

INSPECTION REPORT

MARLBOROUGH SCHOOL

Sidcup

LEA area: Bexley

Unique reference number: 101487

Headteacher: Ms A R Chamberlain

Lead inspector: Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 18th – 20th April 2005

Inspection number: 268591

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:	11 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	74
School address:	Marlborough Park Avenue Sidcup Kent
Postcode:	DA15 9DP
Telephone number:	020 83006896
Fax number:	020 83095612
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Stephen Matthews
Date of previous inspection:	24 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Marlborough is a school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 with severe learning difficulties. Currently, 74 attend the school, 48 boys and 26 girls. All those on the school's roll, referred to as 'students', have statements of special educational needs. Forty-four have severe learning difficulties, 16 have profound and multiple learning difficulties and 14 have autistic spectrum disorders. Additionally, small numbers have emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical disabilities, sensory impairment, or medical needs. When they join the school, the attainment of most students is well below average, as a result of their special educational needs. Most students' homes are in Bexley, although two live in Kent and two in Lewisham. Their socio-economic circumstances are varied but are broadly average. Two of the students are in public care. A variety of minority ethnic groups is represented in the school, no more than two students from any of them, but sixty of the students are white British. Seven have English as an additional language, with Bengali, Panjabi or Turkish spoken in their homes, but they do not require enhanced support in learning English. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People award, and School Achievement Award (2002 and 2003). It is beginning to develop a mainstream outreach role. At the time of the inspection, two temporary teachers were working in the school. Significant building work was taking place, resulting in changes to routines and restricted space for teaching and learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	Religious education, art and design, design and technology
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology, music
32232	Susan Garland-Grimes	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, physical education, english as an additional language
31914	Colette Gribble	Team inspector	Science, personal, social, health and citizenship education, history, modern foreign language, special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Marlborough is a **good** school with many very good features. Students achieve well and their personal development is very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's leadership is very effective and has resulted in the school moving forward very well.
- Students achieve very well in art and design, music, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- Staff provide very good care and support for students who, as a result, enjoy being at school and try very hard to be as independent as possible.
- The school offers a very good range of activities such as clubs and visits, enriching the curriculum and enhancing students' personal development.
- Post-16 students are prepared very well for moving on to the next stage of their life.
- There are no opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to have their achievements recognised through accredited courses.
- Teachers' plans do not routinely indicate how lessons and topics in all subjects help students to develop and practise their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

The school has developed very well since the previous inspection, at which time it catered for all ages. Since then, students' achievement and personal development have improved well, in line with similar improvements in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and assessment, and leadership and management. The issues identified previously have been tackled systematically and successfully.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 13	Good	Very good

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

Students' achievement is **good**. Those in Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11 achieve well, as do the post-16 students. Throughout the school, achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, and religious education. In art and design, music, and PSHE and citizenship, students achieve very well. Post-16 students are successful in the Towards Independence accredited course. Girls and boys and students from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. When their particular special educational needs are taken into account, the achievement of students with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, and additional sensory, medical or behavioural difficulties, is just as good.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school are very good, as is their behaviour. They respond very well to the school's expectations for them to be as independent as possible and they willingly accept responsibility. Attendance is good overall, although better in Years 7 to 11 than in Years 12 to 14.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and, as a result, students learn well. Teachers make effective use of assessment information and their knowledge of students, adapting lessons carefully to meet their individual needs. Occasionally, parts of lessons are rushed or allowed to go on for too long, so learning is not as good. Teaching assistants make strong contributions to students' learning and behaviour management, often sharing lesson planning and having equally high expectations for students to achieve. When possible, students are taught by subject specialists, making very efficient use of the teachers' expertise.

The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and interests as they move up through the school. Amongst the very wide range of activities outside lessons, opportunities for sport and the arts are particularly good. In Years 10 and 11, students do not follow accredited courses. Teachers' planning does not usually indicate how they intend students to use literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects. Students are cared for very well and given very good support – for instance, to help them settle into school or prepare them for leaving. There are very strong links with the community and good partnerships with parents and other schools, and with colleges in particular.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership is very good, with the headteacher ensuring that all staff share her very high aspirations for the school. The deputy headteacher and leadership team provide very strong support. Management is also very good. The school's performance is carefully evaluated and planning ensures that priority areas are developed and are allocated the necessary financial support. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and well informed and meet their statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are positive about the school. They are very pleased with the quality of teaching and feel that the school is very approachable. A very small number would like more homework to be provided.

Students' views are very positive. They enjoy many activities, but swimming is especially popular.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to have their achievements recognised formally – for example, through accredited courses.
- Ensure that the ways in which all subjects promote achievement in literacy, numeracy and ICT can be identified easily.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in art and design, music, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- Throughout the school, achievement is good in other key subjects of the curriculum.
- Post-16 students are successful in accredited courses, although those in Years 10 and 11 do not have this opportunity.
- Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders achieve as well as those with severe learning difficulties.

Commentary

1. In subjects, such as art and design, music, and PSHE, which are taught very well, students' achievement is similarly very good. Because the teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education, students achieve well. The school sets targets for students to achieve in English, mathematics, science, and ICT, when they reach the end of Years 9 and 11. In 2004, the Year 9 targets were met in all these subjects and the Year 11 ones were partially met in English and mathematics, fully met in science, and exceeded in ICT. However, the school has found that the data analysis it uses at present is not a precise enough tool to measure accurately the progress made by all students, especially those who learn very slowly. The detailed records kept by teachers demonstrate that students' achievement is good overall.
2. During Years 12 to 14, students follow the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' course. Their work in a number of subjects contributes to this accreditation and students, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, gain certificates in topics such as 'Pottery and Ceramics', 'Horticulture', and 'Independent Living'. However, the achievement of higher attaining post-16 students is not always fully recognised by this level of course and those in Years 10 and 11 do not have opportunities to gain accreditation. Throughout the school, students achieve awards in swimming, and groups and individuals are regularly successful in athletics and visual and performing arts competitions. A further mark of the achievement of post-16 students is the number that move successfully on to day and residential colleges, sixth form colleges, and residential schools, when they leave Marlborough.
3. The school ensures that all students achieve well, regardless of their special educational needs. Staff are skilled in meeting the particular needs of students with the most severe autistic spectrum disorders – for instance, by restricting the language they use or modifying the environment when necessary. These students, and those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, work in a number of different groupings, alongside others with similar needs or, for example, students with severe learning difficulties. This is successful, because all students' social and learning needs are met by this approach, thus boosting their achievement. A very small number of students have regressive conditions. Staff work hard to enable them to retain their skills for as long as possible. Teachers are alert to the needs of students with additional special educational needs – for example, sensory impairment or behavioural difficulties. They make sure that all students are fully included in lessons and are helped to overcome potential obstacles to learning. Similarly, students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the relatively small number of girls are required to play a full part in activities – for instance, during lessons, questions are directed specifically at each student in turn. As a result, all achieve equally well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very happy in school and they try very hard to do well.
- They strive to be as independent as possible, despite their learning difficulties.
- A very wide range of opportunities for personal development is provided.
- The very high expectations of behaviour, and the consistent response to any challenging behaviour, teach students to maintain very good relationships and behave very well.

