lead to high interest from pupils. For example, in one lesson, pupils with complex needs made hanging baskets to improve the school courtyard, and in another, older pupils watched a CD on an interactive whiteboard on changes to the body during puberty. In their individual education plans, pupils have targets for personal and social development, which are reviewed regularly and are shared with parents and promoted through home/school diaries. The subject is well led and managed and resources are good. The impact of the PSHE/citizenship programme, formal and informal, is most positive. Pupils feel safe and secure, enjoy coming to school, behave well in and out of lessons, take pleasure in learning and achieving, and as they grow older, play a responsible and productive part in the school community. The subject was not reported on in any detail in the last inspection.

POST 16

Provision for students in post 16 is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Their curriculum contains a good range of activities.
- The further education class is well led and there is good understanding of students' needs and of how provision should develop in order to improve.
- Teaching is good and helps students to improve their learning skills.

Commentary

117. Post-16 students are integrated into the mixed groups Year 10 and 11 pupils. This arrangement is appropriate for the emotional and academic needs of the small group of post-16 students, giving them the opportunity to study accredited courses over a three-year period. Their progress towards a range of qualifications, including ASDAN, is good. They have very good opportunities for personal development through elements such as *Life Skills*. In an excellent food technology lesson, for instance, students showed high levels of independence as they followed recipes. Communication from students with more complex needs was very good, showing a very good level of understanding and clear enjoyment of the motivating activities. Vocational studies and work experience are a part of the course and students are very involved in choosing their own employment or further education path.

118. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and most activities are approached in ways that show appropriate regard for the age, interests and learning needs of each student. Relationships are very good and the students' commitment to learning is evident. Students help each other, for example actively supporting each other in lessons and other activities. LCAs are very supportive, working effectively as part of the team and using exceptionally well their knowledge of all students, their targets, and more general learning targets.

119. Planning is relevant to the needs of the students. The adoption of the ASDAN curriculum as the main component for pupils of lower ability and those with complex needs has developed as the needs of the students has changed. For the present group of students it offers an ideal core. There is a good range of opportunities for accreditation.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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