

INSPECTION REPORT

THE MEADOWS SCHOOL

Knutton, Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124512

Acting Headteacher: Mr P D Brown

Lead inspector: Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 21st – 23rd February 2005

Inspection number: 268595

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	93
School address:	High Street Knutton Newcastle-under-Lyme
Postcode:	ST5 6BX
Telephone number:	01782 297920
Fax number:	01782 296150
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Cucyk

Date of previous inspection: 5th July 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Meadows School caters for up to 117 pupils. Presently, there are 93 on roll made up of 65 boys and 28 girls. This includes two children at the Foundation Stage and 12 post-16 students. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties with a small number having additional special educational needs relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism or physical disability. As a result of their learning difficulties, pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. Pupils are frequently admitted at times throughout the school year but few leave other than at the usual time. All pupils are from white British backgrounds and there are no pupils with English as an additional language.

The school serves north-east Staffordshire, a diverse region of urban and rural communities reflecting a mix of more and less privileged areas. In this respect, the school was well located in Biddulph until October 2004, when it was severely damaged by fire. As a result, the school has temporarily relocated further away in Knutton on the outskirts of Newcastle-under-Lyme. While a remarkable amount has been achieved in a very short time in order to get the school operational, building alterations are still in progress and the process of replenishing the school's resources is still going on. The fire and its aftermath have affected quality in areas of educational provision.

The school was awarded a School Achievement Award in 2003 for improved results the previous year and in 2004 it gained the Inclusion Quality Mark.

The school has been affected by the re-organisation of special schools in the local authority and it is intended that by September 2006 it will be a secondary phase school catering for a wider range of special educational needs.

The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher in May 2003 on the retirement of the previous headteacher. A permanent post-holder is currently being recruited.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2016 5	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Mathematics Art and design Music
1934 2	Tom Heavey	Lay inspector	
2543 9	Kath Halifax	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs
1768 1	Roger Sharples	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education Religious education Foundation Stage
2369 6	Johnny Morris	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Personal, social and health education Citizenship Modern foreign language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. To accomplish this, all staff and many others have had to work exceptionally hard to re-establish the school as a matter of urgency after the fire. Leadership and management are satisfactory as is much of the school's provision, including teaching and learning. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, overall and their attitudes and behaviour are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Year 10 pupils achieve very well, especially in English and mathematics, because of the high level of teaching expertise invested in very good planning and preparation of lessons.
- Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good overall and one group achieves very well because of very effective teaching and learning.
- Pupils in Year 11 achieve unsatisfactorily as a result of ineffective teaching and learning.
- The good care taken of pupils and the very good promotion of positive relationships throughout the school ensure pupils develop good attitudes to school and behave well.
- Too few planned opportunities for all pupils to be taught information and communication technology (ICT) lead to unsatisfactory achievement in this subject.
- The curriculum is well enriched with additional activities that pupils enjoy and the opportunity to take part in sports is very good.
- Some Year 7 pupils do not have access to the curriculum to which they are entitled.
- Accredited courses for the few higher attaining Year 10 and 11 pupils and post-16 students lack sufficient challenge.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work have been too limited, particularly the amount done to track and analyse pupils' performance.
- As the temporary arrangements presently stand, accommodation is unsatisfactory.

To a significant extent, the fire has blighted improvement since the last inspection, although overall it is satisfactory. Improvements to post-16 accommodation were destroyed and there has been no scope to remedy this since then. The acting headteacher has taken the initiative to improve key areas, especially ICT and the monitoring of pupils' performance but the fire has hampered progress. While this was a late start to improving ICT, new resources were lost but their replacement is underway. Currently, the greater amount of time and effort is being spent on recovering the curriculum, replacing teaching resources and furnishing classrooms as they become available.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is satisfactory, overall. However, it is good at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6.

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Good
Year 6	Good	Good
Year 9	Satisfactory	Good
Year 11	Satisfactory	Good

Year 13	Satisfactory	Good
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Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Children at the Foundation Stage achieve well in the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception and very well in communication and language. Achievement in English and mathematics is satisfactory, overall. In English it is good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 11. The literacy strategy is more effective in Years 1 to 6 than in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 11. Pupils with additional needs achieve as well as others and the emphasis on language development ensures pupils with communication difficulties achieve well. As a result of very effective teaching, achievement in Year 10 is very good, particularly in English and mathematics. In mathematics, overall, achievement is good in Years 1 to 6 and in Years 7 to 9. It is unsatisfactory in Year 11 because teaching is ineffective. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in science and in religious education. Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory across the school, which is the result of the slow development of provision and, to an extent, the impact of the fire. Post-16 students are making satisfactory progress towards their targets and achieve satisfactorily in their courses, particularly in using their literacy and numeracy skills to solve everyday problems. Better progress is hindered by the unsatisfactory accommodation of post-16 provision in the current temporary arrangements.

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good attitudes, behaviour is good and relationships are very good. Fixed period exclusions are infrequent and attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, although they are good at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6, although very good for one group in these years and they are also very good in Year 10. However, in Year 11, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. They are satisfactory in relation to post-16 students. The best teaching comes from effective planning and preparation based on a good knowledge of the subject and of pupils' needs and different abilities. In these lessons, work is challenging and enjoyable and pupils achieve what they set out to learn. Many of these qualities were missing in the few unsatisfactory lessons and the work failed to interest and challenge pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and its enrichment with additional activities is good. Provision for sport is very good and that for the arts is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the acting headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory, although in re-establishing the school their resolve has been very strong. Management is satisfactory. Self-evaluation is not yet sufficiently robust in helping the school plan improvements. Governance is satisfactory and complies with statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very happy with the school as they judge it to be very good in caring for, supporting and encouraging their children. Pupils view this to be a good school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Take urgent steps to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching and learning in Year 11.
- Ensure that all pupils are taught ICT effectively and have all the appropriate opportunities to learn and use ICT.
- See that all pupils have access to the curriculum to which they are entitled and opportunities to gain certificates that match their level of attainment.
- Continue to develop self-evaluation through rigorous monitoring, including through the collection and analysis of accurate pupil performance data.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

While standards are well below average compared to those expected for their age, overall pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is not as good as at the time of the last inspection although, as a result of the disruption suffered by the school, a judgement on improvement is not possible. Children at the Foundation Stage and the great majority of pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well. Achievement is satisfactory, overall, in Years 7 to 11 and in relation to post-16 students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's understanding of pupils' progress is limited by the lack of tracking and analysis of their performance in subjects.
- Achievement varies between very good and unsatisfactory and this matches the variation in the effectiveness of teaching.
- While provision for ICT has been affected by the fire, there has been insufficient improvement in standards since the last inspection.

Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment as measured through the school's assessment procedures and in National Curriculum assessment and tests at the different stages shows the profile expected for a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. However, there are fewer pupils who are comparatively higher attaining on roll. The school has been slow in initiating the collection and analysis of data on pupils' performance so is not sufficiently assured of how well pupils are achieving. It has only fairly recently begun translating assessments into P Scale data (used nationally to measure performance below National Curriculum levels), and, where appropriate, data using National Curriculum levels as well. As a result, the school is not at a stage of questioning pupils' performance, seeing any trends in progress to reach an overall picture of achievement and using this to plan further to extend learning. This applies to the examination of the progress of different groups of pupils such as boys and girls, higher and lower attaining pupils and pupils with additional needs. The National Curriculum assessments and tests carried out in Year 9 show a few higher attaining pupils reaching Level 3 and above in English, mathematics and science. Their accredited courses in Years 10 and 11, as well as in post-16, are too undemanding and they underachieve as a result. However, most pupils, who are not as able, achieve satisfactorily.
2. The fire has led to a much-reduced amount of pupils' work and school records on file that provides evidence of the progress made over time. The secondary department and post-16 were severely affected in this respect, although the primary department came away largely intact. On the basis of pupils' work seen and the quality of educational provision, pupils make the appropriate progress in relation to their English and mathematics targets and good progress at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6. The achievement of pupils with additional special educational needs is no different from that of their peers because most teachers know their pupils well and provide work that is matched to their capability. Pupils who have autism and communication

difficulties achieve equally well because of the use of a system of picture exchange, enabling them to make themselves understood and to be included in all activities.

3. While the disruption to school life is a factor in the mixed picture of achievement across the school, another is the variation in the quality of teaching. In English, the literacy strategy has been developed successfully and well embedded in Years 1 to 6, which results in greater expertise and more refined approaches to teaching than in other parts of the school. English teaching is not as skilled in Years 7 to 9, because an approach to literacy is not as well developed. This means pupils' achievement is only satisfactory. This also applies to pupils in Year 11, and the fact that this group has only very recently acquired a classroom has been detrimental to their progress. However, in the teaching of Year 10 there is a high level of expertise informing lesson planning and activities that has overcome any debilitating effects of the fire and results in pupils making very good progress. The picture in mathematics is very similar and very good achievements in Years 2 to 6 and in Year 10 are linked to the high level of expertise with which the subject is taught. Overall, achievement in mathematics is good up to the end of Year 9 but it is unsatisfactory in Year 11 because of limited expertise affecting the quality of lesson planning and ineffective methods of explaining and demonstrating mathematical procedures to pupils.
4. Science and religious education, where pupils throughout the school achieve well, stand apart from the mixed picture in English and mathematics. The practical scientific activities organised for lessons engage pupils successfully in active learning. The science curriculum also provides a good variety of experiences in and out of school that enrich pupils' understanding and appreciation of science. Religious education is planned well in ways that make the subject interesting and relevant to pupils' own experiences.
5. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory because the teaching programme is not yet organised sufficiently and many teachers lack the confidence and expertise the subject requires. While the school's attempts to raise achievement have been seriously hampered by the destruction of resources, since the last inspection improvements in the progress pupils make have been slow to materialise. Although achievement in personal, social and health education lessons is satisfactory, good school-wide opportunities in terms of pupils' personal development ensure good achievement in this area.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff has been very successful in ensuring that the pupils feel safe and happy at the new site at Knutton.
- Pupils put a great deal of effort into their work when their lessons are made interesting.
- Pupils benefit in their personal development from the wide range of activities, both in and out of school.
- Only a few pupils do not attend regularly and the school strives for a high level of attendance.

Commentary

6. Pupils have settled very well into their new surroundings due to good care and the long-established very good relationships with staff and each other. There is good mutual respect between the staff and pupils and, because of this, the attitudes and

behaviour of the pupils, including those with additional needs, both in and out of lessons lead to a happy and calm climate throughout the school. Where teaching is effective, pupils' behaviour is managed well and they respond to their work with interest. They are motivated to try hard and complete work independently. In general, pupils are willing to listen to, and consider carefully, the opinions of others. Where teaching and learning is less effective, behaviour is not managed well. In some Year 7 to 9 groups and in Year 11, there are pupils, when bored, who are noisy, answer inappropriately and display unacceptable behaviour, all of which disrupts and slows the learning of others.

7. The school provides well for all aspects of the pupils' personal development, particularly their moral and social development. Although this provision was judged to be very good in the previous report, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. This is because good practice has been maintained throughout the school in spite of recent circumstances. The pupils' spirituality and cultural understanding are promoted well, for example through the celebration of different special events and festivals, such as Christmas and the Chinese New Year, through learning about religions other than Christianity, particularly Islam, and through learning about different countries and cultures in geography and history lessons. Two whole-school assemblies take place each week. This is an opportunity to celebrate pupils' successes with a certificate ceremony. However, the opportunity for pupils to contribute their reflections on their achievements is limited and there is little that is spiritual. Another assembly in the week focuses particularly on spirituality, although this was not seen. There are also brief whole-school gatherings at the end of every day for disseminating information and thinking about others. For example, in one, pupils were asked to think about fund-raising activities for this year's Comic Relief appeal.

8. The school makes good use of a wide range of learning opportunities, both in the classroom and beyond, to develop pupils' understanding of right and wrong, their social skills in different situations, and their awareness of their own cultural heritage and the diversity of modern British society. For example, in school, pupils understand and appreciate the house system and school rules and participate in the school council. Pupils regularly raise money for local and international charities. Outside school, pupils participate in many outdoor pursuits, sporting, drama and musical events. They visit theatres and other schools and retail and community facilities, such as a garden centre and an adventure playground. The contributions of visitors from the Fire Service, an artist in residence and Italian exchange students give good support to pupils' personal development.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	2.2
National data	8.2	National data	1.8