Commentary

4. Students' self-esteem is very high, one student answering 'I'm wonderful' when asked how he felt at the start of a lesson. They have the confidence to try their best in lessons, in the knowledge that their hard work will be rewarded by the praise and pleasure of staff. In a music lesson, where post-16 students were using percussion instruments to follow the rhythm of the Queen song 'Radio Ga Ga', their enthusiasm was so infectious, and their commitment to following the teacher's instructions so determined, that teachers and students passing along the corridor outside were drawn in by the joy of their musicianship. The school recognises the importance of personal responsibility and, where practical, students are allocated specific jobs, such as collecting and returning registers. Additionally, each class elects a member of the school council. From making their own way, whenever physically possible, into school from the car park, to going back out to the buses unaccompanied (but supervised) at the end of the day, the tone is set for students to achieve as independent a life as possible. They review their targets together at registration and set off for lessons determined to achieve well. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to be confident and relaxed with the adults who work with them, making great efforts to co-operate and communicate. The consistent emphasis on promoting independence is much appreciated by parents and prepares students very effectively for moving on from school to further education provision. For instance, they learn to use public transport or go shopping independently.
5. Very good social opportunities are provided, such as learning to cope with their own luggage when crossing London by tube to go on a residential visit, practising conversational French for a day trip on a cross channel ferry, or organising discos. As a result, students learn to get on with each other and other people in very different social settings. Lunchtime clubs are all very well attended and offer students the chance to participate in, for example, Indian dancing, guitar playing or a computer club. During these activities, students consolidate their personal and social talents, form friendships outside of their immediate pastoral groups, and acquire skills which can enhance their leisure time out of school. Students have helped to fund the purchase of a cow in a Kenyan village and raised funds for other young people with special needs – for example, by supporting 'Jeans for Genes'. Activities by the post-16 Youth Action group raise funds that have not only purchased a new lectern for use during assemblies, but also enabled the whole group to go out to an Italian restaurant for a special meal at the end of term. Students learn about a wide range of cultures and faiths through the religious education curriculum, assemblies, art and music. As a result, they become very aware of the diversity of ethnicity outside of their immediate community. They enjoy, respect and celebrate many of the traditions and beliefs of these cultures, and understand that they may be different to their own.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	60	2	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0

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

6. Students are regularly and consistently reminded how they should behave, and these expectations are backed up by rules and a graded tariff of support, depending on the severity of the challenge posed by each individual. This approach, combined with the rewards system and the provision of lunchtime clubs, is having a very positive impact on behaviour. Exclusion is used as a very last resort. All staff are trained in approved techniques to de-escalate any challenging behaviour without the need for physical restraint. However, if a student displays severely challenging behaviour, positive physical intervention techniques are used sensitively. Records show that the number of such incidents is diminishing significantly. As a result, the school is a relaxed and very happy place. Relationships are very strong and nearly all students behave very well, are considerate to each other and, through activities such as the 'Buddy' programme, learn to help others who have more need of support than themselves.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	1.4
National data	8.7 (SLD) 11.0 (PMLD)	National data	0.5 (SLD) 0.7 (PMLD)

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

7. The attendance of students of a compulsory school age has improved since the previous inspection and is now well above the average for similar schools. Post-16 students, who are above compulsory school age, have had more absences because of holidays and sickness. As a result, attendance overall is good and, as nearly all transport gets to school on time, so is punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan and organise lessons well.
- Teaching assistants make strong contributions to students' learning.
- Students' behaviour is managed very effectively and, as a result, lessons run smoothly.
- Teaching is often especially good where teachers are subject specialists.
- Teachers use their knowledge of special educational needs well, so lessons build systematically on what students have learned already.
- Assessment procedures are effective and are currently being revised and refined further.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	15 (37.5%)	22 (55%)	1 (2.5%)	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.

8. The school has adopted an agreed format for planning lessons, which ensures that these are structured consistently well. As a result, students are made aware of what they are to learn, before taking part in the main activities, which often involve varied styles of learning, making sure that all students are catered for. Finally, the lesson is reviewed, teachers checking that students have learned what was intended and setting the scene for the next phase of learning. These routines are well established, helping students to feel secure and able to settle quickly to work. This approach is especially important because, as in mainstream secondary schools, lessons in each subject are mostly taught by different teachers, using specialist rooms. The careful planning results in well prepared learning resources, chosen to motivate students and aid their understanding. For instance, in a religious education lesson for students in Year 8 with severe learning difficulties, including several with challenging behaviour, the teacher successfully employed a variety of clothing and a suitcase, to raise awareness of what it means to go on a pilgrimage. On this occasion, the lesson moved on at a pace which retained students' interest and made efficient use of the time available. Occasionally, teachers misjudge how long they need to allocate to a particular activity, which may result in the rate of learning slowing down or other parts of the lesson being rushed.
9. There are usually several adults involved in each lesson and the effectiveness of their teamwork is striking. Teaching assistants are very knowledgeable about the students, because they generally spend their time with a particular class group. This provides very valuable continuity for students, as they move around the school to learn different subjects. Teachers nearly always deploy other staff effectively – for instance, to work with individual students or small groups. Now and again, the best use is not made of teaching assistants' skills, because they are not sufficiently well informed about what they are to do – perhaps when the teacher is leading a whole class activity. On the other hand, several teachers arrange for a teaching assistant to record students' responses on such occasions, using this time very well.

