

INSPECTION REPORT

Phoenix School

London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100987

Headteacher: Mr. Stewart Harris

Lead inspector: Charles Hackett

Dates of inspection: 16th to 19th May 2005

Inspection number: 268613

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	110
School address:	49 Bow Road Bow London
Postcode:	E3 2AD
Telephone number:	0208 980 4740
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Maureen Tyas
Date of previous inspection:	24 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Phoenix is a primary and secondary day school for boys and girls with statements of special educational needs for a wide range of difficulties. These include, moderate (MLD) and severe learning difficulties (SLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). When last inspected the school catered primarily for MLD pupils. In 2001 the school was re-designated as a school for ASD pupils. As a result of this the primary department has only ASD pupils and in the secondary department there are a mixture of ASD, SLD and MLD pupils in Years 7 and 8 and MLD and SLD in Years 9, 10 and 11. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Of the current population of 110, 77 are of different ethnic backgrounds than white English and 55 live in homes where English is not the first language. Many pupils come from homes which are below the national average in relation to their socio-economic circumstances.

The school has been the subject of re-building work in the last two years. Two early years classrooms are in temporary buildings and areas of the school are closed off.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21081	Charles Hackett	Lead inspector	Modern foreign language and physical education
32676	Nicolas Power	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, personal, social and health education and work related learning
20566	Mary Saunders	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, English
7637	Anil Sinha	Team inspector	Pupils for whom English is an additional language
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, religious education
32836	Frances Crockwell	Team inspector	Mathematics, art, music and design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Phoenix School provides pupils with a **very good** education. It very successfully meets its aim of 'making a difference where it really matters'. Teaching, pupils' progress and the overall quality of leadership and management are very good. As a result of this the school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher and senior staff have very effectively overseen the school's change of role.
- Pupils make very good progress irrespective of their special educational needs or whether or not English is their first language.
- An excellent emphasis is placed on pupils' personal development and providing them with experiences that enrich their lives.
- The outreach service of the school provides outstanding support to both mainstream staff and the pupils that they work with.
- Staff training is very well organised and has made a significant contribution to the consistency and effectiveness of the school's work with ASD pupils.
- The school has limited means of checking its overall effectiveness, including knowing the rate of progress pupils are making.
- Governors are very supportive but are not fully involved in the work of the school.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. Despite its changing population the school has improved both the overall quality of its teaching and the achievements of pupils. In addition, staff have developed and extended their skills in teaching and supporting pupils with a wider range of special educational needs. The weakness identified in the previous report in relation to the transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7, no longer exists. However, the governance of the school is not as effective as was reported previously.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils throughout the school with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make very good progress. Pupils in the secondary department with moderate (MLD) or severe learning difficulties (SLD) also make very good progress. Progress for all pupils is excellent in music and very good in mathematics, science, religious education, art, personal, social and health education and for secondary pupils achievement is very good in information and communication technology (ICT). Achievement of pupils in ICT in the primary department is good and progress for all pupils in English is good overall. The progress of those pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is very good and through the effective support of specialist teachers, these pupils are very well integrated in their class groups. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is also very good and above the national average for schools of this type.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education in the school is **very good**. This reflects the very high level of commitment shown by all staff in developing their skills to meet equally effectively the special educational needs

of all pupils in the school. Teaching and learning are **very good** and the quality of assessment is good. Teachers use effective strategies for ASD pupils, ensuring that classrooms are safe and effective learning environments. With older pupils, teachers adopt age appropriate teaching methods and challenge pupils to achieve as much as possible. Teachers work very effectively with therapists, such as those for speech and language. Systems to assess what pupils know and can do are good but there are not clear procedures to track the rate of progress of pupils throughout their time in the school. The curriculum is very good and greatly enhanced by the excellent opportunities pupils have to experience a wide range of other activities. Work related learning is good. The quality of care, support and guidance provided for pupils is very good and ensures that they are safe and happy in school and eager to learn. A key strength of the school is the excellent work of the outreach team in their support of staff and ASD pupils in mainstream schools. Presently the accommodation is inadequate, particularly so for those pupils in the pre-school (Foundation Stage) and Year 1 class. However, when the current building work is completed the accommodation will be greatly improved. There are very good links with parents, greatly enhanced by the support groups and the resource packs provided by the school to assist parents to work with their child at home. Links with the local community and other schools are also very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership of the school is **very good**. The headteacher and his senior colleagues have been highly effective in overseeing the change of role for the school and minimising the effects of the disruption caused by the building project. The determination of all senior staff to seek the very best for all pupils is apparent in everything they do and a key factor in this has been the emphasis given to providing high quality training for all staff. The management of the school is effective and ensures that all pupils are safe and very well cared for. However, current procedures for the school to evaluate its own effectiveness, particularly with regard to pupils' achievements, are in need of further development. Members of the governing body are **very supportive** but they are not sufficiently involved in the management of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents are very positive about the way the school has helped their children. Although a few would like to see an increased emphasis on achievement for higher ability pupils, all express their appreciation of the high quality of care and support they receive, Pupils themselves are very appreciative of the school. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about how well the school has supported them, whilst younger ASD pupils show by their reactions how settled and receptive they are to being in school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

