

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NORTHERN COUNTIES SCHOOL**

Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108551

Headteacher: Frances Taylor

Lead inspector: Alan Lemon

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 268606

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:	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	72
School address:	Great North Road Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE2 3BB
Telephone number:	0191 2815821
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Kevan W Carrick
Date of previous inspection:	14 <sup>th</sup> May 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a registered charity with a Board of Trustee Governors. It makes provision on a day and residential basis for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs who have complex communication needs. Although it principally caters for deaf pupils, the school also has pupils with a wider range of special educational needs, including visual impairment, autism, challenging behaviour, physical disability and severe, multiple and profound learning difficulties. Whatever their needs, pupils are admitted to the school because they are likely to benefit from its expertise in teaching pupils to communicate using a 'Total Communication' approach. When they enter the school, most pupils' attainment is very low. The number of higher attaining deaf pupils, with less complex needs, has been in steady decline for several years. Most pupils are from localities in the North East and live relatively near to the school. However, there are others whose homes are much further away in both England and Scotland. These pupils, and a few others, make up the 16 pupils using the school's residential provision during the week. While pupils' backgrounds are varied, most have homes in less privileged areas. British Sign Language is used by most pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language and a few come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. Very few pupils leave or join the school other than at the usual time.

Pupils are placed either in the special educational needs department because of the complexity of needs and severity of learning difficulties, or in the secondary department if they have learning difficulties in consequence of their hearing impairment. There are 54 pupils in the special needs department, ranging in age from Reception year to beyond 16. There is one child in Reception year and 16 students over the age of 16. The secondary department has 18 pupils grouped by age in Years 8, 9 and 11. However, as a result of the small numbers of higher attaining pupils coming to the school, governors have decided to close the secondary department in July 2005. They will retain the special educational needs provision and intend to expand this. Governors have agreed a merger, which is under way, with the Percy Hedley Foundation. The Percy Hedley Foundation is a charity that provides for people with cerebral palsy and communication difficulties.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20165	Alan Lemon	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design
19650	Sue Thomas	Lay inspector	
28197	Hilary Ward	Team inspector	Science History Religious education Special educational needs
22466	Diane Pearson	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education Citizenship Music Physical education Foundation Stage
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Modern foreign language English as an additional language
23696	Johnny Morris	Team inspector	English Design and technology Work-related learning

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school is very effective and provides very good value for money.** Very good leadership and management, supported by very effective governance, have ensured the quality of education is very good. In particular, pupils achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well.

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- The very good provision in the special educational needs (SEN) department has developed as a result of strong leadership and very effective teamwork.
- All pupils are fully included in good learning opportunities because of the very good teaching of communication skills.
- The very good care of pupils, support for their individual needs and personal development mean they respond very well in lessons.
- Achievement is very good in English, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- While regular assessment is used very well to support teaching and learning, insufficient data analysis of pupils' performance takes place.

There has been a good improvement in the school's effectiveness by dealing successfully with the key issues from the last inspection and, more generally, in the development of provision since then.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Achievement is very good, overall.** The large majority of pupils, who are in the SEN department, which includes children at the Foundation Stage and students over the age of 16, achieve very well. Pupils in the secondary department achieve well.

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 6	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 9	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 11	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 14	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

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

All pupils in the SEN department, whatever their needs, achieve very well as a result of very effectively adapted teaching and very well co-ordinated professional contributions to their support and well-being. In English, pupils in the SEN and secondary departments accomplish the skills to communicate by means most appropriate to their needs, aided by the substantial expertise in teaching a range of communication methods, most particularly, sign language. Communication skills are promoted throughout the school and lead to very good achievement in speaking and listening. In both departments, pupils achieve very well in ICT as a result of expert support and the many opportunities to use computers and

communication aids. Achievement in reading and writing is good across the school, as is achievement in mathematics. Achievement in all areas of learning at the Foundation Stage is very good and is strong in personal, social and emotional development as well as physical development. All pupils achieve very well in PE because of the physiotherapeutic support in the SEN department and the good programme of PE in the secondary department. Pupils all achieve very well in PSHE as so many very good learning opportunities exist. Good teaching in the secondary department, especially where accredited courses are involved, leads to good achievement in most other subjects and good examination results. Achievement is only satisfactory in science in the secondary department because non-specialists have recently needed to take over teaching the subject on account of the departure of the science specialist and the difficulty in appointing a replacement. However, achievement in science is good in the SEN department.

**Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and they relate very well with others. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good.** Teaching and learning are very good in the SEN department and good in the secondary department. The expertise across the school to teach communication results in all pupils learning these skills very effectively. They are greatly encouraged that all staff use sign language and many do so with fluency. The different needs of pupils are very well catered for in planning and carrying out teaching. As a result, all pupils' learning benefits from the inclusion brought about by having an effective means to communicate. Very effective teamwork between many different professionals contributes much to the higher quality of teaching and learning in the SEN department, where multi-professional collaboration permits finely tuned attention to each pupil's needs. However, it is to the credit of teachers in the secondary department that good teaching and learning have been maintained in very difficult circumstances. The school's curriculum is good, overall and very good in the SEN department, where its co-ordination and planning are very effectively managed. Pupils in the secondary department have a good choice of accredited courses and preparation for leaving school. All pupils are very well cared for and supported.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** Very good governance is ensuring the school's future is secure and that it continues to make a very effective contribution to meeting pupils' special educational needs. Governors fulfil all of their statutory obligations. The headteacher gives clear direction and sets high expectations. Effective leadership has been spread more widely through the school with careful delegation of responsibilities to staff. This has been extremely successful in the SEN department where leadership is very good and provision is managed very well. It means that the wide range and complexity of pupils' needs are expertly met and that pupils achieve very well as a result. While much close monitoring of provision takes place, the tracking of pupils' progress is not sufficient to give a detailed analysis of patterns in their progress.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very satisfied with how the school serves them and their children. Pupils are very positive about how they are treated and what the school has to offer.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the data and analysis of pupils' performance in areas of learning, subjects and personal development in order to inform target-setting.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Overall, achievement is very good. All pupils in the SEN department achieve very well, including children at the Foundation Stage and post-16 students. All pupils in the secondary department achieve well.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- While pupils' individual targets promote achievement, whole-school targets are yet not refined enough to distinguish the detailed gains in progress.
- The wide range of special educational needs in the SEN department is very effectively provided for and supports achievement very well.
- Pupils and students throughout the school quickly acquire the most appropriate communication skills.
- Overall, achievement in English, ICT, PE and PSHE is very good.
- While achievement is good in the secondary department, it has not developed its provision as effectively as that in the SEN department.