10. Teaching assistants often contribute significantly to supporting students who have challenging behaviour. Teachers give an extremely high priority to maintaining an orderly and productive working environment, which allows all students to focus on their work. This aspect of teaching is tackled in a variety of ways – making sure that activities are interesting and pitched at the right level, so students want to be involved, for instance. Because staff know students so well, they are quick to notice when individuals are becoming anxious or over-excited and they respond equally promptly to calm them down and prevent the situation from escalating. Where students have individual behaviour plans, these are applied very consistently and effectively. For example, at the start of an ICT lesson for students in Years 7 to 10 with autistic spectrum disorders, one boy became agitated and a teaching assistant immediately showed him a special symbol card, designed to calm him.
11. As far as is practicable, the school organises timetables so that lessons are taught by subject leaders or other who have developed particular expertise. This approach works very well because teachers are able to focus on a relatively narrow range of subjects. As a result, they have relevant skills and knowledge at their fingertips and can concentrate on applying these to meeting students' special educational needs. Specialist teachers' expectations for students to achieve are frequently very high. For instance, during an art lesson for students in Year 11 with severe learning difficulties, the teacher displayed an image of a guitar sculpture by Picasso. Through questioning and building on students' responses, he enabled them to develop their understanding of how an artist communicates ideas. As a result, when students worked on observational drawings, they made sure that essential elements, such as the strings, were included, appreciating that this would convey the impression of a guitar. The success of this very challenging lesson demonstrated clearly the teacher's knowledge of his subject. Where teachers are new to the school and their specialist roles, relevant training is identified, in order to develop their expertise.
12. Even though the school often groups students flexibly, according to their needs in particular subjects, within each teaching group the range of learning difficulties is invariably wide. In order to successfully respond to this challenge, teachers usually adapt lessons so that, for instance, higher attaining students have more difficult tasks or are required to be more independent. For example, during a visit to a café, to develop their personal and social skills, the teacher had varying expectations for each of the students, who were in Years 10 to 12 and had severe autistic spectrum disorders. As a result, higher attaining students were able, with support, to go to the counter, choose their snack and drink, and hand over money at the till. Others, at an earlier stage of learning, gave picture cards to staff, indicating their choice from a narrow range of options. All students were equally successful, even though they demonstrated different levels of competence.
13. The school uses a variety of methods to assess and record students' learning and achievement. These include detailed individual profiles which record significant steps in each student's learning as they move up through the school. Additionally, a nationally approved scale to measure the performance of students who are working below National Curriculum levels (Performance or 'P' levels) is utilised, to track students' achievement in each subject. However, staff recognise the difficulty of recording precise levels for many students, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and the current data does not reveal the very small steps in learning made by these students. As a result, a commercially developed data base system has been purchased. This has the potential to increase the accuracy of information held about each student's progress, because it uses a more finely graded scale. For those students who are over sixteen, alternative measures are being introduced, which will enable assessment data to be transferred smoothly as they move into adult learning. As these developments are implemented, the school has identified the need to compare teachers' use of assessment criteria, to ensure that the information gathered is accurate. ICT is used extensively to store and handle assessment information, making it readily available for all staff to use.

The curriculum

The quality and range of learning opportunities are **good**. A **very good** range of activities enriches students' learning. The accommodation and resources are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for students to participate in sports and the arts are used very effectively to enrich their learning.
- Subjects and courses are well matched to the needs and interests of the students.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to have their achievements fully recognised through accredited courses.
- It is not easy for the school to identify where each subject contributes to students' learning in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- The accommodation meets students' needs very well.
- The arrangements for students with more complex special educational needs are good.

Commentary

14. There is a very good range of interesting and highly motivating activities, which add to the work students do in lessons. Lunchtime clubs include football, sewing, electric scooters, band, choir, a healthy school tuck shop run by the school council, and an Indian dance club. Students have an impressive record of achievement in sport where they compete, for example, in the London Youth Games, the South London Disability Games and the Southern Special Schools' football league. Students in Years 12 and 13 have the opportunity to go on a residential 'school journey' to experience canoeing, abseiling, walking and water sports. Students throughout the school perform with the Greenwich Concert Band and take part in a national competition to perform a percussion piece. They regularly exhibit examples of their art, gaining public recognition for their work.
15. Planning, resources and teaching methods are well adapted to the age and interests of the students across the school. For instance, the curriculum for older students has been designed very effectively to prepare them for life after school. Students in Years 12, 13 and 14 follow courses leading to the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' award, which is designed to develop students' independence skills. This year, for the first time, students in Year 13 are also working towards an NCFE pre-Entry level course in Personal Development. Post-16 students also follow relevant vocational programmes at local colleges, where they experience activities such as horticulture, bricklaying and creative computing.
16. A recent development for students in Years 10 and 11 is the introduction of an opportunity for them to choose the courses that they study during one afternoon each week. However, the curriculum does not currently enable them to have their achievements recognised by following accredited courses. There are good arrangements for teaching English and mathematics, where students in Years 7 to 9 are organised into classes according to their abilities, and these have contributed towards raising standards of achievement. Across the school, teachers' plans do not routinely indicate how lessons and topics in all subjects help students to develop and practise their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. This makes it difficult for subject leaders to check that there are sufficient opportunities and that these are pitched at levels matched suitably to students' needs.
17. Since the previous inspection, the accommodation has been greatly improved. As a result, the curriculum is taught in an environment that is stimulating and very suited to meeting students' needs. For example, the new computer room is used extensively by staff when preparing lessons and by students during lunchtime clubs. Building work in progress will provide students with the most complex needs with a new hydrotherapy pool, but there is no distinct area for post-16 students to use as a common room. Specialist classrooms are of a good size, display areas are well used and the whole building is maintained to a very high standard by the caretaking

staff. Teachers are well qualified to teach the curriculum and are supported by a generous number of support staff. The appointment of staff to care for students' personal and health care needs has enabled teaching assistants to focus more on supporting students' learning.

18. The school caters well for all students, regardless of their special educational needs. For instance, the arrangements for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties enable them to be included in as many activities as possible, mix with other students, and also have specialised, individual support when necessary. The therapies provided by the local Health Trust are augmented by hydrotherapy and aromatherapy, arranged by the school. Students with autistic spectrum disorders often work well together and have opportunities to join lessons in other classes. They have individual work stations, which are used for part of the time to promote their learning through structured programmes. A picture exchange system is used successfully to enable students who do not speak to communicate and express themselves. Arrangements for the annual review of students' statements are very good. Outside agency support for these is good, overall, and parents and students are central to the proceedings.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for ensuring students' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. **Very good** support advice and guidance is provided for the students and the school involves them and listens to their views **very well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school looks after students very well and makes very good arrangements for meeting their physical, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Induction arrangements for new students are very well thought out and implemented.
- The school takes careful account of students' views.
- All students, including those requiring high levels of support and care, are prepared very well to make choices about their future lives.