This very good school will improve even further if:

- Governors increase their involvement in the management of the school, including improving their current systems of knowing and monitoring the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Improved procedures are developed to ensure that the school has the means to evaluate its effectiveness, including having a clear picture of how well pupils progress as they move through the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils, irrespective of the nature of their special needs, make very good progress.
- Pupils make excellent progress in music and very good progress in art, mathematics, science, religious education, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship.
- Achievement in English and information and communication technology (ICT) is good overall.
- Pupils for whom English is not their first language make very good progress in developing their understanding and use of language.
- Pupils' progress in all subjects is not always recorded well and this means that there is limited data for the school to analyse in assessing its effectiveness.

Commentary

1. Many older pupils in Year 11 demonstrate their very good progress through passing GCSEs. These pupils, most of who have moderate learning difficulties (MLD) have achieved GCSE success in mathematics and art and this year are also taking physical education and science. Passes in Entry level examinations are achieved in English, mathematics, design and technology, science, music and French. In French, in particular, for many pupils examination results have been very impressive. Pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) have not had the same opportunities in the past to pass examinations, but are now achieving very well following a nationally accredited course (ASDAN). Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are benefiting from the very effective teaching approaches taken by staff and also making very good progress with their learning.
2. The arts play a key part in the life of the school. Very high quality teaching and excellent opportunities for pupils to be actively involved leads to pupils making very good progress in art and design and excellent progress in music. Pupils' very good progress in personal, social and health education and citizenship is because of the well planned course they follow and emphasis given to pupils' personal development throughout the school.
3. Progress in English and in the development of pupils' communication skills has also been a key focus in the school. As a result, pupils for whom English is not their first language at home, make rapid progress and become fully integrated in lessons with other pupils. However, inconsistencies in the management of English impacts on pupils' progress as they move through the school and mean that pupils' overall progress is good rather than very good.
4. Older pupils make very good progress in information and communication technology (ICT). These pupils benefit from following an established course and frequent opportunities to use computers. Progress, however, lower down the school is good but inconsistent as teachers develop their own ICT skills and become more confident in teaching these to ASD pupils.
5. Pupils' individual files and a scrutiny of their work, give clear indications of very good progress. There are, though, exceptions to this where the records of pupils appear to indicate reduced levels of performance over time. However, indications are that these are a reflection of limited systems to moderate the assessments given by staff, rather than pupils' achievements deteriorating. The recording and monitoring of pupils' performance over time is less well established in all subjects and this means that the school has insufficient data to demonstrate the rate of progress pupils are making. As a result of this, the school is not in a strong position to evaluate pupils' progress and take action if there are areas where pupils don't achieve as well as others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **excellent** overall. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy school and the many opportunities for learning that it offers.
- Pupils relate very well to each other irrespective of their differing backgrounds or special needs.
- The school's arrangements for developing pupils' social skills and their cultural understanding are excellent.
- The school liaison worker makes a strong contribution to the high attendance rate of pupils.