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

9. The drop in the attendance rate since the previous inspection lies solely in the repeated absences of a very small number of pupils. The school makes appropriate efforts to promote attendance including involving parents to ensure their children are ready when their transport arrives. The introduction of a computerised register enables the school to track patterns of absence and to generate follow-up letters as required. As a result the school now monitors attendance closely. Despite the increasing profile

of pupils with challenging behaviour, the school has effective means for managing this and the number of exclusions is kept at a low level.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
93	3	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory because teaching and learning and the curriculum currently make an adequate contribution to promoting achievement. Pupils are well cared for and are given sound support and guidance. Considering the major loss of teaching resources and the relocation of the school, a process not yet complete, it is praiseworthy that educational provision has been returned to a satisfactory state. As a result of the disruption, a judgement on improvement since the last inspection is not possible. Most shortcomings in provision relate to accommodation or resources not yet in place. A good range of extra-curricular activities has been maintained and links with the community are good. Rebuilding of partnerships with schools and colleges is needed because of the relocation, but these links are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Overall, the assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory and adequate use is made of assessment information in maintaining and raising standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Despite the disruption, teachers have worked hard to make sure that pupils continue to have a range of learning opportunities within the National Curriculum, although teaching at present varies.
- The teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The best teaching is based on thorough planning and in these instances teachers have very effectively overcome any losses.
- In general, teaching is structured well and particularly so in Years 1 to 6.
- Teaching in Year 11 is unsatisfactory, overall, because it often fails to bring together the key components that make teaching effective.
- Teachers set good targets for each pupil in English and mathematics.

Commentary

10. There has been a sharp drop in the proportion of very good and better teaching compared with the previous inspection. At that time teaching and learning were good, overall. The apparent decline in effectiveness is due largely to considerable disruption in moving to new premises as well as time and energy spent in replacing the many teaching resources that were destroyed. However, in these circumstances, that

teaching and learning are satisfactory is a measure of the staff's huge determination to sustain the school. Adverse effects are particularly noticeable in relation to post-16 students, who as yet have no accommodation at school, which is detracting from them learning better than satisfactorily. While late, the steps taken a year ago to improve teaching in ICT by developing new resources were all but wiped out. The quality of teaching in ICT has been undoubtedly affected by this but overall a lack of timely action since the last inspection is largely to account for unsatisfactory teaching and learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	8 (17%)	20 (42%)	17 (35%)	3 (6%)	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.

11. At present, overall satisfactory teaching emerges from a mixed picture of teachers' expertise in the subjects taught and, to a lesser extent, the level of their awareness of pupils' learning difficulties and additional needs. While loss of curriculum documentation and teaching resources has played a part, the degree to which teachers have expertise and know their pupils leads to a marked variation in the effectiveness of planning lessons, the preparation of activities and ultimately the quality of pupils' learning.

12. The preparation of activities in very good lessons, particularly the choice and variety of resources, is painstaking and imaginative. This reveals how closely in touch this teaching is with the subject and how it is made relevant and interesting for all pupils. In a history lesson, pupils' learning about the Romans was greatly enriched with dressing in costumes and taking part in role-play. The teaching and organisation of science are good because pupils do practical scientific activities and take part in an interesting variety of approaches to learning science. A very good knowledge of pupils, their different abilities and needs plays a vital part in creating very effective learning opportunities for all pupils. All of this is found in large measure in the very good teaching and learning in Year 10. In a mathematics lesson, a great variety of resources helping pupils read time added considerably to each pupil's ability to tackle analogue and digital time problems with a large amount of independence. As a result they learnt key principles very quickly. With a lot of organisation, work and resources were very carefully matched to what each pupil could realistically achieve and the classroom assistant gave very purposeful support to the least able pupils.

13. In many lessons, time is divided constructively into a variety of whole-class, individual and small group activities that hold pupils' interest and that match well-established approaches for teaching literacy and numeracy. This structure is embedded most in Years 1 to 6 and the resultant teaching and learning are good overall, although very good in relation to one group. This is the case in English and mathematics. With good planning and organisation, lessons in these subjects in Years 1 to 6 move at a brisk, purposeful pace. Teachers and their assistants have a common sense of purpose and make effective teams focused on supporting pupils' learning. Where lessons are very good this is due to a higher level of planning, preparation and expertise in teaching. The work to be done and what is expected to be achieved is clear to staff and pupils. Lessons stay well on track and sustain a good challenge. The expert attention given to developing the language of pupils with communication difficulties benefits those pupils.

This includes the two children at the Foundation Stage who learn well because of the effective teaching of all the early learning goals but particularly in relation to communication, language and literacy. While teaching in mathematics continues to be good in Years 7 to 9, the skill with which English is taught and the organisation of lessons, while satisfactory, are not as accomplished as in the earlier years. As a consequence, pupils' responses are not as keen and they work less energetically. However, in mathematics, the same pupils learn a good range of number and other mathematical skills that they usefully apply in everyday, practical ways. Behind this has been the positive impact of consultancy and training in mathematics, which have increased expertise and teaching skills.

14. In Year 11, the detailed planning of what pupils should learn and the care that needs to be taken in preparing activities and resources are lacking in how pupils are taught. What it is pupils are required to learn is not explained or demonstrated to them clearly enough. Pupils are given a cursory introduction to what is expected and left largely alone. In mathematics, this arises because of the limited skill in explaining mathematical procedures. As a result, pupils take minimal interest and this response is managed ineffectively so that too little learning takes place. Concentrated work is replaced with unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. Knowledge of teaching English is satisfactory, but lesson planning and preparation still are not sufficient to make activities appropriately challenging for pupils.
15. Many assessment records were destroyed in the fire. However, a reasonable check is now kept on each pupil's progress by recording their increases in attainment using assessment booklets designed by the school. The school has begun to match its assessment to the P Scales and National Curriculum levels and is building this data as a computerised record, which should help its monitoring of pupils' performance. A close assessment is carried out on the progress of children at the Foundation Stage. In regard to English and mathematics records, these are used to decide on the targets for each pupil's individual education plan. This process operates well in identifying appropriate and progressive English and mathematics targets and, in practice, the planning of most English and mathematics lessons involves addressing these targets effectively.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are good. The accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme for children in the Foundation Stage and the literacy and numeracy strategies in Years 1 to 6 contribute well to pupils' education.
- Problems with the accommodation are having a negative effect on some provision.
- Not all pupils have consistent access to the appropriate learning opportunities.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a good range of activities.

Commentary

16. Despite the problems the school has, it is striving to make sure that pupils continue to have access to the full range of the National Curriculum and religious education. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was judged to be good but provision has

been seriously affected by the fire. However, in terms of improvements since the last inspection, religious education is now taught to all pupils and better use is made of form time. A range of nationally recognised awards has been introduced, though these are not matched well to all pupils' needs. While there had been improvement in ICT, the provision remains unsatisfactory. The subject is not taught in all classes and some staff lack confidence when using computers. Currently, the opportunity for pupils to work alongside those of the same age in mainstream schools is under-developed.