Commentary

19. The school is innovative in its approaches to meeting students' personal and health care needs and has appointed a personal care assistant and a health care worker to co-ordinate the arrangements for individuals. Health professionals work closely with the school's care team and contribute to students' individual education plans. Midday supervisors follow precise procedures for feeding students who require specialised programmes or one-to-one care at mealtimes. Arrivals and departures from the school are closely supervised. Health and safety procedures are very well organised and backed up by external advisers to ensure that all assessments of risk are completed. Child protection procedures follow area guidelines, and all staff are regularly updated and trained in respect of new requirements. Staff know and care for all of the students very well and the opportunities for students to communicate with an adult they trust, for example, at the start or end of the school day, at lunch or break, or when they are receiving personal care, are very good.
20. The arrangements for settling students into the school when they first arrive are very carefully worked out. They are the result of a specific strategy to smooth the transition from primary to secondary education and the culmination of many meetings between staff at Marlborough and staff in the school from which students are moving. For instance, students start on a project at the end of Year 6 and complete it in Year 7. Where a student has a specific learning, behavioural or physical need, the school ensures that it is ready to provide the necessary support. Parents say they are pleased with the way in which their children are settled into the school.
21. The school council meets every half term and represents very effectively the views of students across the school. Students, who also hold the position of prefect when on the council, are

aware of the responsibility placed on them by their appointment and have had a significant impact on every-day school life. For example, they run a healthy tuck shop and have organised a 'Walkathon' to fund water bottles for students. Students are consulted on a daily basis about their targets, by an annual questionnaire on whole school issues, and where possible, during their annual review meetings. Most recently, 'Girls' Talk' sessions have been piloted to focus on specific gender issues. Within the annual review system, a Person Centred Planning approach is being used for older students, who are making the move from school, supporting a greater input on decision-making by students. Students' views are respected, but they are also taught to understand that they are responsible for the choices that they make, especially when it comes to going on to college or residential provision. As a result, the academic achievements of students, which are supported by good assessment procedures, are also enhanced by very effective arrangements for their day-to-day personal support and guidance.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **good**. Partnership with the community is **very good** and links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very wide range of community facilities and links supports students' personal development and academic achievement very well.
- Links with colleges are very good and help students make decisions about what they want to do when they leave school.
- Parents support the school and enjoy the regular contact they have with staff.
- There is a wide range of information to let parents know what is happening in the school and how their children are doing.
- A few parents have indicated that they would like more opportunities to help with their children's learning.

Commentary

22. Community facilities, such as a bowling alley, cafés, and local shops, are used regularly to enhance the curriculum. The use of the community allows the school to develop independent living skills for students, such as buying the milk for the staff room from a local supermarket or walking to a nearby travel agent to select brochures for a day trip to France. The school has a very high profile in the community and is in receipt of generous fundraising by businesses and individuals. Activities such as Arts Week, supported by the Welling Arts Partnership, have enabled students to work with a professional printmaker, for example. At Christmas time, performances are given in the local church and the choir sings carols to raise money for school funds. Visiting musicians, artists and theatre groups bring new experiences into the school. Members of Charlton Athletic Football Club visit regularly to work with students. Outside support agencies and professional bodies offer the school a wide range of expertise but, unlike in previous years, there are few opportunities for work experience placements in the community.

23. Post-16 students access a wide range of courses at local colleges. They mix with other students, become accustomed to the hustle and bustle of college life, and enjoy opportunities to relax at lunchtime alongside young people and adults from special education and mainstream backgrounds. Marlborough's music and drama staff have linked with a specialist college to promote dance and have plans to extend the programme into musical theatre. A developing outreach service is now offered to local mainstream schools to support staff who are working with pupils with special educational needs. Close links to four secondary schools promote opportunities for students to engage with mainstream students and also offer those schools' students experiences that they could not access in mainstream environments. The school is very forward-looking in its support for students when they leave school, and establishes links to possible college provision some time before they are due to move on. As a result, these very

effective links to colleges offer post-16 students very good opportunities to establish supported education away from home.

24. A useful welcome pack for the parents of new students emphasises the nature of the secondary education that the school provides and the opportunities on offer. A daily home/school contact book provides many parents with a dialogue on their child's progress, but other parents said that they are happy that telephone messages, progress reports or meetings in school provide them with a wide range of information on how their sons or daughters are doing in school. All parents attend annual review meetings and a very high number come to parent evenings. As a result, staff can deal with any concerns or suggestions quickly and efficiently because they know parents well and have built up a good relationship with them. Listening to parents' concerns has led the school to bring out specific information that can help them. For example the 'Parents/Carers Adolescent Information Guide' helps parents to understand changes that take place during the teenage years and suggests ways to support their children, and families, through this time. Homework is not a strong feature of the school and has been identified as an area for development.
25. Termly newsletters give additional information about the range of activities in which students are to be involved. Additionally, linked to their work in humanities, students in Years 10 and 11 compile and send out an annual school newspaper. Changes to the annual written report, separating it from the annual review report, has confused a number of parents about what reports they are receiving, but they remain pleased with the information provided by the school. The new format gives a comprehensive coverage of students' achievements and areas they need to work on. As a result, parents feel well informed on their children's progress and like the fact that they are consulted regularly.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the headteacher has made it possible for the school to move forward significantly.
- Performance management and the deployment and professional development of staff are all very effective.
- Planning for improvement is based on very good self-evaluation and leads to very relevant targets for the future.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the success of the school.
- Very good financial management helps the school to achieve its aims.

Commentary

26. The headteacher provides very thoughtful and determined leadership and has very high aspirations for what students can achieve. She has very successfully steered the school's progress from one catering for all ages to its present position of mirroring, as closely as practical, mainstream secondary provision. The very good improvement since the previous inspection has been driven by the headteacher's commitment to providing the best possible quality of education for Marlborough's students and her ability to inspire and motivate her staff to have equally high expectations. One very significant outcome has been that students' achievement continues to improve, despite the increasingly complex nature of their special educational needs and recent staff changes. These have hampered the school's ability to promote very good achievement, even though leadership is very effective. The headteacher is supported very strongly by the deputy headteacher and the other members of the leadership team. Between them, these senior staff fulfil a wide range of significant responsibilities, adopting a professional approach to their work and presenting good role models to other

teachers – for instance, through the quality of their teaching. The school is outward-looking, as seen by its very strong community links and its willingness to take on initiatives – such as Person Centred Planning – when it believes that these will benefit its students.