Commentary

6. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes towards their work and the many activities provided for them. Older MLD and SLD pupils talk enthusiastically about what they have done and ASD pupils show through their actions that they like being in school. Pupils are keen to participate in all the school has to offer; for example, their attendance at after school clubs is very good. Pupils appreciate the large number of opportunities to take responsibility for tasks around the school and this helps to develop their confidence and self-esteem.
7. Pupils behave very well because of the emphasis the school puts on their moral and social development. Given the mix of differing special needs and home backgrounds of pupils, the harmonious relationships that exist are a very special feature of the school. Bullying or racist incidents are not a problem. Secondary pupils are kind and considerate and try hard to support those that are less able. Pupils with ASD have individual behaviour support plans and these help staff to manage instances of challenging behaviour. However, because the behaviour of a small number of pupils is very challenging the lack of areas available for individual support mean that the learning of other pupils is sometimes disrupted. This was a contributory factor to the fixed term exclusions issued last year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	36	9	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	1	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	51	1	

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

8. The school's programme for assemblies, which is very well thought out, and the very good provision for religious education make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are keen to raise money for people in need and appreciate the ways in which they can help. For example, pupils have raised significant amounts for the victims of the

recent Tsunami. The very good emphasis on the arts is also used very well to develop pupils' interest in cultural aspects.

- The school employs a part time home-school liaison worker to monitor attendance on a day-to-day basis and impress upon parents the importance of education for their children. He has built very good relationships with parents and has gained their support. This is a significant achievement and as a result of this work the school's attendance rate has improved consistently over the last three years and is now very good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.5	School data	0.3
National data	8.2	National data	2.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Despite the accommodation currently being poor the school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Very high quality teaching, a very good curriculum and excellent enrichment opportunities, coupled with very effective support and guidance ensure that all pupils achieve very well. Welfare procedures such as health and safety are very good, as are links with parents, the community and other schools. The outreach support provided by Phoenix staff to mainstream schools is outstanding.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are both **very good**. Assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources used in lessons are imaginative and make learning enjoyable for pupils.
- Teachers use very effective strategies for working with ASD pupils.
- The very good teaching methods employed for MLD and SLD pupils are enabling them to achieve success in examinations.
- All staff work very well together and manage pupils' challenging behaviour effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are consistently seeking to extend and develop their skills.
- Although there are good assessment procedures, there is little evidence of the impact of assessment on pupils' achievement.

Commentary

- Teaching throughout the school is very well planned and is highly effective in encouraging pupils to learn. Staff seek to provide interesting activities and make very good use of resources, often using a multi-sensory approach. This was the case in a Year 2 science lesson where pupils made fruit salad. In carefully planned activities they matched items of fruit to pictures and tasted different fruits, making very good progress in making choices and expressing likes and dislikes. Similarly in an excellent Year 7 social use of language lesson looking at common idioms pupils took part in a variety of role plays based on helping them understand what is meant by the expression 'pull your socks up'.
- Since the school's change of designation, staff have worked very hard to develop their skills for working with ASD pupils. This has proved to be very effective and teaching strategies are now based on nationally recognised strategies for working with ASD pupils. Teachers, though, have adopted an 'eclectic' approach in how they make use of these strategies; choosing to pick the best of each strategy rather than relying solely on one particular recommended procedure. As a

result pupils are helped to access learning through a range of strategies that reduce their anxieties about where they are and what happens next. These include:

- Consistent and clear daily classroom routines set out on visual timetables.
- Organisation and structure of learning tasks – ‘TEACCH’ schedules, clear ‘FINISH’ signals and the use of workboxes to control the process of learning.
- Communication aids – signing, use of symbols and PECS, careful control of the language of instruction (not talking too much), and very good use of visual material to support lessons. Big Macs to help some pupils respond and also to make their needs known.