#### **Commentary**

1. Standards are very low in the SEN department because of pupils' severe learning difficulties and additional complex needs. The department ensures its pupils and students achieve very well by using its thorough assessment of each pupil's needs as the base for detailed planning and individual target setting. This includes children at the Foundation Stage, where achievement is very good in all the areas of learning. However, as whole-school target-setting is currently based on a simple calculation of pupils' progress towards their individual targets, the school is implementing a well-established commercial scheme to track progress using more precise measures. While current practice does not promote a detailed analysis of patterns in pupils' progress, the effective use of the new scheme will facilitate this and give the school insights into setting more precise whole-school targets and, therefore, managing its educational provision to gain best value. The stage at which the school is at with whole-school target setting does not have an adverse affect on pupils' achievement as the steps taken to identify key individual targets are painstaking and based on accurate assessment.
2. The SEN department's wide range of well-qualified staff works together very effectively to ensure the conditions are created for pupils and students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as those with visual impairment to make rapid progress. Visually impaired pupils, for example, are taught very effectively to feel their way on a computer keyboard and are able, as a result, to write. The good knowledge of pupils held by all the staff involved with them, particularly their communication needs, contributes significantly to their achievement. The school is admitting an increasing number of pupils with autism who achieve very well. This is because their learning needs are being met very well in a discrete class in the SEN department. This class has the right conditions in which autistic pupils can learn. Pupils' communication skills are developed very effectively using the Picture Exchange Communication System and there is intensive interaction with each pupil in teaching.

3. In relation to subjects, the best achievements are in English, ICT, PE and PSHE and this is in both the SEN and secondary departments. Achievement in English is very good throughout the school, especially in pupils and students acquiring speaking and listening skills. This is the result of the school's major emphasis and substantial expertise in teaching communication, applying very effectively a range of strategies including sign language, symbols and Assisted Augmentative Communication (AAC) aids that meet the communication needs of all pupils and students. This is the single most important achievement for all, as it provides high level access to learning in all the other curriculum areas as well as in personal development. Across the school, all pupils are achieving well in reading and writing.
4. Pupils whose home language is not English, because their parents either speak a foreign language or use sign language, make very good progress in lessons and in the long term they achieve very well. This is because many pupils very quickly acquire sign language and rapidly begin to communicate at a sophisticated level, expressing fluently their feelings, ideas and opinions. Many also begin to develop spoken language.
5. Achievement in ICT is very good because of the expertise with which it is taught. This extends also to the use of AAC aids for a number of pupils in the SEN department. In addition, the many opportunities for all pupils to use their ICT skills in other areas of the curriculum support achievement. The very good physiotherapeutic and subject expertise is combined very effectively to make a very good range of learning opportunities in PE. The opportunities for pupils' and students' personal development are many and very well organised across the curriculum and the whole school day. The direct teaching concerning health and relationships is very good. Pupils achieve well in mathematics as a result of consistently good teaching. In science, achievement is good in the SEN department and satisfactory in the secondary department, where the loss of specialist teaching has had its impact. In other subjects, where a judgement has been possible, pupils and students across the school achieve well. Overall, the standards achieved across the school at the time of the last inspection have, at least, been maintained. They have improved well in English, ICT and PE.
6. While the small group of Year 8 to 11 pupils achieve very well in a number of subjects and well in most others, their educational provision is good but not of the same high quality as found in the SEN department. This is why their achievement, overall, is not at the very good level found in the SEN department. Historically, pupils in the secondary department have achieved higher standards because their special educational needs were less acute than those in the SEN department. While the recent trend has been falling numbers in the secondary department, the special educational needs of the fewer pupils admitted have been more marked. The decision to close the department has meant it has not developed its provision as much as in the SEN department to address the changing needs of pupils and this has an impact on how well they achieve. However, pupils have good opportunities to pursue accredited courses, which are matched mostly to their different capabilities. The GCSE, Entry Level Certificate and vocational course results gained over the last three years have been good.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive. Behaviour throughout school is very good. Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Attendance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school ethos and supportive environment promote successful attitudes to learning.

- Well thought out behaviour strategies very effectively help pupils to be confident and improve their behaviour.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Spiritual and cultural development is good.

### Commentary

- Pupils are encouraged by highly committed staff to have a very positive attitude to school. Throughout the day it is obvious that pupils are keen to learn and they enjoy their lessons. They are friendly and polite and eager to communicate with visitors. Pupils show enthusiasm for their school and respect for each other. The school council provides its members with the opportunity to express the views of their classes on such issues as a recycling initiative and changes to the school uniform. Pupils appreciate this and feel that their ideas are taken seriously.
- Pupils are very well behaved at all times because behaviour is consistently managed by all staff who make expectations clear to pupils but more so have developed very good relationships with them. There is no significant level of exclusions. During lunchtimes they show how independent, sensible, helpful and sociable they are. During playtimes they enjoy games and relate well to adults and each other. There is no evidence of bullying, harassment or conflict between pupils. A few pupils who require a more structured programme respond very well to carefully thought-out targets.

#### *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	68	1	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0

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

- Pupils' moral development is very good as many essential values are emphasised through discussion of personal experiences in lessons. Pupils are sensitive to others and know right from wrong. In PSHE and citizenship many issues are discussed, for example whom to call on for support or how one should react if teased. Very good opportunities for social development are provided throughout the day. From a very young age, pupils are encouraged to listen to each other and take turns. Events such as a coffee mornings, fund-raising events and residential visits promote excellent opportunities to share different activities and new experiences with others.
- The school encourages spiritual development through topic work and discussions and this is good. Daily assemblies and time for reflection ensure pupils develop an

awareness of themselves and others. Pupils in the SEN department enjoy experiences such as a story and drama about Rama and Sita and a visit to a Hindu temple. Here, circle time supports discussion by pupils on topics such as being afraid. Cultural development is good; for example, pupils visit different shops, theatre, and exhibitions to complement lessons. One group dressed in Victorian costumes and discussed whether it was difficult to write with quill pens. They are developing an awareness of the diversity of other cultures through topic work and drama and taking part in celebrations such as Diwali.

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.0	School data	0.0
National data	8.7	National data	1.7

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence in 2002/3.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is made very relevant to the needs of all pupils in the SEN department while secondary department pupils have a good choice of accredited courses and are prepared well for further education or employment. All pupils' needs are cared for and supported very effectively.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good, overall. Assessment is good, overall; it is very good at the Foundation Stage, good in the SEN department and satisfactory in the secondary department.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the very good teaching is in the SEN department, which includes the Foundation Stage and post-16.
- Pupils are taught expertly to communicate using methods most suited to their needs.
- Teachers in the secondary department manage pupils well and have high expectations of them.