17. For children in the Foundation Stage learning opportunities are good because of the well-thought out programme, which is well matched to their needs. Good attention is given to all the required areas of learning as well as to children's individual special educational needs. Similarly, pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well in English and mathematics because of the effective way the subjects are planned to more precisely meet needs. Literacy and numeracy strategies are well established in Years 1 to 6, especially in relation to the format of the three-part lesson. In addition, the language programme, also in Years 1 to 6, which staff have devised, is increasing the rate of pupils' progress in speaking and listening.
18. Provision in a few areas is being adversely affected until accommodation is ready. This impinges most on pupils in Years 7 to 11 and post-16 students. While the building is being refurbished and equipped, when completed it will still not fully meet needs. There is no computer suite and no discrete accommodation for post-16 students. In order to continue education in some form, post-16 students are spending most of their week off-site at colleges or other placements. While some time in college is utilised well, activities, overall, are unbalanced. The remainder of the week is spent using the art room as a base, which is far from ideal and it is also the school's music room. The courses that students were part way through have been dropped because, in addition to coursework being lost, resources such as computers are not available to them.
19. The school prides itself in its being an inclusive school and the recent award of the Inclusion Quality Mark is in recognition of its achievement in this respect. While staff promote equality of opportunity, it is not done consistently. In addition to the inequality of opportunity for post-16 students as a result of their predicament, other pupils do not receive their full entitlement. The decision to retain three Year 7 pupils, who ought to be in the secondary department, in a class of pupils in the primary department means they are not taught all the subjects on the secondary timetable. This is unsatisfactory especially as some of the work they are doing is not appropriate for their age. A further group of pupils, who do not have the opportunity to reach their potential, are the higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. National test results at the end of Year 9 indicate these pupils are capable of achieving General Certificate of Education (GCSE) and Entry Level Certificates in English, mathematics and science. However, the National Skills Profile and AQA Units of Accreditation are not sufficiently challenging for these pupils.
20. A good range of educational visits and visiting specialists supports pupils' learning effectively. Experts providing workshops have included an artist in residence, a poet and musicians. Enrichment in sport is very good. Pupils take part in, for example, basketball tournaments, athletics meetings, climbing, caving, cross-country running, short tennis and penalty shoot-outs at Stoke City Football Club. These, residential experiences, cruising on Beatrice Barge, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme all promote pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides sound support, advice and guidance for its pupils. There are satisfactory arrangements to involve pupils in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very warm relationships throughout the school are a strength.
- Good procedures for pupils' personal safety promote their well-being.
- Pupils are supported well in their personal development.

Commentary

21. Relationships throughout the school are characterised by trust and mutual respect, resulting in a climate of confidence that greatly aids learning. In a literacy lesson, for example, Years 1 and 2 pupils had the confidence to ask and answer questions. They were undeterred when they gave the wrong answer because the teacher complimented them on their effort. In the same class, when pupils felt distressed, they were comforted and thus enabled to rejoin in the lesson, aided by the very effective teamwork between the teacher and classroom assistant. The 'family feel' frequently commented upon by parents, enables pupils to approach adults in the school with confidence.
22. As a result of the fire, staff maintain a high level of alertness on matters relating to health and safety. The weekly testing of alarms, frequent fire drills, comprehensive risk assessments, efficient first aid procedures, careful child protection procedures and upgraded security arrangements all combine to create a climate of well-being and security.
23. The school's records of pupils' personal development and individual needs are used along with care plans, close observation and effective behaviour management to give good support to the needs of each child. In the dining room, for example, lunchtime assistants give effective help to pupils with eating and appropriate behaviour. As a result of this attention to their welfare, pupils develop socially and behave well. The school listens to its pupils both informally around the school and more formally through the activities of the school council. The school provides sound support to pupils' progress in subjects. The strongest feature is the use made of pupils' individual education plans. These are well linked to the annual review of their statement of special educational needs. Individual education plans include targets for numeracy, literacy and social skills and these are used effectively by most teachers who refer to pupils' targets in lessons and contribute to their progress towards them.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. The links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very positive views expressed by parents ensure their support for the school.
- Pupils have benefited from the money the school has raised through its community links.

- As a result of its move to the current site, the school has relinquished many of the previously good contacts with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

24. The great majority of parents who expressed views are very positive about how the school caters for their children. They agree that their children like coming to school and are making good progress. They admire the school's promotion of good behaviour and are pleased with the quality of the leadership. Parents agree that the school seeks their views and takes account of their comments and concerns. Information provided by the school for parents is complemented well by personal contact with the school and at the twice-yearly parents' evenings. They particularly welcome the school's 'open door' policy that makes it easy for them to access members of the staff team to discuss any concerns about their children.
25. Productive links with the local community, especially before the move to the current premises, have helped the school to enrich the lives of pupils through the provision of equipment and additional resources. Particularly helpful has been the support from the business community and from charitable organisations such as the Rotary Club, Round Table and Lions. The school's senior staff work hard to sustain links and make new relationships in the vicinity of the new school. For their part, the pupils are encouraged to give as well as to receive. They show their concern for others through helping raise considerable sums of money for local and national charities.
26. The school had links with schools in Biddulph before transferring to Knutton. In the circumstances, new links with local schools have not yet been established and developments in this area are acknowledged to be at an early stage, priority being given to more immediate problems related to the school premises.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the acting headteacher and of other key staff is satisfactory, overall. However, the lead taken by all staff to re-establishing educational provision after the fire has been good. Management is satisfactory. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current circumstances are placing limits on leadership and management being more than satisfactory.
- The acting headteacher has led the staff team effectively in re-establishing the school.
- Managing the recovery of the school has been effective but other aspects of management are weakened by under-developed senior roles and a lack of monitoring and evaluation.
- Limited information coming from the school has restricted governors from increasing their effectiveness.