27. The arrangements for observing classroom practice have helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning considerably since the previous inspection. Monitoring through formal performance management arrangements is complemented very well by visits to lessons by subject leaders, who provide advice and encouragement and ensure that good ideas are shared and approaches are consistent. The effects of the school's very strong commitment to teamwork are apparent throughout the school. For instance, new, less experienced staff are able to settle in quickly and establish themselves, ensuring that students are disturbed as little as possible by the transition. There has been considerable development in the school's links with support agencies and this is reflected in the establishment of multi-agency team meetings to share information about students and consider how best to meet their needs. The involvement of teaching assistants in planning and reviewing students' work and learning is a key factor in their ability to support students and teachers confidently. Innovative methods of staff deployment, such as the use of a high level teaching assistant in science, reflect the forward-looking nature of the senior team. The effectiveness of the deputy headteacher in organising professional development is responsible for the very good staff training programme, which has a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
28. The school's evaluation of its own performance is very accurate, with a very clear appreciation of areas of strength and those needing further development. There is a shared understanding of these priorities and staff and governors value the process of whole school development planning. Developments are identified through the performance management process as well as through the 'booklets' compiled by the subject leaders. These demonstrate, for example, how the analysis of students' performance has revealed any whose progress is giving cause for concern. In consultation with the headteacher, priorities for the following year are identified in each subject and these in turn feed into the whole school development plan. This sets out very clearly and concisely how the school's goals are to be achieved, and provides the necessary structure to co-ordinate the work of staff and governors.
29. The governors are committed and very supportive of the school. They work effectively with the headteacher and staff to make sure that necessary improvements take place. Governors have a clear view of the aspects of the school that are working well and where developments need to be focused. This information is acquired by receiving reports and by, for example, governors' attendance at school performances and other events, meetings with staff, health and safety audits, and visits to lessons by the governors linked to English and mathematics. Governors' efforts to improve the accommodation have resulted in significant improvements since the previous inspection with further improvements currently underway. Statutory requirements are met. Meetings are professionally managed and there is pertinent questioning and discussion of issues.
30. The school has developed very efficient systems to link forward planning to the performance management processes. No concerns were noted in the last audit report. The headteacher and governors appreciate fully the need to implement principles of best value and are vigilant about purchasing services at the best price. Spending decisions are considered very carefully in the light of how they will benefit students. For instance, by securing the services of a professional fund-raiser, the school has been able to pay for a hydrotherapy pool and put aside money for its upkeep for the next three years. This will enable students to have more regular opportunities for therapy to support their physical development and eliminate the travelling which currently eats into the time for teaching and learning.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1276599	Balance from previous year	44033
Total expenditure	1249160	Balance carried forward to the next	27420
Expenditure per pupil	16880		

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum contributes well to work-related learning.
- There are good arrangements for students in Years 12, 13 and 14 to experience a range of college courses and gain recognition for their achievements.
- Students do not currently undertake work experience in the community.

Commentary

31. The school ensures that students in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students have varied opportunities to gain insights into the world of work, and statutory requirements are met. For instance, Year 10 students press flowers to make cards and design fridge magnet note books to sell. Students with profound and multiple difficulties experience a sensory walk in the park, where they are challenged to make choices about their likes and dislikes. Year 11 students take part in a mini enterprise, where they provide a café for staff, offering soup, jacket potatoes and salad. They budget and shop for the foods. They made a profit of £300 last year which they contributed towards their 'school journey' residential experience.
32. Careers education is in place and the Connexions service is involved with students in discussing their options. Post-16 students have well planned opportunities to experience vocational courses at local colleges, where they study bricklaying, horticulture, creative computers, current affairs, media and basic skills. The ASDAN course, 'Towards Independence', provides a good basis for work-related learning for these students, through the work awareness module. Good opportunities to undertake tasks and activities that are set in a work context are provided when students collect waste paper around school, collect water from the drip trays, go to the shop for milk and shred a pile of paper. The school is well aware that all students from Year 10 onwards would benefit from opportunities to build on this internal work experience and apply their skills and understanding of the world of work to placements within the community. This year, there have been difficulties in arranging support from facilitators and the school is now set to make its own arrangements.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects. Judgements were based on evidence collected through observing lessons, analysing pupils' work and assessment records, reviewing subject plans and other documents, and through discussions with staff.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4 AND AT POST-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

One lesson of French was observed. Judgements have not been made about French. Five English lessons were seen.

33. Students study **French** in Years 7, 8 and 9. Those in Year 9 have the opportunity to join a day trip to France, preparing all the necessary requirements during lessons leading up the visit. For instance, they find out about the need for passports, changing currency and also learn some simple words, signs and symbols to improve their vocabulary. There is also an emphasis on learning about basic food and drink. To this end, a French café is set up in school, with students making invitations and dressing up as waiters and waitresses. The focus is on students experiencing French culture and learning some language, so that they become more confident and competent communicators. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties also take part in multi-sensory activities linked to Spain and Holland, providing rich opportunities for learning.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers ensure that all students achieve well, whatever their special educational needs.
- There are good systems to assess students' achievement but no opportunities for them to follow accredited courses in English.
- The subject has improved well since the previous inspection, through very good subject management.
- Teachers take full advantage of opportunities to promote English through other subjects, but do not always plan formally for these.

Commentary

34. The school often groups students according to their ability in English, and this is an effective measure because teachers are able to focus their attention on a narrower range of special educational needs. For instance, students in Years 7 to 9 are divided into five groups and those in Years 10 and 11 into three groups, with teaching tailored to their particular needs. As a result, students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are starting to respond to symbols in order to answer simple choice questions and they use ICT aids to help them communicate. Higher attaining students with severe learning difficulties responded equally well during a very good lesson involving reading, writing, speaking and listening. They tried hard to read with expression and several read fluently, showing clearly their awareness of punctuation. Later, sequencing words into sentences, students recognised those that made sense and those that didn't. The use of challenging questions by the teacher meant that students had to extend their thinking skills to analyse why a sentence did not make sense. Afterwards, they recorded their responses in different ways – for example, copying onto a small whiteboard or into the correct space on a worksheet. Very effective teamwork was a strong feature of a lesson for students in Years 7 to 10, with autistic spectrum disorders. Because staff were so aware of

each student's needs and the lesson had been very carefully planned, students enjoyed sharing the story 'Sleep Sam' and made very good progress – for example, in matching words and pictures.

35. Teachers carefully record important signs of students' learning and the school uses its own system to check on their progress from the time of entry through to their leaving. Nationally recognised 'P-scales' are used to record the achievement of those students working below National Curriculum levels. However, these do not demonstrate the small steps in learning made by most students and so, to complement the P-scales, a new system is being introduced by the school. The information collected is to be compared, both within the school and with other schools, to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. In Years 10 to 14, there are several students who are working within National Curriculum levels, but they do not have their achievements recognised through accredited courses. Currently, much of the English work in Year 10, and elements in Year 11, is taught through other subjects. This would need to be reviewed if an accreditation route were followed.
36. The subject leader manages the subject very well. Amongst the many aspects of English that have improved since the previous inspection, a better balance has been established between developing writing skills and providing writing practise, and there is now a wider range of reading texts and supporting materials. The structure of the curriculum is effective in helping students to make progress. The format of working from different genres of literature provides an interesting context that keeps students attentive. Teaching has developed well – for example, the way in which writing is taught. Teachers provide regular opportunities for higher attaining students to practise writing over or under words. As a result, more students are able to write down what they want to say. Many of the teachers lead English lessons for particular groups of students, and these arrangements are organised very well. The subject leader observes lessons taught by colleagues, targets are set for students to achieve, and their progress is analysed. All this information is combined very successfully in the 'subject booklet'. Although the main developments in English are identified through formal performance management procedures, an action plan for other areas of the subject is not contained in the booklet. Resources are very good and much improved since the previous inspection. However, at present there is under-use of the computers in classrooms, although this is being tackled by the introduction of interactive whiteboards and timetabled opportunities for lessons in the computer suite.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

37. The school's constant emphasis on communication results in students using language well throughout lessons and day-to-day activities. Students and staff talk and listen to each other very well, often with the help of aids or signing where necessary. There is a good emphasis on developing the vocabulary needed for learning in different subjects. In other subjects, students' use of literacy is good. For example, attention is paid to handwriting and accuracy in most lessons for the higher attaining students. However, it is difficult for the English subject leader to maintain an overview of this work, because it does not always feature in written plans. Displays of work are well captioned with words and symbols and books are displayed attractively in classrooms.