### Commentary

11. Very successful teaching in the SEN department is a direct result of the very effective leadership and management. Clear direction and high expectations have led to very effective teamwork between the many professionals contributing to meeting pupils' needs. They share a strong sense of purpose and are sharply focused on deciding and shaping the best approaches for each pupil. Good multi-disciplinary assessments at the outset as well as detailed ongoing assessment and recording of pupils' progress towards their individual targets are a significant contribution to the SEN department's effectiveness. This includes the one child at the Foundation Stage, who, as a result, is learning very well in each area of learning. The quality of teaching and learning in relation to post-16 students is very good. A very significant strength is the staff's knowledge of the students' individual needs. All staff use speech, signing and other strategies, such as electronic aids and individual student contracts, extremely well to inform and involve the students in their learning. However, while the SEN department is introducing a scheme to better measure the very small steps of progress its pupils make, closer monitoring of pupils' performance is not fully place.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 68 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	29 (43%)	32 (47%)	6 (8%)	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.*

12. As deafness is the principal characteristic of most pupils in the SEN department, a wide variety of means of communicating is taught very well. This is a main strength in



English, where teaching and learning are very good. Sign language is the main vehicle; the staff's high level of expertise and constant signing results in many pupils, including pupils whose home language is not English, learning this as their language, thus gaining very good access to wider learning opportunities. The level at which signing is taught is well gauged to pupils' capabilities, with the lower attaining learning extended gestures and higher attaining pupils being taught British Sign Language. As some pupils are not capable of acquiring sign language because of their more complex needs, other forms of communicating are learnt by them as effectively. Both the Picture Exchange Communication System and Assisted Augmentative Communication (AAC) are well developed and taught very effectively. Pupils using AAC have learnt to operate their electronic voice synthesisers and many to the extent of holding short conversations. In order to do so, some have learnt to operate their equipment using head movements to activate a switch. The success of learning to use AAC has been greatly improved by the close assessment of each pupil's progress and sharing this with them so that they are clear on how to improve.

13. A good standard of teaching and learning is being maintained in the secondary department. Despite circumstances, teachers maintain high expectations, which are expressed most clearly by lessons always getting off to a good start and the pace of work being maintained well. The few pupils who are challenging are managed effectively, mainly because relationships are very good. The expertise in teaching sign language is very good and all pupils learn to sign effectively. As in the SEN department, this is a main strength of teaching English. Teachers' expertise in the subjects taught is also good and this is marked particularly in planning lessons for accredited courses taught in Year 11. These courses provide clear assessment criteria, which teachers make good use of in tracking pupils' progress. Otherwise, while there is some good regular assessment and recording, it is not carried out consistently well in all subjects. Individual education plan targets pertaining to subjects are in some instances vaguely worded and not specific enough to the needs of individual pupils. The planning for a few lessons, for example in art and design, lacks the necessary detail on what pupils should learn because a scheme of what should be taught in each year has not been developed sufficiently.
14. In the subjects where judgements have been made, teaching and learning were at least good and often very good. The amount of very good lessons seen maintains the upward trend in effective teaching and learning and is a good improvement since the last inspection.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good, overall. It is very good in the SEN department. The provision for enriching the curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is broad and it is strongly relevant to the wide range of pupils' needs.
- Pupils and students have good opportunities to pursue accredited courses and prepare for life after school.
- There are many good learning opportunities beyond the school day.

- Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good, overall.

## Commentary

15. Learning opportunities are good in the secondary department and they have been very well adapted to suit pupils in the SEN department. This includes very good provision for pupils with visual impairments, profound and multiple difficulties, and pupils with autism. Many classes in the SEN department have pupils of widely differing ages and their teachers plan their long-term work well, making sure it remains appropriate for their age as well as their abilities. While most subjects are taught, all pupils are disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. However, as the majority are deaf, their experience of learning English is similar to learning a foreign language. There is a very effective emphasis on pupils learning to communicate. Total communication, which embodies as many methods of communicating as necessary, has a very high priority. Sign language, speech, AAC and symbols make up the principal ways by which staff and pupils communicate and all of these are developed to a high degree. This ensures all pupils have very good access to the broad range of learning opportunities.
16. The curriculum includes opportunities for higher attaining pupils to enter for several GCSE course, Entry Level Certificates and for lower attaining pupils to pursue the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Unit Awards. There are also opportunities for pupils to take City and Guilds and other vocational qualifications. By Year 11, pupils have good experiences of work placements, both within the school and in other settings out of school. There are good links with the local college, with a variety of courses on offer each year. Currently, pupils are studying beauty therapy, bricklaying and motor vehicle maintenance at college. Post-16 students are prepared well for leaving school.
17. The wide range of extra activities makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and adds much interest and challenge to learning opportunities, overall. Pupils have enjoyed camping trips and residential visits, for example to Kielder Water each summer, where they learn to canoe, sail and rock-climb. Pupils take part in a good variety of sporting activities and relish the competition in football matches against other schools. Pupils have good opportunities to develop wider interests in the arts. They visit the arts centre and, recently, took part in an arts festival with a local primary school. Professional artists provide workshops, for example in print-making and there have been performances by South American musicians and dancers in school. Many pupils are involved in different fund-raising events, such as for the Macmillan Nurses fund, a local hospice and Oxfam.
18. The school has a good number of well-qualified teachers. In the secondary department, they teach up to GCSE level in a range of subjects and provided vocational courses as well. There is no science specialist and so the level at which science is taught has had to be reduced and this has affected achievement. The number and quality of support staff are very good and they make very good contributions to pupils' learning. Classroom staff and therapists

are closely involved with pupils' learning programmes, helping in the planning of teaching and individual pupils' targets. Teaching and support staff have very good training in meeting the range of pupils' special educational needs, which is contributing greatly to provision in the SEN department. Many staff have been very well trained to use sign language and some have gone on to gain higher qualifications.

19. Good accommodation allows specialist teaching to take place in several subjects and supports achievement in these. There are good facilities for design and technology, computing, physical education, including hydrotherapy, swimming and food technology, as well as therapy and medical facilities. The residential areas are well maintained, clean and well furnished for pupils, which contributes to pupils enjoying their time spent in residence. The school has good resources that support and encourage pupils' learning, such as table-top games and equipment in mathematics, and English text and library books. Many pupils need specialist equipment, including seating, and the school does well to ensure that it is provided for them.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The care, welfare, health and safety of all pupils are very good. The range and quality of medical and therapeutic support are very good. The school continues to provide very good support and guidance for pupils. The steps taken to involve pupils, and to seek and act on their views are good. This enhances all aspects of pupils' personal development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff know pupils well, and are trained effectively to support them.
- The wide range of external agencies makes a significant contribution to pupils' support.
- Residential provision is managed well.
- There is very effective support as pupils move through the school.