12. The quality of teaching for older pupils is similarly very good. A key strength is that teachers use very age appropriate materials and the topics covered recognise the growing maturity of pupils. This means that pupils themselves are given responsibilities for their learning and encouraged to think and evaluate their own performances. For example, in physical education pupils having performed specific physical tasks for their GCSE exam were well supported in evaluating each of their performances. The teaching of a modern foreign language is an example of teaching where the topics interest pupils and lessons are focused on challenging pupils to achieve. Their successes in Entry Level examinations reflect the benefits of this approach.
13. A very clear strength of teaching is the way in which all staff work well together to form effective teams. It is clear that teaching assistants feel valued in their work, follow routines well yet use their own initiative when the situation demands this. They are good at encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible. All staff know pupils very well and have established very good relationships. This is effective in encouraging and supporting pupils to try new tasks and create positive learning atmospheres in each classroom. Staff have also been very imaginative in making best use of the school’s inadequate accommodation.
14. There is considerable staff expertise in many aspects of the school’s work. For example, in music, especially singing, many staff have high level personal expertise and use this effectively to ensure that pupils are confident to join in a whole range of different activities. Good links are also established with the therapists who are associated with the school. For example, in a very good Year 5 English lesson the speech and language specialist worked very effectively alongside the teacher to develop pupils’ communications skills. All pupils had individual targets and, although following an established routine, were challenged to make choices and respond to different stimuli.
15. The school has information on pupils’ achievements on entry and uses base-line testing to assess reading ages. Some assessment information, especially that of the younger pupils is collected almost daily and there is a developing evidence base of pupils’ progress over time. The quality of annotation and marking of pupils’ work, though, is inconsistent; annotation often describes activities as apposed to achievement. A recognised, computerised assessment package is used to record pupils’ progress and there is good ongoing assessment in art, design and technology and music. These areas are extending the use of digital photography to record pupils’ achievements. However, the complexity of all this information makes analysis and interpretation difficult and the school is at an early stage of gathering value-added information about individual and groups of pupils. Procedures to moderate assessments are still at an early stage of development and, therefore, it is often difficult for staff to assess the reliability of assessment information provided.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 56 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfacto ry	Poor	Very Poor
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8(14%)	26(47%)	17(30%)	5(9%)	0	0	0
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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.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **very good**. There is an **excellent** programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The current state of the accommodation is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned and ensures that all pupils, irrespective of their special needs, make very good progress.
- The outstanding enrichment programme provides pupils with many exciting learning experiences.
- The emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills is very appropriate and effective.
- Very good quality resources help to reduce the impact of the poor accommodation on pupils' learning.

Commentary

16. The curriculum is very well planned to meet the statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and offer religious education, sex and relationships education, drugs education, citizenship, careers and work related learning. The deputy headteacher provides a very good lead in moving the curriculum forward to accommodate the changing population in the school yet also ensures that older pupils follow suitable courses. In Years 10 and 11, the routes to accreditation have been developed very well. They challenge the most able MLD pupils to reach GCSE standard, give other MLD pupils access to Entry level courses, and provide very appropriate accreditation opportunities for the SLD pupils with the recent introduction of the Youth Award ASDAN Transition Challenge.
17. As the numbers of ASD pupils in the school have increased, teachers have adapted their curriculum plans very well, particularly in the primary years, to take account of the complex learning and communication difficulties of these pupils. Secondary teachers have maintained the very appropriate curriculum for older MLD and SLD pupils yet also started the process of preparing changes to accommodate the ASD pupils moving up through the school.
18. Planning for personal and social education is very good. The co-ordinator is managing the transition from the former MLD/SLD programme to a programme more suitable for the increasing number of ASD pupils very well. As a result, all pupils are making very good progress in time-tabled lessons for this area. These lessons are supplemented with the many other opportunities to enhance pupils' personal and social skills that include circle time, the enrichment programmes, lunch and break times.

The school has achieved the 'Quality in Study Support Award at Established level' for its excellent provision for enrichment through its extra-curricular activities and after school clubs.

The co-ordinator's excellent management of the weekly enrichment programme, ensures that all pupils have fifty hours or more of extra-curricular experiences a year. Pupils' progress from year to year through a wealth of activities, including residential experiences abroad, is carefully monitored and recorded to an exceptionally high standard. This ensures that pupils' participation is very well matched to their differing needs. The success of the provision has been achieved, in part, by creating time every

Wednesday whilst still complying with national guidance on the length of the taught week. Activities spanning sport, creative arts, including a `Bollywood musical, dance, college links, therapies, personal, social and citizenship education draw on excellent links with local schools. The business and professional community provide support and mentors. For example, with generous support from a national bank pupils have participated in the Lord Mayor's Show. Pathfinder projects promote pupils' independent travel and excellent partnerships enhance pupils' vocational education. For example, an annual two day construction challenge develops skills in plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying and electrical work.