Commentary

27. Leadership and management have not improved beyond being satisfactory, which is how they were judged at the time of the last inspection. Key issues highlighted then, aiming to strengthen direction for the school and its organisation, remain factors that make current leadership and management no more than adequate. Leadership and

management would now be unsatisfactory but for several mitigating circumstances. The school has been led by an acting headteacher on an indeterminate basis since May 2003 and governors, despite trying to recruit, have not yet succeeded in appointing a headteacher. The re-organisation of special school provision in the local authority means the school will shortly have a substantially changed remit, adding new imperatives to leadership, which a temporary headteacher is not well placed to carry out. Above all, the fire in October 2004, which destroyed the site at Biddulph, has for the moment sidelined most of the major priorities the school is faced with. What had been achieved in accommodating post-16 students adequately and the start made to developing ICT, both key issues from the 1999 inspection, has been destroyed.

28. The acting headteacher has been the effective co-ordinator of the huge effort by all the staff in resurrecting the school on its current site in Knutton. This was achieved expeditiously as a result of the substantial commitment of staff and their unstinting contribution of time and effort in putting the school back together. The acting headteacher has won the approval of his staff and has raised morale by an open, consultative leadership. Teachers appreciate the greater scope they have to take charge of developments in the subjects for which they are responsible. They clearly demonstrate their willingness to follow in the direction and meet the expectations set. However, at present, because of all the complicating circumstances, direction is not yet clear enough for the school to meet all its challenges effectively.
29. School management functions adequately on a day-to-day basis. Much of the attention of senior managers as well as subject co-ordinators is currently absorbed by developing the new school premises, replenishing lost stock, and replacing planning, most of which they are handling effectively. However, senior managers' roles lack the substance needed to be in effective overall charge of both the primary or secondary departments. Responsibility for the entire curriculum goes directly to the acting headteacher, who has insufficient time to do it proper justice. There is no robust monitoring by managers of the school's work and its impact on pupils' achievements. The school has started to self-evaluate and this has highlighted the need for more systematic, rigorous assessments of the school's work, including ensuring staff have the skills to carry this out effectively. A recent self-evaluation exercise has highlighted the need to improve the observation of teaching and learning and the monitoring of pupils' performance. The school has been awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark, for the effective ways it has developed inclusive practice. However, because there is not the close scrutiny needed, the way some Year 7 pupils are grouped and the limited opportunities for pupils to gain appropriate accreditation take away from the quality of inclusiveness.
30. Governors are strongly committed to the school, its staff and pupils. They have the range of expertise that enables them to provide constructive support, for example to the school's financial planning and to monitoring the budget. Governors are well informed on the main issues facing the school in relation to the fire and re-organisation proposals. They are judicious in meeting their statutory obligations and speak knowledgeably about school improvements, for example, about what was achieved on accommodating post-16 students and acknowledging the slow progress on provision in ICT. There is also recognition that the amount and quality of information coming from the school have been limited. This has hindered their capacity to challenge and help direct the school. While the flow of information to governors has improved recently, the school supplies them with too little information based on the systematic monitoring of the school's work and pupils' performance. This means they have only a fairly general

view on pupils' achievements and therefore are not well placed to help the school in its direction and development.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	848250	Balance from previous year	17710
Total expenditure	814138	Balance carried forward to the next year	51822
Expenditure per pupil	9120		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

The provision for work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are a number of ways in which provision for work-related learning is promoted, although the programme is not broad enough for some pupils.

Commentary

31. The co-ordinator has carried out a useful exercise of examining the whole curriculum to see where it matches what is required for work-related learning. The school has an effective partnership with the Connexions careers service and the Staffordshire Partnership for business links activities. The good provision for work experience in a range of social care and retail situations has been maintained, in spite of the school's relocation to a new site. Pupils receive additional certificates for health and safety at work. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ADAN) course 'Foundations for Work', started in September 2004, and community links, particularly with the Honeycomb project, are contributing to pupils learning about work. The school has maintained links with colleges since the fire. There is some good practice in Years 10 to 13. However, the opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work within school are too limited at present; in particular, not enough is done in Year 9 to lay a firm foundation for work-related learning.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision in each area of learning at the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of communication, language and literacy is very good.
- Staff make the best use of the limited accommodation.

Commentary

32. The two children of Foundation Stage age are taught in a group where the mix of pupils ranges from Nursery age to Year 4. The work evidenced in the two children's records and that observed taking place in the classroom show they achieve well, overall. Achievement is very good in **communication, language and literacy** and it is good in **mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world**, as well as in their **creative development, physical development and personal, social and emotional development**.
33. Teaching and learning are good and effective in meeting the needs of both children. Teaching is very good in relation to language development with the result that children rapidly learn language and become confident communicators. The teacher and learning support assistants work very effectively as a team and have a good understanding of the needs of each of the children. They record detailed assessment of the children's work and these are used effectively in the planning of future activities. In a very good religious education activity the staff brought the story of Saint George alive with their enthusiastic role-play and use of costumes. The children were totally involved and fascinated by this experience.
34. Leadership and management are good, especially in responding to relocating provision at short notice. Although in the temporary arrangements space in the classroom is still limited and lacks an attached outside play area, the staff have worked hard to create as stimulating and appropriate learning environment as possible. Effective use has been made of an adjacent storeroom as a sensory room. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the standards children achieve. While teaching and learning were judged to be very good then, that teaching and learning are currently good in the circumstances is a measure of the staff's commitment.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 5

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in the primary department achieve well because of good teaching.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 lacks expertise and in Year 11 progress has been affected by accommodation problems.
- Achievement in Year 10 is very good because of very good teaching.
- The provision in the sixth form is unsatisfactory mainly because temporary accommodation is unsatisfactory.

- Limited assessment leaves teachers unclear about higher attaining pupils' capabilities.
- English makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