## **Commentary**

20. The school very successfully promotes pupils' care, welfare and support. The high standards found by the previous inspection have been maintained. The school's established routines and procedures are well supported by a comprehensive range of policies with clear aims and objectives. Before a policy is finalised, the headteacher often seeks advice from relevant outside authorities. Any complaints raised by parents are investigated thoroughly in line with school policy. Teaching and care staff know pupils well. The very good relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils trust the staff. They are confident about approaching staff if they have a problem. Staff liaise well together to support the best interests of the children.
21. A good number of therapists and medical personnel are available on site or visit the school to assess and advise on pupils' care and development. Clinics are often held at the school so children do not lose valuable school time in attending appointments at local hospitals. For pupils who need them, the speech and language therapist prepares detailed feeding plans and these are available to all staff. A varied training programme ensures staff are kept up to date with latest developments in their areas of responsibility. A well-prepared training workshop for those learning support workers who feed children covered all aspects of feeding and enabled these staff to undertake their responsibilities with sensitivity and a keen awareness of the problems which could arise with swallowing and eating. The very high quality of the school's catering ensures that all children have a well varied choice of nutritious, healthy food each day. This year the school won the Healthy Schools Award for the fourth consecutive year for its work with pupils on all aspects of healthy living
22. Children who need to stay overnight are well cared for by the residential team. Care staff encourage pupils to be as independent as possible. As pupils mature they have the opportunity to budget for and cook their own evening meals. They enjoy their independence and respect the trust which staff place in them. Skills pupils learn in the residence are not accredited separately with a recognised award although they contribute to modules of the ASDAN qualification.
23. As children move through the school they receive good support and advice regarding the next stage of their education or transfer into the community. Where possible, older pupils attend college for taster weeks and experience life as a student. The school has developed some valuable community work experience placements.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a good partnership with parents. Links with the local community are good. Links with schools and colleges are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school keeps parents well informed.
- Only a few parents are actively involved in the work of the school.
- A range of links with the community and other educational establishments makes a valuable contribution to pupils' education.

## Commentary

24. The school works hard to create good links with parents. Parents' views of the school are mainly very positive. They appreciate the school's contribution to their children's development and nearly all are comfortable about approaching the school with any problems. Staff know it is important to use a variety of ways when communicating with parents. As well as using sign language, staff communicate with deaf parents by fax or minicom. There is considerable contact with other parents by telephone, much of which is in the evening when the school knows that this is a convenient time for parents. For parents whose first language is not English the school uses the services and expertise of local workers in the community, specialist health visitors and registered interpreters and translators. The school prospectus is helpful and contains all the required information so parents have a good understanding of the school. The governors' annual report is a useful summary of the school year. If appropriate, staff will visit pupils' homes to discuss issues that have arisen. Home/school books are an additional useful means of communication. When used well, there is a good exchange of information between home and school. However, some parents do not use the books and others think the books are not a reliable way of communicating essential details. Some parents are confused about the future of the school and would welcome more information.
25. A few parents attend the monthly coffee mornings which raise money for local and national charities. Parents' attendance at the governors' annual general meeting and at pupils' reviews is variable. One reason for this may be the long distance some parents live from the school. Nevertheless the school recognises it needs to find other ways to involve parents in their child's education and has set this as a priority in its development plan.
26. The link the school has forged with the local primary school is good and boosts pupils' morale. Pupils who are deaf attend to learn alongside pupils of a similar age who have no hearing impairment. Other pupils from Northern Counties gave a successful deaf awareness presentation to mainstream pupils, which acted as a considerable boost to their self-esteem. The community is used well to support pupils' confidence, independence and social skills. Younger pupils learn road safety. Older pupils learn to be responsible citizens by shopping for themselves and interacting with hearing people. The signing choir sing and sign carols in local shopping centres, hospitals and residential care homes at Christmas. This contributes significantly towards increasing self-confidence. Members of the community use the school's facilities from time to time.
27. The school has similar productive links with colleges. These benefit older pupils who attend for regular vocational lessons or taster sessions before confirming their wish to transfer full time.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management have improved well and are now very good. Governance has improved and is very good. The headteacher is a very effective leader and, overall, the leadership of the other key staff is good. The school is very well managed.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors share a strong sense of purpose with the school and are fully committed to its aims.
- The headteacher has raised expectations and made good improvements across the school.
- Leadership and management in the SEN department are very good.
- The school operates efficiently and by good monitoring of its work keeps track of its effectiveness.
- The data generated on pupils' performance is too restricted.

## Commentary

28. The governing body, comprising trustee and representative governors, is a widely qualified and expert group who very ably pursue and protect the interests of the school. Governors know the school very well and have a particularly good grasp on its immediate and long-term financial position. This has helped produce a very clear vision for the future, in which, as a result of the changing educational environment, substantial re-adjustment to the services the school provides is now being sought. This is linked to determination to protect the school's well-established work with deaf children. With their experience and expertise, governors are very well placed to successfully see through the agreed merger with the Percy Hedley Foundation to ensure the school's considerable contribution to meeting its pupils' needs is preserved and further developed.
29. The headteacher, promoted into this post two years ago, has brought about major change very successfully, essentially through co-ordinating more of the leadership potential of staff. Much of this has been realised by the careful delegation of responsibilities to staff throughout the school. The decision to close the secondary department because of its falling roll has been a setback but its impact on the staff affected has, nevertheless, been handled sensitively. As a result, good leadership in the secondary department continues and is ensuring a professional response from all staff. This guarantees pupils are well provided for and achieve well.
30. A major success of the headteacher's initiative has been the SEN department. The deputy headteacher in charge has very clear aims for meeting the range of complex needs of pupils. These are based on a strong sense of purpose shared by the multi-disciplinary team of teachers, assistants and therapists. There are key staff in the department giving effective leadership to discrete provisions such as for autism, visual impairment and behaviour management. The high quality of teamwork, and the clarity and very effective management of systems to support pupils have resulted in very effective provision for the range of needs and ensure pupils achieve very well. This places the school in a very strong position in terms of its future.
31. The school is managed very well within its non-maintained status. Business and personnel management plays a vital and very effective role, which frees the headteacher and senior staff to concentrate more on educational matters and makes running the school smooth. In this respect, school administration and financial management work very well. This makes for a good application of the principles of best value. Teaching and learning are monitored well and, because systems are

particularly well developed in the SEN department, the oversight of provision here is very good. What is learnt from monitoring is very well related to managing teachers' performance and ensuring their professional development meets their and the school's needs. While tracking pupils' performance is satisfactory, the school understands it has a very limited analysis of performance. It is now pushing forward in a clear and very well managed way to implement a better method of measuring pupils' performance to permit greater analysis of patterns and trends in their progress.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2327019	Balance from previous year	143637
Total expenditure	2209755	Balance carried forward to the next	260901
Expenditure per pupil	26948		

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is successful in developing awareness and understanding of the world of work.