19. Staff have developed a very good range of high quality resources to engage the interests of ASD, SLD and MLD pupils. This includes the very good development of sensory resources, particularly in the primary department. The accommodation, however, causes many difficulties. Weaknesses include:
- The location of the youngest pupils in temporary accommodation is most unsuitable for their needs.
 - There are many areas that are inaccessible to wheelchair users.
 - No common room for leavers to develop their independence skills.
 - A lack of smaller rooms where pupils, particularly the ASD pupils, can be withdrawn when they have difficulty staying in class.
 - Limited suitable space for the very good and developing therapy programme.

Care, guidance and support

The school gives its pupils **very good** support, advice and guidance and ensures that standards of care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views **very well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is extremely proactive in linking with other agencies to meet the needs of pupils.
- Pupils feel very well looked after and have very high levels of trust in the staff.
- Support and guidance is based on what is required to support each individual pupil effectively.
- The behaviour difficulties of ASD pupils are managed very well.
- Pupils play a very important part in the life of the school and their views are highly valued.

Commentary

20. All staff know pupils very well. Pupils trust them and are confident that they can approach them with any problems they may have. Education and health professionals work very well together. Key personnel within the multi-disciplinary team meet regularly and review pupils' changing circumstances. As a result the support, advice and guidance pupils receive is timely, pertinent and very helpful to them. School and health personnel ensure that parents are fully supported so they can continue to support their children's development at home. In particular the school's behaviour support plans are well thought out and useful to staff and parents alike.
21. The school takes the care of its pupils very seriously. The site is extremely secure despite the presence of building contractors. Child protection measures are strong and all staff have received appropriate training. There are a good number of qualified first aiders and risk assessments are thoroughly and effectively carried out. Families appreciate the close ties the school keeps with them in relation to their children's well being. For many pupils school can represent a haven away from the traumas of life outside of school. The ethos of trust ensures that pupils are confident and at ease in their learning.
22. The detailed individual guidance given to each pupil is very good. From the time the pupil is admitted the school makes a point of finding out all it needs to know about the pupil so it can

give the best possible support. Good academic assessment systems help the school match work carefully to pupils' individual needs. The very good work related curriculum provides excellent support and guidance for pupils as they prepare to leave school.

23. The challenging behaviour of ASD pupils is very well managed by:
- Awareness of when pupils are becoming stressed and giving them time-out opportunities.
 - Ongoing use in lessons of calming strategies – massage, favourite objects, singing to them etc.
 - Use of calming rooms for time-out (where available).
 - Positive handling strategies for when things go wrong.

The school values pupils' opinions and very successfully involves them in school life through informal and formal methods, such as the school council. Representatives on the school council are very good ambassadors for their school. The current building works have been discussed with the council and their views taken into account, for example, in the provision of a cycle track. Pupils are able to nominate others for the monthly awards (the 'Jack Petchey Achievement Award'). The successful pupil then decides how they would like the cash 'prize' spent to the benefit of all pupils and the school does its best to meet their wishes. As a result pupils know they are listened to and their views taken seriously.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents, the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources available to parents to help their children at home are excellent.
- The partnership between the school, other schools and industry at management level is excellent.
- Links with the community enhance pupils' curricular experiences very well.
- Links with mainstream schools are mutually beneficial for both Phoenix and mainstream pupils.

Commentary

24. The school gives a very high priority to supporting parents to understand their child's special needs and develop skills to work with them. Support groups have been set up and these are well attended and provide much appreciated assistance. Excellent resource packs are produced and given to parents to support their child's learning at home.

Resources available to parents are specifically designed to support the learning of pupils with ASD. The autism resource officer encourages parents to take parent-pupil packs home and many do. She is bilingual and very enthusiastic about her work and this ensures that all parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning. The parent-pupil packs consist of a visual timetable, a piece of work, a song, a motivating educational toy and an instruction leaflet. They are available in a wide range of areas and levels. For example there are packs that cover fine motor skill development and social interaction as well as packs that enhance curricular areas such as vocabulary extension and counting.