35. Teaching and learning are, overall, satisfactory, although the good progress identified in the previous report has been maintained for pupils in the primary department. Achievement in Year 10 has improved and is very good as a result of very effective teaching. Achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 11 is satisfactory. The achievement of students in the sixth form is unsatisfactory because there is as yet no adequate base for students to be taught in. A generous amount of time is allocated to English in Years 1 to 10. Pupils in most groups make good progress towards literacy targets in their individual education plans because specific time is set aside for this and, in the best lessons, teachers remind pupils of their targets.
36. In the primary department, teachers follow the three-part lesson with useful introductions and recapitulation of previous work to check pupils understand what they have learned. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace so pupils maintain interest. Teachers and support staff work well as a team enabling effective small group and individual work. Teachers have high expectations of the work pupils produce and how they behave. Planning is detailed and matched to pupils' abilities. However, while good emphasis is placed on the mechanics of reading, the choice of text is sometimes inappropriate. For example, literacy this half term is based on *Little Red Riding Hood*. Last half term it was based on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Neither of these is an appropriate subject matter for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, these pupils achieve well. They take part frequently in a range of activities that foster an interest in reading and increase skills, for example reading to adults, comprehension exercises, following story tapes and reading electronic books. To aid the progress of lower attaining pupils, teachers have compiled high quality books, which extend and support the chosen reading scheme. Pupils who have communication difficulties have been grouped together and benefit from an intensive programme which is rich in language and which provides for those with autism to communicate through the use of pictures.
37. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 endeavours to follow the recommendations for literacy in the Key Stage 3 Strategy, but does not have the skill and confidence in the primary and specialist teaching. As a result, though lessons are well planned, the pace is sometimes slow and tasks are mundane. Some teachers lack confidence in using *Big Books* for pupils to learn together and study a text. Nevertheless, pupils make sound progress. Pupils in Year 11 have only recently been provided with accommodation and the absence of a classroom and teaching resources has lowered achievement in the very recent past.
38. Teaching in Year 10 captivates pupils' interest and is relevant to their needs and experiences. Lessons in this class are inspirational. Activities are relevant to pupils' lives and, in addition to extending skills in English, contribute significantly to pupils' personal development through, for example, the acquisition of words used on signs in the real world. Lessons are conducted with a sense of urgency and are demanding for pupils of all capabilities. To address the limited range of texts available to this age group, the teacher has written and published books that are appropriate to this age and level of need. The teacher, who is the subject manager, is very knowledgeable about how English should be taught, provides very good leadership and is a very good example as a practitioner. His management is good. While in the past the subject manager has monitored what is happening in other classrooms, his time since the fire has, of necessity, been spent ensuring colleagues are well supported and in replacing resources.
39. Since the move to new premises, post-16 students do not have a base. They spend much of their time off-site and the amount of time allocated to the subject has been cut. On the present timetable, there is an imbalance in the time allocated to mathematics and that to English. This is affecting students' achievements in English. Work towards National Skills Profile was destroyed in the fire. In an effort to provide some form of accreditation, Oxford Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts examinations study modules in 'Using the library' and 'Finding information' have been introduced.

40. Improvement since the last inspection is, overall, satisfactory. The range of accreditation has increased. However, higher attaining pupils who achieved well in their Year 9 national tests are not able to work to capacity by, for example, working for Entry Level Certificate or GCSE. This limits their achievement. As at the time of the last inspection, the use of ICT is an area for improvement. While some teachers are confident and use computers for pupils to draft, refine and present their work, others make little use of the technology. The recording of pupils' achievements is satisfactory. Teachers conscientiously record day-to-day success in the detailed individual books. However, pupils are only assessed against National Curriculum criteria at the end of each year. As a result some teachers are unable to judge how their pupils are performing compared to those in similar schools.
41. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development by, for example, them considering the moral and social issues dealt with in novels such as *Of Mice and Men* and *Machine Gunners*. Pupils were helped to come to terms with the trauma of the fire through their writing, producing an illustrated newspaper account and work on the legend of the Phoenix. Pupils' cultural awareness is furthered through theatre visits and visiting drama groups.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. Language and literacy are promoted well in most subjects. Subject teachers highlight key vocabulary such as 'toga', 'villa' and 'mosaic' when studying the Romans in history, written so pupils recognise how the word is spelled. In most subjects teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read from a worksheet or text, drawing on their knowledge of initial letter sounds, and breaking a word into parts, to read new vocabulary. In the primary department and in Year 10, pupils write at length and imaginatively, for example, when writing about life in Bangladesh in the primary department and poignant 'letters from the front' in Year 10 history.

French

43. French was not a focus of the inspection and it was not possible to observe any lessons during the inspection. As a result there is insufficient evidence on which to judge provision. The school does, however, meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. French is taught every week in Years 7 to 9 and examination of pupils' work and reports suggests that they complete a satisfactory amount of written work and exhibit positive attitudes to speaking and listening tasks. There was no teaching in Years 10 and 11 at the time of the inspection but it is planned to re-introduce this in the near future. Examination of pupils' work shows that last year they completed a European project, which included learning a few words in German, Spanish, Italian and Greek.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The highly effective planning and approaches to teaching lead to pupils in some classes learning very well.
- Achievement in Year 11 is unsatisfactory as a result of ineffective teaching and learning.
- While positive steps are being taken to improve provision in mathematics, more attention to sharing best practice is needed.

Commentary

44. For the majority, teaching and learning are good, overall. This is largely the result of the effective teaching strategies, which make most lessons fast moving, lively and varied. As a result, pupils find them challenging, rewarding and enjoyable and all of this contributes much to their good achievement. Teaching is made effective through applying a close knowledge of pupils' needs and mathematical abilities to planning lessons. In this way, and in the best lessons, teaching is taken to a very good level with particularly thorough planning and preparation of pupils' work. It is also evident that key points on teaching mathematics from recent training have been understood and are being implemented very successfully. In one lesson, involving mainly older pupils in the primary department, they learnt an effective and quick technique to add double-digit numbers. This meant that counting on fingers was replaced by a better method. In Year 10, higher attaining pupils learnt quickly to read time in its analogue and digital forms and translate between these as a result of many very well organised demonstrations and exercises. The lower attaining pupils were kept well included with less demanding but equally challenging tasks and the full attention of the classroom assistant. Very good learning for all was supported by the rich variety of visually strong resources prepared, and behind these was much detailed consideration of how each pupil would best learn. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in relation to post-16 students and they make sound progress, especially in solving everyday problems relating to money and time.
45. Mathematics lessons lack effective planning in relation to teaching of Year 11 pupils. There is a limited expertise in mathematics and knowledge of pupils' learning needs. Not enough emphasis is placed on explaining and demonstrating mathematics and pupils' interest is not stimulated as a result. Lessons rely too much upon worksheets for higher attaining pupils that, by their design, over-help them and not enough attention is paid to assessing what all pupils have learnt. This large group contains a complex mix of learning difficulties and additional needs and it demands particularly careful understanding and planning. A small number of pupils, bordering on severe learning difficulties, are given appropriate work. They do not concentrate for long but with the good support of the classroom assistant they identify different coins and make up small sums of money. However, in a double lesson they were unable to sustain effort for that long. This was not helped by insufficient planning and preparation for activities to fill the time. The other pupils who are higher attaining, when motivated, work independently at solving money problems, explaining their methods and performing accurate mental calculations. However, motivation is at a minimal level, particularly amongst boys as the work set lacks challenge. The few girls persevere better with the same tasks, but work too slowly. For a large part of the lesson boys stopped working and chatted amiably with each other.
46. Leadership and management are satisfactory. While the October 2004 fire has been a serious distraction to the leadership of mathematics, it has not halted a programme of consultation and training for teachers. This is having a positive effect where effective teaching is already well established. However, in managing provision in mathematics, too little attention is paid to monitoring strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school. As a result, there is insufficient action where improvements are needed and staff do not get to share ideas and strategies. In particular, the analysis of data on pupils' performance would highlight the limited challenge for higher attaining pupils of accredited courses in Year 11. There is too little use of ICT in mathematics. While this has been slow to improve since the last inspection, new equipment was destroyed and is currently being replaced. However, in considering the impact of the fire, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