MATHEMATICS

Five mathematics lessons were observed.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the high quality teaching, all pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the subject.
- Effective leadership and management ensure that there are high expectations for pupils to achieve, but their achievement is not fully acknowledged through accredited courses.
- Students make use of numeracy during lessons in other subjects, but it is not part of teachers' formal planning

Commentary

38. The subject has improved well since the previous inspection and the quality of teaching is now good. Teachers use their knowledge of students effectively and set tasks that will interest them and motivate them to learn. In a number lesson, a group of younger students with profound and multiple learning difficulties were highly motivated by the teacher singing and playing the guitar. They responded by successfully selecting a numeral card from a choice of 2, by pointing with their eyes, for example. Teachers' well planned lessons are based on the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy and usually start with a mental warm-up, leading to a main activity targeted at an individual level, followed by a final review session. During a lesson for students in Years 7 to 9 with severe learning difficulties, on the recognition of coins, a starter session required them to identify 1p, 2p and 5p coins. The main part of the lesson saw students divided into small groups, according to their ability, to take part in carefully matched tasks. For instance, one group shook a dice and found the coin that related to the number shown, whilst higher attaining students identified the coins needed to pay for items such as a biscuit or a banana. Interesting activities such as these mean that students concentrate well on their work and a significant strength in mathematics lessons is the very good behaviour of the students. For example, in a lesson about budgeting, students in Years 13 and 14 with severe learning difficulties responded well to the challenge, the lively pace, and the relevant resources. Because their behaviour was so good, all the students were able to concentrate and use mental calculation – for instance, to work out how much money they would need to pay for a bottle of Coke.
39. The skills and experience of teaching assistants are deployed effectively – for example, when keeping a record of what individual students have achieved in a lesson, so that teachers can use this information when making their assessments. Teaching assistants know the students well and they give effective support to help them to stay engaged and on task. They play a significant role in helping students to progress in their learning. For instance, during a lesson in the computer room, for students in Years 7 to 10 with autistic spectrum disorders, one student chose not to continue with his work. The teaching assistant skilfully took a turn at counting coins on the screen, which helped the student to reconnect with the task and learn well.
40. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader is enthusiastic and capable and has a clear view of what needs to be done in order to develop mathematics further – for instance, by extending the use of interactive whiteboards. An audit of the subject has been carried out, lessons taught by colleagues observed, and the available assessment data has been analysed. Further analysis of the achievement of particular groups of students will be possible when the school's new assessment and recording system is up and running. Students are placed into classes according to their ability and this is instrumental in raising standards as it helps teachers to plan well-matched work and to set challenging targets. However, higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 are not having their achievements fully recognised through opportunities to gain qualifications.

Mathematics across the curriculum

41. Teachers make satisfactory arrangements to reinforce and broaden mathematics skills in lessons in other subjects. For example, an interactive whiteboard was being used in a science lesson and students were invited to go out to the front of the class in first, second, and third place. During registration, another group of students were counting and adding. Higher attaining, older students with autistic spectrum disorders go to the counter to buy drinks in a café and, at a local college, post-16 students with severe learning difficulties were constantly counting from one to 15 as they planted seeds very precisely, during a horticulture lesson. More formal planning for mathematics within other subjects would help to ensure students have consistent opportunities to consolidate what they learn in mathematics lessons and enable the subject leader to check that tasks are always relevant to students' needs.

SCIENCE

Three lessons were seen.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching by specialists is helping students to improve their scientific skills.
- Learning resources meet individual students' needs very well and the very good science room provides plenty of space for them to carry out investigations.
- Students' achievements are recorded well, but those in Years 10 and 11 do not follow accredited courses.

Commentary

42. There has been good progress in science since the previous inspection. Two specialists, one of whom is a higher level teaching assistant, teach the majority of students in Years 7 to 11, and the quality of teaching is good. Throughout the school, lessons are well planned to meet individual needs. For instance, during a lesson for students in Years 8 and 9, including several with additional, complex difficulties, teachers and support staff used scientific vocabulary consistently. They were rewarded by a student with severe learning difficulties saying 'a monkey' for the first time, as he matched animals to their habitats. His delight was infectious, and other students applauded and praised his efforts. Teaching is challenging. Staff have high expectations and students respond to this – for example, by trying hard to name, sign or use symbols during games in science lessons. On entering the science room, students with severe learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11 reacted immediately to the bitter cold, purposefully created by staff in order to provoke a reaction. As the room was gradually warmed by a variety of methods, exciting scientific knowledge was gained by all students, through their investigations and observations. For those students who are over 16, elements of science are covered through the Towards Independence course, which is taught by their own class tutor. Their work shows that they achieve well – for instance, in health related topics.
43. Students with complex needs respond very positively to the teaching methods used. In a lesson about a space adventure, for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties in Years 10 and 11, music was played and images displayed using the interactive whiteboard, to emulate a space mission. Students explored resources such as rocks and sand and expressed themselves – for instance, by making sounds into a microphone. These very good resources were used very effectively, to enable all students to play a full part in the lesson. This took place in the roomy and well equipped science room, giving all students experience of this stimulating environment.
44. Leadership and management are good. The teamwork between the teacher and the higher level teaching assistant is very effective and they regularly observe each other teach, sharing

ideas and good practice. In addition, the teaching assistant is often present in lessons in other subjects where science topics are taught – for instance, personal, social and health education. This approach enables the science staff to check that work covered in science is followed through and consolidated in other lessons. For example, new scientific vocabulary is practised in other contexts. The science staff make accurate assessments of what students have learned and maintained. These records show that students make good progress over time. However, the achievements of students in Years 10 and 11 are not recognised through accredited courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons were observed.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Computer equipment and technical support have been much improved since the previous inspection.
- Lessons and activities are matched well to students' needs.
- There are no opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11 to follow accredited courses.
- Teachers make good use of opportunities to use ICT during lessons in other subjects, although this is not always identified in their plans.