### Commentary

32. All pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience placements in the second half of the summer term. The school is successful in finding a good variety of employers offering work experience to pupils. The administrative workload is considerably greater than in mainstream schools because of the nature of the pupils' difficulties and the necessity to carry out detailed risk assessments and to take full account of discrimination legislation. The school manages these matters extremely well. In addition, pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students have a reasonable range of opportunities for work experience and enterprise activities within the school itself and to visit a number of colleges. Pupils in Year 11 attend college courses with a very strong emphasis on work skills. Last year these courses were in hairdressing and carpentry and joinery and this year they are in beauty therapy, bricklaying and motor vehicle maintenance.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The Foundation Stage is led very effectively.
- Very good teaching is based on detailed assessment, clear planning and well-focused activities that promote learning.

#### **Commentary**

33. Currently there is one child at the Foundation Stage who is taught successfully with pupils in Years 1 and 2. All those in this group including the one Reception child have made substantial progress over the last two years and achievement is very good. As a result of the very good leadership and management, detailed assessment and planning of what is taught succeeds in meeting individual needs. As is the case for pupils in Years 1 and 2, very detailed assessment by the physiotherapist, speech and language therapist and teacher provides a sharp focus to learning in language, communication and physical development. There are very good opportunities provided to mix and co-operate in small group activities.
34. The Foundation Stage curriculum is comprehensive and covers all areas of learning, with an appropriate emphasis on PSHE. There has been a good improvement in provision, especially teaching and learning, since the last inspection with the result that achievement is now better.
35. Independence skills are greatly encouraged through **personal, social and emotional development**, such as acquiring the skills to eat with a spoon or hold a cup while drinking. **Communication, language and literacy** is integral to all activities, such as making a choice between two photographs or symbols and anticipating the sequence of a song or story. **Physical development** is given priority through close assessment and support by the physiotherapists towards learning to walk without support. During hydrotherapy, singing games encourage physical exercise through the enjoyment of kicking and splashing in the water. Rebound therapy sessions are successful in improving concentration and balance by providing new experiences of movement on the trampoline. In **mathematical development** a large electronic switch and touch-sensitive computer screen enables the visual tracking of objects and the anticipation of sounds and colours. Counting is experienced and enjoyed through many songs and stories. A variety of activities promote **creative development** and **knowledge and understanding of the world**. These include experience of using paint and crayons, making marks and splashes of bright colours and creating patterns. The group listen to familiar tunes and are beginning to take a turn to shake an instrument. Exploring materials, tasting and smelling foods give children very good opportunities to make choices and show preferences.



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 5

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good use of signing and other techniques and very good relationships between staff and pupils are major factors, which result in very good achievement in communication skills.
- There is a keen awareness of the pupils' difficulties with written tasks, and very good strategies are used to help them improve.
- Lessons are planned very effectively to meet the variety of pupils' needs, and resources are use very well to promote learning.
- Assessment is being used very well in making pupils' individual education plans and in planning individual tuition.
- Senior staff provide a good lead and all teachers manage their responsibilities very well.

#### Commentary

36. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 11 achieve very well. They all make very significant gains in lessons and over time, in speaking and listening, and they make good progress in reading and writing. One measure of the success in English is that a small number of Year 11 pupils, from the secondary department, gained grades within the A to C range in GCSE in 2002 and 2003. One pupil is well on target for success in GCSE English this year. Consistently good or better progress is effectively shown by the quantity and quality of written work and by pupils reaching their individual communication targets. Observations of English lessons and of other subjects, as well as dining hall and break time activities, clearly demonstrate the school's substantial success in developing the pupils' ability to communicate with each other and adults through wide opportunities for signing, gesture and vocalisations.
37. Pupils and students in the SEN department complete a good amount of written work and make effective progress in a wide range of written tasks. For example, a pupil in Year 2 wrote short sentences such as "I had my hair cut" legibly and with good spacing between the words. A higher attaining Year 6 pupil successfully put 15 words beginning with 'f' in alphabetical order and wrote a well-structured letter. Year 11 pupils, in the secondary department, write at length and with good understanding about Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The teachers effectively use a good range of strategies to help pupils improve their writing. For example, in a lesson in the secondary department, the teacher introduced Year 9 pupils to 'dialogue journals'. This was explained as a new activity to help pupils improve their writing through written exchanges of experiences and ideas. The approach is based upon recent research, in the United States, into developing the writing skills of people with hearing impairment.
38. Teaching and learning are very good. There is no significant variation in the learning of different groups of pupils. In a lesson in the SEN department, pupils from Years 8 to

11, with very complex learning difficulties, achieved very well in both communication and the physical activities planned in detail from their individual education plans. Very good individual tuition enabled a pupil with autism to achieve very well in developing communication skills using the Picture Exchange Communication System. In several lessons, teachers showed good awareness and managed the tendency for the more communicative pupils to dominate group discussions. All teachers make very good use of a wide range of resources to reinforce the pupils' understanding. Teachers frequently refer to the displayed timetables, which use words and symbols and often involve the pupils in writing a daily timetable on the board, reinforcing their reading and writing skills and their understanding of regular routines.