47. Each pupil's individual education plan has targets for mathematics and the plan plays an active part in planning teaching across the curriculum. This gives rise to opportunities and others arise naturally for pupils to apply number, measurement and data-handling skills in, for example, science, food technology and physical education. The fact that most teaching is

carried out by the class teacher also contributes to sound co-ordination of mathematics in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good practical scientific investigations stimulate pupils' interest.
- The co-ordinator is aware of the need to reinstate resources necessary for the teaching of science.

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning are good overall, and lead to pupils throughout the school achieving well. This is reflected in the good results achieved in the National Curriculum tests in 2004. Throughout the school, good use is made of practical activities that actively involve pupils in learning science. In Year 2, for example, as part of their study of the senses, pupils were blindfolded and, feeling with their hands alone, identified different objects. In another lesson, a National Parks Ranger provided an informative slide show and talked on animal habitats to Year 3 to Year 6 pupils. This was a good follow-up lesson to a field study undertaken recently in the Peak District National Park. In a Year 9 lesson the pupils mixed different soils and sands with water and observed how this settled as different layers at the bottom of the container, simulating the processes leading to the formation of sedimentary rocks. In Year 10, as part of their accredited course, pupils learn how to set up an aquarium in the classroom.
49. Where teaching is good, pupils are expected to use the correct scientific vocabulary and ask questions that make them think carefully about their answers. The pupils rise to this challenge with enthusiasm and with good concentration. Pupils are keen when conducting independent research using the Internet. In a good Year 7, 8 and 9 lesson on reproductive processes in animals, there was great skill and sensitivity applied to dealing with this challenging topic. Pupils responded in a sensible and mature manner as a result of the way the information was presented.
50. Since moving to the temporary premises the co-ordination of science has changed hands. Good liaison between the present and past co-ordinator ensures that effective leadership and management continue. The new co-ordinator is urgently re-establishing the substantial amount of documentation and resources lost in the fire. At present, the focus is on equipping a new science classroom, which is being built in combination with a design and technology workshop. Equally, now that Year 11 has its own classroom, there is also a focus on ensuring this group is taught science. As a result, improvement is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' do not achieve enough because there is a lack of consistency in teaching on building on previous learning.
- The current co-ordinator is an enthusiastic and determined leader and provision is beginning to improve.

Commentary

51. In the time elapsed since the last inspection, the rate of improvement has been too slow and is unsatisfactory. Pupils and post-16 students are still not achieving well enough and achieve

unsatisfactorily. However, the school has experienced very difficult circumstances and, through sound leadership and management, the co-ordinator has made headway on recovering provision. While most ICT resources were lost, currently all classrooms have at least two new computers and a good range of software. The programs available on all the computers and other resources are sufficient to cover all elements of the National Curriculum. There are plans for further improvements to resources, notably the purchase of interactive whiteboards. The co-ordinator is leading a good programme of training to ensure that all staff are confident and competent in teaching and the use of ICT resources. However, at this time, pupils' knowledge and skills are not being developed systematically. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of basic computer functions, including opening programs and using the mouse and keyboard. A group of pupils in Years 3 to 7 learnt well about using a graphics program to produce a computer portrait of a partner. In this instance, teaching was good because of a good knowledge of pupils' prior learning and pupils learning how to use the 'spray' facility. Pupils in Year 11 know how to use a mobile phone to send text messages and take photographs and how to use the Internet. However, over the school as a whole, practice is piecemeal and pupils do not use ICT often enough to develop their knowledge and skills in using common tools such as word-processors, databases and spreadsheets.

52. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because staff are not making sufficient use of their ICT resources to teach pupils. At the present time, ICT is being taught as a discrete subject in only a few classes. This is due largely to the time elapsed in replenishing the school's ICT equipment. Teaching is made more difficult by the lack of a computer suite. As a result, there is not enough learning of ICT skills and pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise what they have already learnt.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

53. ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because facilities are not used enough in other subjects. There is some good practice, for example pupils in the primary department using a good commercial reading resource in English and pupils in Years 7 to 9 using the Internet for research in science, but these are the exception. Last year, pupils in Years 10 and 11 used computer dictionaries to find words in several different languages as part of a European project. However, many other opportunities are missed to both develop and use pupils' ICT knowledge and skills in a variety of learning situations.

HUMANITIES

54. History and geography were not a focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered for judgements to be made on provision. Pupils' work and teachers' planning indicate pupils follow a suitable programme of work matched to the National Curriculum.
55. In **geography** in the primary department, pupils compare where they live to conditions in another country, for example Bangladesh. They are acquiring a basic understanding of plans and maps and have investigated aspects of a river. Of the two lessons seen, that in the primary department was good and that in year 9 satisfactory. In the primary department, lively teaching enabled pupils of all capabilities to increase their knowledge and understanding of the features of contrasting areas of Africa. In the year 9 lesson about the river Severn, though teaching was well prepared, too much time was spent talking and, therefore, some pupils found concentration difficult. In both lessons good emphasis was placed on specialist vocabulary such as 'meander', 'source', and 'estuary', so pupils increased their vocabulary and used the correct phraseology. Good attention is given to mapping skills and this is reinforced in outdoor education when orienteering and planning expeditions as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Written work is well presented and well illustrated with maps, plans and pictures.
56. In the lessons seen in **history** in the primary department, pupils learned very well as a result of skilled teaching. They made very good gains in their knowledge of Roman clothes, dwellings

and food through imaginative teaching. The use of real objects and the pace of the lesson made learning meaningful and enjoyable for all. In Years 7 and 8, though teaching was confident and made good use of real objects, too long was spent on explaining the voyages of Drake and some pupils lost interest and their rate of learning slowed. Some teachers provide well for pupils to improve literacy by, for example, producing a newspaper report of the sinking of the *Titanic*. However, this is not always so and in some classes, the only recording pupils have done is filling in missing words. In contrast, pupils in Year 10 write imaginatively and at length. This was so in accounts from the 'Front' when, in their letters home, pupils reported, for example 'the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end at the surrounding horrors'.