Commentary

45. The headteacher and governors have ensured the development of facilities for ICT by providing significant funding. Improvement has been very good because previously the provision was unsatisfactory. There is now a well equipped specialist room, as well as computers in classrooms and a growing number of interactive whiteboards. The appointment of a technician and training for members of staff support students' achievement well. The quality of teaching is now good and students achieve well. Higher attaining students of all ages use computers confidently and independently.
46. Teachers are guided by the school's very well structured programme of work, which ensures that students' learning in all aspects of the subject builds on what they have covered already. Throughout the school, students with profound and multiple difficulties operate switches to make choices and to communicate their needs. Devices are matched well to each student's identified need. For example, a student in Year 9 operates a 'jelly bean' switch controlled by neck movements. During one lesson, students with autistic spectrum disorders in Years 7 to 10 coped well with moving to the ICT room to identify examples of technology from digital photographs taken around the school, before using computers to record what they had discovered. Post-16 students with severe learning difficulties attend a computer class at a local college of further education, following an Entry level course, 'Creative use of your computer'. Here, they demonstrate their ability to select text, cut and paste items into documents, and use a paint program. They use the Internet effectively and download relevant features to include in their work. The higher attaining students work very independently. In Year 10, higher attaining students with severe learning difficulties use the Internet to research information, cut and paste text and insert pictures, as well as using a multi-media presentation program. However, this achievement is not recognised through an accredited course.
47. The present subject leader took over the subject in January 2005. As she develops her leadership and management skills, she is being very well supported by the deputy headteacher and so leadership and management of the subject are currently satisfactory. The school has devised an action plan to ensure that ICT continues to develop and meet students' increasingly diverse needs.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

48. There is effective use of ICT in other subjects, particularly when interactive whiteboards are used or when lessons are taught in the computer room. In a mathematics lesson for students in Years 7 to 10 with autistic spectrum disorders, good use was made of a program that enabled them to recognise combinations of coins. Switches and communication devices are used effectively in lessons for those students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. However, during lessons in general classrooms, there are occasional missed opportunities to use computers – for example, for research or reinforcement.

HUMANITIES

No geography or history lessons were observed and judgements have not been made about these subjects.

49. During lessons in **geography**, students increase their knowledge and understanding of the immediate locality and places further afield. For example, Year 8 students study the seaside. They learn geographical vocabulary, such as 'coast' and 'coastline' and develop their awareness of living on an island surrounded by the sea. A study of Kenya encourages Year 9 students' geographical enquiry skills as they ask questions about the weather and the different crops and animals that live there. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience a tactile story which takes them on a lion hunt. The subject leader plans to further develop students' knowledge and understanding by providing greater access to an interactive whiteboard.
50. There is good evidence of **history** around the school and in students' files to illustrate their enjoyment of activities linked to life in the past and comparing this to the present day. For instance, students in Year 9 looked at life in the Blitz, during World War Two. Their work shows that many gained an understanding of evacuation and saw that life was not much fun in those times. In contrast, other examples of the history of entertainment enabled a comparison with hobbies and the media today. Teachers make effective use of a local resource centre. Artefacts and specific resources are borrowed, and staff from the centre have visited the school to work with students and staff.

Religious education

Three lessons were observed.

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make the subject relevant to the needs of all students.
- Students learn important messages through the study of religion, as well as about the religions themselves.
- Learning resources are good, but there are only limited links with the community.

Commentary

51. The subject leader has worked very hard to develop a curriculum, based on the Bexley Agreed Syllabus, which offers opportunities for students to learn about a wide range of topics. By writing detailed plans for each of these, she has provided teachers of the subject with clear guidance to help them organise lessons that build systematically on what students have already learned. In turn, teachers' knowledge of students' particular needs ensures that the work planned is pitched at the right level for each. For instance, a lesson introducing the theme of 'Mosque' to students in Years 10 to 12 took very good account of their autistic spectrum disorders. The teacher used language sparingly, to help students focus on key words, and well

chosen resources – such as a recording of Muslim call to prayer, a copy of the Qu’ran, and prayer mats – were introduced clearly, with symbols cards reinforcing the names of the objects. As a result, students made a very good start to learning about mosques and their importance to Muslims.

52. The quality of teaching is good overall and students achieve well. A particular strength is the way in which all aspects of students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted during lessons. This was exemplified very clearly in the first lesson of a series linked to ‘Water’, involving students in Year 10 with a very wide range of learning difficulties. Through varied activities, students identified the importance of water in many aspects of life, helped each other – a boy with challenging behaviour holding a shampoo bottle, so a visually impaired girl could smell the contents – and considered if everyone in the world has enough clean water. Staff consistently provide very good role models to students, through their own caring attitudes and the respect they show to colleagues and students.
53. The subject is well led and managed and this has led to good improvement since the previous inspection. For instance, the increased emphasis on teaching the ideas promoted by religion and the creation of programmes of work, both represent important developments. Additionally, through evaluating what is provided currently, the subject leader has identified key aspects requiring further attention. The most significant of these is the need to increase the number of links with the community, to enable students to have more opportunities to meet and learn from people who subscribe to different faiths.

TECHNOLOGY

One lesson of design and technology was observed. Judgements have not been made about this subject.

54. Although students take part in a broad range of design and technology activities, there is a heavy and suitable emphasis on food technology. During these lessons, students have the opportunity to carry out practical food preparation skills and learn about healthy eating, supporting their personal, social and health education. During the food technology lesson observed, the teacher had produced a laminated recipe book, with step-by-step instructions in the form of digital photographs. As a result, the students, with autistic spectrum disorders, knew what they had to do and could predict what came next. Work in resistant materials is often linked to activities in art and design – for instance, using clay to produce functional items such as containers.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Four lessons were observed in art and design.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are taught a very wide range of skills and techniques.
- Art makes a very strong contribution to students’ cultural development.
- Specialist teaching meets the needs of all students very well.
- The accredited course offered does not fully recognise students’ very good achievement.