39. Assessment is satisfactory and rapidly improving. The school has recently introduced a new system to collect and analyse information about pupils' learning and to try to identify significant strengths and weaknesses and trends in the achievement of groups of pupils. More significantly, the use of assessment information to produce high quality individual education plans and to plan the next steps of learning is well established and very effective in the SEN department. For example, the individual programmes in the classes for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including physical disabilities and autism, are of very high quality. These arise from the teachers' very good understanding of the pupils' needs and their systematic approach to assessment, recording and planning.
40. Although there is no nominated subject co-ordinator, English is well led and very well managed. This is because both deputy headteachers have a very good overview of the subject and the development of the key skills of language and communication is at the heart of everything the school does. This is reflected in the high quality policies for communication, English and AAC and good schemes of work based on the National Literacy Strategy and the GCSE course. Staff in the SEN department liaise very effectively with each other and other specialists, such as the speech and language therapist, to plan and evaluate pupils' individual programmes. In the secondary department, the planning is very good and consistent because most of the teaching is carried out by one teacher. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The high standards pupils achieve in communicating have been maintained as have the standards of reading and writing.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

41. This is good. The development of pupils' language and communication skills is the main priority in the school and is central to the teaching and learning in all subjects. A lesson about the film *Toy Story 2* was linked very well to the class history topic about toys. The school's success in developing the pupils' literacy skills clearly enables greater access and achievement in other subjects, notably written tasks in mathematics, science and citizenship.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good.
- While much effective assessment of pupils' progress takes place, it is not done consistently well because provision is not co-ordinated.

## **Commentary**

42. Pupils achieve well throughout the school, whether in the SEN department, which includes post-16 students, or in the secondary department because lessons are well planned and taught to give challenging work to pupils of all levels of ability. Pupils with autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, or auditory and visual impairments are all taught by teachers who understand their problems and needs well. Support staff are very capable. They are used very well by teachers to help meet the needs of individual pupils or groups, such as in one good lesson in which the support staff took a group of autistic pupils in the hall to learn about concepts such as 'in', 'on', 'under', 'between' and 'through' by working their way around a circuit of soft play apparatus. All staff explain very well, ask probing questions and give good praise, whether speaking aloud, using very clear signing or making use of pictures and symbols to help pupils' understanding.
43. The best lessons, particularly in the SEN department, are led with great enthusiasm, and high expectations that pupils will behave very well, pay full attention and try their hardest. Often, teachers use computers very well to help some pupils, such as when helping a pupil with visual impairment to work out money problems in one lesson. Teachers mark pupils' work in a positive way that helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve and teachers keep clear records of what has been learned. There is not, however, a consistent way of doing this throughout the school, which is the result of the subject not being co-ordinated sufficiently. Towards the top of the school, pupils' progress is well recorded through the coursework that they do, often as part of a commercial scheme. It is also a built-in part of the courses that lead to nationally recognised qualifications such as GCSE and ASDAN. These courses are very good motivators for many pupils. In relation to post-16 students, mathematics is not taught as a separate subject. However, it is a major part of students' wider learning for their general living skills through, for example, food preparation, shopping and eating out in cafes.
44. Mathematics is managed well, with class teachers discussing pupils and plans with their colleagues, organising their equipment and text books and deciding which method of tracking progress they will use individually. The school has done well to maintain good progress by all groups of pupils since the previous inspection, especially in view of the changing nature of the pupils. In particular, throughout the school there is now much more practical mathematics taking place than previously.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

45. The use by pupils of their mathematical skills in other subjects is good. Throughout the school there is now much more practical mathematics taking place than previously. For example, in geography pupils have learned about directions, angles and distances; in science they have drawn graphs of surveys they have undertaken; sometimes, the graphs have been drawn using computers; and in PSHE pupils have used money in practical shopping activities and learned how to read bus timetables, as well as telling the time.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, overall, and sometimes very good in the SEN department.
- Pupils' achievement is supported by a variety of methods matched to their needs.
- The loss of a science specialist from the secondary department has resulted in teaching and learning by non-specialist teachers being sometimes less effective than it was at the time of the last inspection.

### Commentary

46. All pupils and post-16 students in the SEN department achieve well due to well-planned teaching. Higher attaining pupils and students experiment with electrical circuits and explain simple cause and effect. They also, with good encouragement, make predictions and learn subject-specific language. They benefit from the department's use of a nationally recognised scheme of what to teach, which is adapted well by teachers to meet the particular needs of pupils and students. The subject is often taught through topics, which incorporate good links to other subjects such as PSHE and food technology, which develops learning in science with a different focus.
47. Lesson planning is very detailed and enables teachers to organise activities effectively. These challenge pupils and students well and, as a result, they take an interest in science and further their knowledge. The very good management of pupils and students ensures they maximise learning opportunities. Teachers use a range of strategies effectively in lessons, which ensure these higher attaining pupils and students understand the work. Questioning is carefully judged and matched to pupils' and students' ability and communication needs. Pupils and students, who have complex learning difficulties, learn to understand more about their own bodies through an effective experiential, multi-sensory approach to their learning. They develop their senses through touch, massage and aromatherapy and by experiencing different sweet and bitter tastes as well as by recognising parts of their bodies in a mirror. With these sensory approaches, a great deal is accomplished to consolidate learning for these pupils and students.
48. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in the secondary department. Following the recent departure from the secondary department of the science teacher, there is no one who is a science specialist. The impending closure of the department has meant it is not possible to make a new appointment so the remaining teachers have had to acquire the knowledge and skills to teach science. This has led to adjustments in the science curriculum being taught in Year 11, where two pupils have had to curtail their GCSE course and follow one at a lower level. Despite the loss of an opportunity for pupils to gain an appropriate qualification, teachers have worked hard to ensure the Entry Level Certificate now offered will be taught within the time scale left.

49. The leadership and management of science across the school are satisfactory. Teachers are good at assessing the progress of their pupils and students but this is not always recorded effectively and is largely dependent on the skills of individual teachers. Improvement in science since the last inspection is satisfactory. Provision in the SEN department has improved well and standards in the secondary department have been maintained.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in the secondary department are very confident and knowledgeable in using computer programs.
- A good range of ICT is used very effectively in the special educational needs department to support pupils' access to learning.
- ICT is used very well across the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