25. The school has developed many very good partnerships with industry. For example, an excellent link with 'Unilever' and five other schools in East London has been established. The partnership brings different perspectives and management techniques to both schools and businesses. Last year's project in developing management techniques was very successful and the headteacher reports that this has helped shape managerial strategies in the school.
26. Links with the community are being used very effectively by the school to enhance many different aspects of its work. For example, links with local churches and places of worship are helping pupils' understanding of cultural differences. The school's partnership with Barclays

Bank is very successful. Volunteers from the bank work with pupils in the school and the recent Lord Mayor's show, in which the bank and school jointly produced a float, was very much enjoyed by the pupils.

27. The school is working effectively to extend links with other schools and colleges. Mainstream staff representatives spoke enthusiastically about these links to inspectors. If appropriate, individual pupils have good chances to integrate into mainstream schools and there are a number of mainstream pupils who spend time at Phoenix each week. Innovative projects, such as the 'Bollywood' musical project, are very effectively involving mainstream pupils and staff and successfully widening the educational experiences of Phoenix pupils. College links are also helping prepare pupils very well for leaving school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is **very good** and its management is **good**. Governance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is very determined to ensure that being at Phoenix is a very positive experience for all pupils.
- Senior staff have very successfully overseen the changing role of the school.
- The very experienced senior team lead and manage their specific areas of responsibility very well.
- School improvement planning is very thorough but procedures to evaluate the school's effectiveness are limited.
- Governors are very supportive but have only limited means of knowing how well the school is doing.

Commentary

28. The headteacher is very committed to ensuring that all pupils at Phoenix enjoy and benefit greatly from being there. As a result of this the school has deservedly earned a reputation for the high standards of its work. Officers from other agencies, local businessmen as well as representatives of mainstream schools in the area all confirm how effective they believe the school to be. The determination shown by the school to enrich the lives of all pupils demonstrates the desire that staff have to provide the very best they can. Its aim of 'making a difference where it really matters' reflects the commitment of staff to have a positive impact on pupils' lives.
29. The headteacher, with the support of governors, has ensured that the challenges presented by the re-designation of the school and by the difficulties faced with the building project have all been addressed and the quality of education has not deteriorated as a result. Indeed the quality of the work of the school has continued to improve as staff have developed and extended their skills, particularly in being able to work very effectively with ASD pupils. Staff training for this has been excellent. This, though, has not been to the detriment of work with older MLD and SLD pupils, as they have continued to be successful in GCSE examinations. The majority of difficulties presented by the building work have been addressed and very imaginative use has been made of the restricted space available.
30. The senior staff team is very strong. Its members possess skills that complement each other very well. They work very effectively together, for example, departmental leaders in the primary and Year 7 and 8 ASD groups have been very effective mentors in coaching the teaching skills

of staff new to the school or those established members of staff having to develop new strategies to work with ASD pupils. Senior staff have actively sought out examples of best practice to share with colleagues and are very keen and willing to engage in projects that will enhance the quality of provision further. For example, a recent project has started to look at interactive play for ASD children.

31. As at the time of the previous inspection school development planning is very detailed and there is a very clear link with the expenditure required for each development. There is, also, a key emphasis placed on these developments having an impact on pupils' achievements. However, the school does not have detailed processes by which it can evaluate its own effectiveness and this means the basis of the development plan is not rooted in a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, there is no system to check that pupils with different special needs or gender or ethnicity achieve to similar standards. This is an aspect that the school recognises it needs to develop further.
32. Governors have been very enthusiastic supporters of the school and have ensured that statutory responsibilities have been met. They have clearly had a very positive impact on the very good links that there are with the local community and in supporting the headteacher in addressing the difficulties the school has faced with the rebuilding project. However, scrutiny of the agendas and minutes of their meetings indicate that they rely too much on reports from the headteacher and do not have sufficient means to hold the school to account. They are not involved sufficiently in monitoring the budget, have very limited involvement in the appointment of staff and have few means of knowing and influencing what is happening in the school.
33. The school does have a very healthy balance of funds but given the lengthy delays in the building work much of this has been earmarked for projects that have had to be put on hold.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,901,940	Balance from previous year	143,755
Total expenditure	1,758,185	Balance carried forward to the next	300,793
Expenditure per pupil	13,782		

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Two careers lessons were observed, discussions held with key staff and planning documents were read. Content of a recently introduced ASDAN Transition Challenge course was noted.