Commentary

55. Since the previous inspection, a specialist teacher has joined the staff and his expertise has led to very good improvement in the subject. The quality of teaching is now very good. Students' portfolios, displays, and teachers' records demonstrate vividly the richness and diversity of the art curriculum. In addition to drawing and painting, collage, printing and photography, students regularly undertake projects involving work in three dimensions. For instance, they work with clay, papier mache, card, recycled materials, and textiles, creating outcomes such as figures, masks, tiles and pots. Students work individually, in small groups or as a whole class, as when they painted the backdrop for a recent school production. Very occasionally, where teachers are less proficient in the subject, time is not used as efficiently and students have less opportunity for creativity. As a result, their learning is not as rapid.
56. A criticism made in the previous inspection report was the lack of opportunities for students to learn from the work of famous artists. This issue has been dealt with very comprehensively and students' work now involves ideas from a wealth of cultures, periods and styles. For example, during the inspection, students in Year 11 with severe learning difficulties recalled their study of Barbara Hepworth's sculptures, in a lesson that focused on Picasso. Students in Years 13 and 14 based their work on Aboriginal art, referring to images displayed on the interactive whiteboard. This lesson demonstrated how students develop a growing repertoire of skills and knowledge as they move up through the school. One student showed initiative as she incorporated hand prints into her design, placing these carefully to enhance the painting and printing applied earlier.
57. A strength of the subject leader's teaching is the way in which he enables all students to express themselves and produce work of such high quality. For example, in a lesson for students in Years 7 to 10 with autistic spectrum disorders, the painting tasks were adjusted to suit students' individual needs. As a result, a student with more significant learning difficulties was able, with support, to dip a roller into paint and apply it to paper. Later, he added collage materials, following the teaching assistant's instructions – 'Turn paper. Squeeze glue. Stop.' On the other hand, a higher attaining student used a brush to copy a rainbow design, keeping the paint carefully within the lines and washing the brush before starting with a new colour.
58. By the end of Year 14, most students have completed successfully modules in 'Making pictures' and 'Pottery and ceramics', as part of the Towards Independence course. Elements of their work are done off-site, through links with further education providers. The quality of work produced by a number of students suggests that they could aim for higher level courses. Currently, students in Years 10 and 11 do not follow accredited courses. The subject leader is exploring alternatives, as part of his plan to develop the subject. Art is led and managed well. The subject leader has provided support for another teacher over the planning of units of work and visited lessons to observe the quality of teaching and learning. The art room is a very good facility and is largely used very well. However, older students with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not benefit from working in this stimulating environment. Students regularly exhibit work locally, alongside those from other schools.

Music

Three lessons were seen.

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all ages and abilities achieve very well.
- Music is very well taught by specialist teachers.
- There are very good opportunities for students to learn and appreciate music outside of timetabled lessons.

- The subject is very well led and managed, but more use could be made of ICT resources.

Commentary

59. Throughout the school, music is an important part of the support for students' communication. Year 7 students with severe learning difficulties sing well as they prepare to play their instruments. They can play to the beat and can count in 3/4 time. They listen carefully as instruments are played out of sight and the higher attaining students identify and name them. Post-16 students use percussion instruments very effectively to show the increase in tempo of the music. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond in a range of ways to a quiet passage of music and the ringing of a bell. They show anticipation and a high level of enjoyment, choosing whether or not to strum the strings of a guitar. One student teased the teacher when singing into the microphone, pretending it was a lolly to be licked, demonstrating the very good relationships teachers have with the students. During such sessions, the teachers promote very good achievement through understanding the stimulus needed for individuals to make progress.
60. Teaching is often excellent. Signing and communication aids are used very well to communicate with students and, as a result, they are clear about what they have to do in lessons. Planning is very detailed and lessons are very carefully structured, so very efficient use is made of the time and students build very well on their previous learning. Teaching assistants are very effective in encouraging students' to join in activities. Students' learning is, therefore, very good. There is a very high level of enthusiastic participation in lessons.
61. Teachers work in close partnership with a variety of visitors to offer students a rich musical experience. The school band has a membership that includes students with a range of learning difficulties. The band makes a significant contribution to students' confidence in their own ability to communicate through song and related actions. It has represented the school at music festivals and is highly respected in the community. There are a range of other musical opportunities in which students can participate at lunchtime, including a guitar club and a choir, and they have attended professional performances and recitals.
62. The accommodation is barely satisfactory, as it is too small, but the current building work will rectify this and create new facilities. Resources are very good, although more use of ICT – for example, the sound beam – would further enhance students' experiences and learning. The very good leadership and management of the subject have led to a good improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching and learning were simply satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Two lessons were observed for students in Years 7 to 9. Judgements were not made about physical education.

63. Students are grouped carefully, so physical education lessons are matched accurately to their special educational needs. For example, a lively pace to an athletics lesson motivated students in Years 7 to 10 with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders to participate fully in walking quickly around the hall, kicking backwards and finding a hoop. In another group, students with profound and multiple learning difficulties made very good responses during their individual programmes, supported by the physiotherapist, and others with autistic spectrum disorders became more accurate at throwing and catching, using specially adapted resources.
64. Sporting links with other schools and the community now contribute significantly to the curriculum – for instance, enabling students to learn swimming and gain certificates. Physical education for Year 10 and 11 students takes place at a local grammar school, supported by its sixth form students. Marlborough is involved with the School Sports Co-ordinator project and students compete in, for example, the London Youth Games, the South London Disability Games, and the Southern Special Schools football league. They have opportunities for outdoor

and adventurous activities during residential visits and there are a number of sporting clubs at lunchtime.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Five lessons were observed.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a relevant and well-integrated programme, which caters very well for all students.
- Teaching is very good and allows all students to achieve very well in their personal and social development and their understanding of citizenship.
- Leadership is dynamic and specialist knowledge is promoting students' personal and social development and awareness of healthy living and community.

Commentary

65. All students take part in a very high quality range of experiences, which enhances their personal development and enables them to achieve very well. Work is very well planned in lessons and also during other activities outside the classroom – for example, visits or lunchtime. This means there is a consistency of approach in what is taught which ensures that all students are able to benefit from lessons and activities. There is a very strong emphasis throughout the school on developing students' awareness of themselves, others and their community and beyond. Citizenship topics are integrated well into lessons – for instance, during an English lesson about courts, guilt and innocence. Students are given autonomy and rights which, in turn, encourage them to take responsibility for their actions.
66. Well chosen learning resources and exciting activities enable students to learn at first hand. This was evident in a lesson for students in Years 10 and 11 with a range of needs, including severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Students developed their knowledge of personal hygiene as they learned how to use dental floss. Time to reflect and de-stress is built into many lessons. For instance, students in Year 8 with severe learning difficulties began their lesson by throwing a ball to a chosen friend, helping them to settle and breaking the ice, in preparation for learning to make informed choices about food. Specialist teaching is in place for most classes, which makes assessments of students' personal development more consistent across the school. Students are encouraged to 'have a voice' and take part in all activities, which are adapted very well to meet their individual needs.
67. The subject leader is very effective. She has ensured that there is a teaching approach which crosses all subjects. Her links with other agencies, including the school nurse, and other schools has brought a fresh vibrancy to the curriculum. In turn, the school is now represented by students at meetings and events in the 'mainstream'. This has given a high profile to the school and the students' personal and social achievements. Statutory requirements for sex and relationship education, drug education, and careers education and guidance are met. The subject was not reported previously so it is not possible to judge the improvement made.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

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	2
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

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