50. In the secondary department, pupils are very familiar working with computers and do so with a high level of independence. As a result, their achievement is very good. They have a very clear understanding of instructions given by teachers and carry out lesson tasks with minimal support. Very effective signing, both by teachers and pupils, means communication is of a high order and instrumental to very good learning. When asked, Year 8 pupils were able to connect to the Internet and carry out individual searches for images of pet animals. They printed the pictures they selected and used the correct steps to enlarge. Pupils undertake a wide range of ICT applications such as creating and modifying digital imagery, spreadsheets and data bases. In Year 11, pupils very confidently built a database. Their keying-in of data was fluent and accurate and with a little support they sorted the data according to different specifications and extracted the information required. In word processing, pupils use a variety of formats to suit the style of writing such as poetry or prose. Writing is usually very well set out in paragraphs and features such as bold type or italics are used effectively to enhance appearance. Pupils' achievement matches the standard required for the highest stage of the Entry Level Certificate and over the past three years many pupils have reached this standard. Teaching is very effective as a result of the good expertise supporting learning and close monitoring of each pupil's progress.
51. ICT is well integrated across the curriculum in the SEN department. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils with learning difficulties linked to severe physical disability benefit in particular from the expertise and attention given to them using AAC aids. They are given a high level of patient tuition by teachers and support staff in lessons and at lunch times. As a result, they make steady but very good progress despite the significant restrictions in their movement and manipulation. A Year 9 pupil pieced together a conversation from a menu of statements programmed into a Dynavox, making selections by operating a switch with head movements. Unable to communicate otherwise, this pupil now chats about his weekend activities. With the same close attention, pupils with visual impairments are taught where each letter is on

a keyboard with the result they word process simple statements. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils operate simple programs and use a mouse or keyboard to access and control programs. They key in letters and copy type sentences. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils word process with very good skill, writing sentences using good punctuation and setting out text very well in paragraphs or lists as appropriate.

52. The leadership and management of ICT are very good throughout the school. The very good planning of what is taught in the special educational needs department linked to close assessment of each pupil's progress supports achievement very well. Planning in the secondary department is generally good, but very good where it draws upon the guidelines of the Entry Level Certificate course, because the objectives that are assessed are much clearer. There has been an all-round good improvement in provision and standards since the last inspection, particularly in how ICT is now used across the curriculum.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

53. Pupils use ICT very effectively to support learning in other subjects and it is at the core of learning in the SEN department. In English, pupils in the secondary department re-draft GCSE coursework by word processing. In science and mathematics they produce tables, diagrams and graphs using computers.

### **HUMANITIES**

54. It was not possible to gather sufficient evidence from lessons and pupils' work to judge overall provision in **geography** and **history**.
55. **Geography** is taught regularly throughout the school. It is included on the timetables for all classes and there are some attractive and wide-ranging displays around the school. In the four lessons seen in Years 9 and 11, the teaching was good, with well-planned activities that had clear learning aims. Teachers motivated pupils well and used good resources, such as aerial photographs, a computer and model volcanoes, to make the lessons lively and interesting. Pupils' learning was very well aided by capable support staff working with individual pupils. All staff speak very clearly, sign very fluently and make sure they have pupils' full attention.
56. Two lessons of **history** were seen. The teaching and learning observed were at least good. A visit to a toy museum with 22 pupils from the SEN department was exceptionally well planned so that pupils could appreciate that the museum's toys were old. Pupils were very well challenged by looking for specific toys and making a record of their age and how they worked. In a follow-up lesson, pupils learnt to sort toys into old or new categories and went on to applying their knowledge of old and new to different objects in the classroom.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Religious education is taught in an enjoyable and relevant way in the SEN department.
- Pupils learn about the religious festivals of the major faiths and this increases their understanding of themselves and others.

## Commentary

57. Achievement across the school is good. While pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism in the SEN department find it hard to develop knowledge and understanding of religions, they do develop successfully self-awareness through multi-sensory experiences. For example, they look at and recognise photographs of their own and other's facial expressions and in doing so, become aware of, and tolerate, others. Higher attaining deaf pupil and students in the SEN department as well as pupils in the secondary department enjoy stories about Christ's life and know about rites of passage by acting out ceremonies such as baptism. They visit places of worship including a synagogue and a Hindu temple; they take photographs to support follow-up work and remember new vocabulary learnt about others' beliefs. By Year 11, pupils develop more detailed knowledge, for example that Hindus worship more than one god and know that religions came into being, for example, by following the life of Mohammed and the founding of Islam. Their work in religious education counts towards gaining accreditation in the ASDAN course and the Unit Award Scheme.
58. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use a published religious education scheme of what to teach in the SEN department and as the needs of pupils and students are often so individual, teachers modify the scheme well to meet the needs of each of their pupils and students. Religious education is often taught well through topic-based work and linked effectively to other subjects. Good learning often takes place through a multi-sensory approach using very practical, experience-based activities. In the secondary department there is a specialist teacher of religious education who teaches effectively the three classes in that department. Here there is a strong commitment and good knowledge of the subject and successful work with colleagues to develop the Newcastle Agreed Syllabus. The co-ordinator contributes to assemblies, for instance by ensuring festivals are included and by organising resources. In the secondary department, pupils have more advance communication and think through values and beliefs in discussions. Their learning also benefits from taking part in role-play. They learn about different faiths and discuss the relevance of customs, such as marriage, to their own lives.
59. Leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The school has formed good links with local churches, a mosque and temple and arrange not only for visits to them but for representatives from those places to come into school to take acts of worship and to talk to the pupils about the principles of their faiths. While the SEN department, which forms the major part of the school, does not have a discrete co-ordinator for religious education, planning is monitored by the deputy headteacher, which ensures the necessary breadth of religious education is being taught. Overall, the school has maintained good standards in religious education through effective teaching and learning.

## TECHNOLOGY

60. **Design and technology** was sampled and, therefore, no judgement is made on provision. However, from the two lessons seen and the examination of pupils' work and school documentation, there are positive indicators of the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' achievements and the curriculum.
61. A positive feature of the lessons seen was the teacher's very good relationships with the pupils, including the effective use of humour to keep those pupils who find concentration difficult working steadily through the lesson. In a very good Year 9 lesson, in the secondary department, all pupils made very significant gains in practical skills and used ICT very well to find and select, re-size and print out pictures to personalise the bookends they were making. In a good lesson involving pupils from Years 6 and 7, in the SEN department, the teacher successfully developed the pupils' practical skills and understanding of how to make their model boats move. Instructions and explanations were clear, good attention was paid to health and safety matters in the workshop, and the pupils' interest and involvement were good.
62. There are good arrangements to assess what pupils know, understand and can do, and to use the resulting information to plan what they need to do next. There are good opportunities for all pupils, from Year 1 to Year 11, to acquire and develop skills of planning, designing, making and evaluation in all aspects of design and technology, including food studies. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11, in the secondary department, have good opportunities to pursue a GCSE course. Several pupils successfully completed courses in resistant materials technology and food technology in 2002 and 2003. The examination of the work of two Year 11 pupils, who are designing and making a toy box and a fishing tackle box respectively, shows that they have a good understanding of the properties of different materials and the processes of planning and evaluation. Accommodation and resources are good and they are very well used.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

63. Two lessons were seen in music, which is insufficient to make an overall judgement on provision. Pupils in the secondary department take part in performances, for example as part of a signing choir.
64. Class musical activities are provided for pupils in the SEN department. The lessons observed support individual communication and language work, which effectively helps build pupils' attention, anticipation and their ability to imitate sounds. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are beginning to listen to familiar songs and show enjoyment in anticipating loud and soft sounds. By Year 6, pupils enjoy making sounds on large drums and react to the notes of a saxophone.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in the secondary department achieve well as a result of expert teaching.