57. In both subjects, practical experiences make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, their moral and social awareness is increased through discussions on the impact of water management, and when comparing the lives of people in third world countries with life in the United Kingdom. Pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage is encouraged through, for example, learning about the canon *Roaring Meg* and its role in the siege of Biddulph Hall during the Civil War. An appreciation of the culture of other is fostered through, for instance, the Moroccan practice of *Khamsa*, where Africans decorate their hands for luck.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of teachers planning interesting work, pupils achieve well.
- Religious education is well led and managed.

Commentary

58. Teaching and learning are good overall because teachers plan a range of stimulating activities to interest and engage pupils. In a very good Year 6 lesson on the topic of Easter the teacher created a sense of mystery through an imaginative style of storytelling supported by the good use of pictures and artefacts. In an equally very good Foundation Stage lesson the story of Saint George was brought to life by role-play and in an effective Year 2 lesson pupils dressed up to perform a wedding ceremony as part of their study of family celebrations. In these lessons the pupils were fascinated and totally immersed in the activities. Post-16 students are provided with good opportunities to discuss their ideas and opinions of more complex subjects, such as values in society. This enables students to verbalise their thoughts and gain deeper insights. Good use is made of challenging questions to extend students' answers and they respond with thought-provoking comments.
59. Effective leadership and management have ensured a good improvement since the previous inspection. The planning of a balanced range of activities across the full age range and the development of a comprehensive system of record keeping have ensured that all pupils receive an appropriate and relevant curriculum. They are provided with good opportunities to compare the similarities and differences of the major religions. Good provision is due largely to the commitment and enthusiasm of the religious education teachers. New resources to support learning activities have been acquired and are in place to replace those lost in the fire.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

60. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision in design and technology as only two lessons were seen in food technology. The loss of pupils' work and teachers' planning

exacerbates the lack of evidence, overall. In a food technology lesson for Years 12 and 13, in which the teaching was good, students showed confidence in preparing their lunch. Their good range of culinary skills was obviously built on knowledge gained from prior learning. Students displayed a good understanding of hygienic procedures, health and safety and showed high levels of independence in preparing their food. This is a positive contribution to students' transition to adulthood. In a satisfactory lesson involving a mixed group of pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9, attitudes were good. Pupils enjoyed the processes and results of making apple crumble. However, the task lacked some challenge, particularly as adults weighed and mixed ingredients rather than pressing pupils to do these more independently.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

61. Two lessons were seen in **art and design**. There was no pupils' work other than that started very recently as all work and records were destroyed in the fire. The limited number of teaching observations and evidence from pupils' work means no judgement on provision is possible.
62. In the lesson where art and design was taught by the specialist, teaching was very good. This fits with the picture at the time of the last inspection when, due to the same specialist teaching which led to more ambitious work with some groups, progress was very good. A group of more able pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 are developing very good designs for large panels based on an Ancient Egyptian theme. This is the result of very good sketchbook research carried out by each pupil into pattern, colour and the hieroglyphic shapes they have selected and adapted from a wide variety of illustrations. New computers have just been linked to the Internet and some pupils use website searches to further investigate Ancient Egyptian imagery. The drawing out of designs and the application of colour are executed by pupils with considerable care and control.
63. In the lesson taught by the non-specialist involving pupils in Years 2 to 7, teaching was satisfactory. The group set about modelling the form of a wolf and this was linked to their story in English lessons. Pupils' interest and ideas were stimulated effectively at the outset through discussion and looking at illustrations. However, they had difficulty translating their ideas into the visual form expected as they had few of the modelling skills required. While the teacher also lacked this expertise, pupils enjoyed exploring the characteristics of the modelling material and this was a pre-requisite to them going on to achieve higher standards.
64. One lesson was seen in **music**, which is insufficient to make a judgement on provision. Accommodation has only very recently been re-established and resources have not yet been fully replenished. At the present time music has to share space with art and design, which is not ideal.
65. In the lesson seen, which involved pupils in Year 9, teaching was satisfactory. The planning of the lesson was good and provided an interesting and enjoyable topic that challenged pupils to explore how musical sounds evoke moods and emotions. Well-chosen video excerpts effectively demonstrated to pupils how music is composed to dramatise the effects of fantastic machines, such as a giant mechanical hen. This helped them to identify accurately the special effects achieved by music, which set the scene well for them to use their own musical imagination to start composing. However, as pupils did not use instruments to aid their composition their interest and sense of direction suffered.

Physical education

66. No lessons were seen in physical education. The limited planning documentation that has survived and the additional information provided by the enthusiastic co-ordinators points to the provision of a curriculum that contains a good balance and wide range of learning activities. There is a very good range of out-of-school activities including unihoc, basketball and cross-

country running. Many of the activities are organised by the North Staffordshire Special Schools Sports Association of which the school is an active participant.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good in relation to personal development.
- While the planning of lessons is good, there is little in the way of a scheme of work and activities do not always match the needs of all pupils.

Commentary

67. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory gains from year to year in their knowledge and understanding of personal care, life skills and the common structures and processes of a democratic society. They make good progress in their personal qualities and skills as a result of the wider provision for their personal development such as developing very good relationships leading to considerate behaviour and positive regard for others.
68. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Strengths of the teaching were the very good relationships and pupils' desire to learn. Teaching provides interesting and relevant topics which are well organised but in approaching lessons, there is a tendency towards too much teacher-led discussion and not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute or develop their ideas and opinions. The work in lessons is matched to pupils' age and interests but does not always meet the needs of different pupils effectively. Less able pupils, for example, lacked the opportunity to do more practical tasks and more able pupils were not always sufficiently challenged by their written tasks. In a Years 7 and 8 lesson about smoking, pupils were already familiar with all the planned discussion points apart from passive smoking and the written task was unchallenging as it did no more than reinforce what they already knew.
69. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has successfully acquired a good range and quality of commercially produced resources to support teaching and learning throughout the school. However, the school does not currently have a school policy or its own scheme of work to provide clear guidance on how these materials should be used. Pupils' records show that teachers use the school's assessment system satisfactorily to measure pupils' progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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

In a special school such as this, standards achieved are judged against individual targets and not national standards.