- High expectations and good teaching lead to pupils in the SEN department achieving well.
- While the co-ordination of art and design has many positive features, the planning of what is taught is not organised well.

## Commentary

65. Over several years in the secondary department, results in GCSE art and design have been good and among the best accomplished in the school. In relation to pupils' capabilities, these outcomes represent a good achievement and are the result of their interest in art and their striving for high standards. This has come about largely because of the enthusiasm and expertise with which art and design are taught. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils learn to explore a wide range of materials and processes imaginatively and are taught effectively the skills to use these creatively. They work in two and three dimensions including ceramics and printmaking. Pupils have learnt to appreciate the visual properties found in different materials, and the frequent inclusion of artists' work in the development of ideas has contributed to their knowledge and understanding. Very good use has been made of opportunities beyond school for pupils to extend their learning. A workshop in a printing studio for Year 8 pupils resulted in a large number of prints of exceptional standard. In this situation, the print expertise and technical facilities available in the workshop gave pupils access to levels of achievement not otherwise possible. Similarly, the time spent by Year 11 pupils in life drawing classes at another centre saw a considerable rise in the standards of their observational drawing.
66. The same enthusiasm and expertise are invested in teaching art and design in the SEN department and here teaching and learning are also good. Communication with pupils is of a high quality and the art teacher is supported very well in this respect by classroom assistants. This ensures pupils know what is expected and are well engaged in thinking how they will tackle their work. Expectations are high and pupils use the work of artists as starting points to create their own compositions, for example a still life by making a collage with pieces of pictures in the style of a cubist artist.
67. The co-ordination of art and design is satisfactory. The main strengths in its leadership and management come from the expertise informing teaching and the creating of a stimulating environment in the art room. Together, these bring about many exciting and challenging creative activities that pupils from across the school enjoy. However, the activities are not tied together sufficiently in a well worked out scheme to ensure pupils' learning develops systematically over time. While pupils learn techniques, for example the making and use of tone, they do so in a way that is not sufficiently direct or well organised. In addition, because there is no detailed scheme of what to teach, learning objectives are not always made clear enough to the pupils, such as by showing them examples of what they could aim for. The provision for art and design is much the same as that seen by the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained and improvement is satisfactory.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education (PE) is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The physiotherapist and teachers thoroughly assess and plan physical movements to meet the individual needs of pupils in the SEN department.
- A full programme of sports activities is in place for pupils in the secondary department.
- There are good resources for PE, contributing to pupils' achievement.

## Commentary

68. Pupils achieve very well overall as a result of the very good leadership and management of PE. The physiotherapists and teachers assess and plan joint aims, regularly evaluate achievement and set new targets for pupils in the SEN department. Physiotherapists work alongside teachers and assistants, which ensures pupils access their lessons while completing physical therapies such as standing, walking and sitting in correct positions. The planning and assessment of the secondary department are co-ordinated by the swimming teacher who also teaches most of the hydrotherapy sessions. This provides expertise and ensures continuity and an overview of progress, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. Records of achievement are meticulous and show the very good progress of each pupil over time. Teachers in the SEN department are responsible for the physical education lessons for their pupils, which are thoroughly planned and assessed.
69. All pupils in the SEN department have a good programme of gymnastic and sports activities, swimming or hydrotherapy lessons and rebound therapy. Secondary pupils follow a good programme, through the year, of gymnastics, team games, swimming and trampoline skills. Most pupils also have the opportunity to visit an outdoor pursuits centre where they take part in archery, sailing, climbing and canoeing activities.
70. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan lessons well and the aims are based clearly on very good assessment of pupils' progress in each aspect of PE. Most staff are very well qualified in the skills of life saving and swimming, trampoline and rebound therapy. Health and safety are given priority and lessons are planned so that all pupils can be as independent as possible. Staff are particularly skilled in gaining the attention of each pupil so that they know what they have to do in order to achieve success. Secondary pupils are given very clearly signed instructions and encouraged to think of how to improve on their skills. All pupils gain recognition for achievement with national swimming and water skills awards, certificates for inter-schools sports events and British trampoline awards.
71. Very good use is made of the swimming pool where, on a regular basis, pupils from the local primary school join pupils in lively sessions. The new hydrotherapy pool is an excellent sensory environment for pupils with complex needs. The extensive grounds provide ample opportunity for sports and games. Pupils have enjoyed training days with the Falcons Rugby Club, Newcastle United football team and other events with local pupils organised by the Wanderers Association held all over the North East. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers now have detailed schemes for physical education and resources have improved.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good.
- PSHE and citizenship topics are well planned and pupils' progress is assessed well.

### Commentary

72. Pupils make very good progress in personal development, particularly in independent skills as very good opportunities permeate the whole school day. Young pupils learn about changes to their bodies as they grow up, while older pupils discuss appropriate relationships, sex education and the misuse of drugs. The Healthy Schools Award scheme contributes topics including sex and relationships, emotional health and well-being, healthy eating and physical activity. All pupils and students have taken part in the Healthy Schools Award with topics followed by all groups, such as practical sessions led by the dental health promotion team. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when provision for PSHE was satisfactory. Improvement is the result of the successful developments in what is taught. Citizenship is based on a whole-school approach, which is incorporated with aspects of PSHE and integrated into subjects. Citizenship themes and concepts, dealt with across the curriculum, also make effective links with careers education, residential experiences, special activities and projects.
73. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned to develop pupils' understanding of issues such as recognising the danger of certain medicines and what to pack for a holiday to keep clean and healthy. Pupils in the secondary department achieve an accredited award for their work in citizenship. Groups are encouraged to share experiences and they discuss who they would call on for additional support in various emergencies. Pupils recall speakers from various charities such as Child Line who have visited school. They have completed surveys on incidents of crime in local areas and discussed human rights and the countries involved in the Council of Europe. A deaf awareness day involved pupils spreading understanding of communication to various groups of people.
74. PSHE is well led and managed. Assessment is very detailed and a particularly good illustration of this is the photographic record of pupils with autism. They have improved their independence through visiting shops and developing the skills to find and purchase what they need. Post-16 students are supported well in completing topics such as getting to know a group and following rules to complete an ASDAN unit award.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (Ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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

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