Provision for work related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils follow a very interesting variety of vocational education programmes well matched to their different special needs.
- Work experience and an enterprise project are well planned and of great benefit to pupils.
- The procedures for recording pupils' experiences and achievements make it difficult to track their progress.
- New statutory requirements for work related learning and careers education are in place.

Commentary

34. Achievement in work related learning and careers education is good. The recently introduced Youth Award ASDAN Transition Challenge is very well matched to the learning needs of SLD pupils in Years 10 and 11, providing very appropriate vocational units for pupils to learn about work. A well taught careers education programme for pupils in Years 9 to 11 is well suited to the learning needs of SLD and MLD pupils. Year 9 MLD pupils, for example, learn about safety signs in the community and in the work place. Year 11 SLD pupils learn about the clothes worn for different jobs. Year 11 pupils, working with a mainstream school, learn how to apply for jobs, complete a curriculum vitae, make telephone calls, and consider what makes an ideal employee. These tasks are covered in a two day 'Getting Ahead' conference, sponsored by the Industrial Society.
35. All Year 10 pupils are well prepared for work experience. Placements are very carefully matched to learning needs and cover retail, office work, nurseries, horticulture, outdoor pursuits, farm work and residential homes for the elderly. An annual two day construction challenge for pupils in Year 10, held in partnership with a mainstream school and the Construction Industry Training Board, promotes skills in plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying and electrical work. Year 11 pupils run their own Young Enterprise Project, taking on the roles of the various directors of the company. The support they receive from the deputy headteacher is excellent. A small minority of less motivated Year 11 MLD pupils have access to college courses in bricklaying, plumbing, painting and decorating. Vocational work at college for most of the Year 11 pupils, however, is limited to a catering course.
36. Leadership and management of work related learning and of careers education are good. The co-ordinator has taken a very good lead in linking with the local community to find interesting vocational activities for SLD and MLD pupils and the new statutory requirements for work related learning, and for careers education, are in place. The organisation and management of the records of each secondary pupil's experiences and achievements in work related learning, careers education and work experience are limited and this means there is no readily accessible means of tracking each pupil's progress from year to year.

OUTREACH SERVICE

The Phoenix School outreach provision for pupils with ASD is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent intervention strategies enable many ASD pupils to remain in their local mainstream schools.
- Outreach staff provide excellent professional training for mainstream staff.
- Outstanding management of the service gains the respect and confidence of participating schools.

Commentary

37. The success of the outreach service in enabling pupils with ASD to be educated in their local schools is of a very high standard. It achieves this by working alongside the mainstream school's staff, providing them with examples of learning materials and by modelling ways of encouraging ASD pupils to engage in learning activities. In many cases individual pupils are provided with excellent strategies for managing their autistic related behaviours. The process of negotiating when to use these strategies with older and more able pupils is very effective. As a result, the service very successfully helps pupils with challenging behaviour to avoid responding to situations in ways that could lead to their exclusion from school.
38. The service also contributes to the inclusion of pupils with ASD by providing an excellent range of professional development opportunities for the staff of local mainstream schools. These range from sessions covering general topics about teaching pupils with ASD to tailor-made training specifically adapted to the needs of a particular school. There are also excellent opportunities for mainstream school staff to develop their practical skills with ASD pupils by

working alongside colleagues in Phoenix school classrooms. The service strives to develop its effectiveness by continuously carrying out rigorous evaluation of its courses and activities.

39. The professionalism of the service is illustrated by the excellent procedures for making sure that all parties involved in the support are clear about what is to be provided. There are very clear protocols for how work in schools should be carried out. Pupils are accepted to the service following a very thorough referral process. Very detailed service-level agreements are then drawn up, with very clear, specific objectives that are agreed with the special needs co-ordinator of the mainstream school. These include the level of input from the speech and language therapist.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Five lessons and others aspects of the day were observed. Children's' work was analysed and discussions held with key staff.

As the department has only opened this year and has only a few children it is not possible to make an accurate judgement on the provision for Foundation Stage children. However, it is possible to highlight areas of strength and weaknesses of the current provision without judging the rate of children's progress in each area of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The physical accommodation for teaching and play is poor.
- The curriculum is very well suited to the needs of the children.
- There are very good arrangements for settling pupils into school.
- Good use is made of signing, pictures and schedules to help pupils learn.
- Opportunities for pupils to respond independently are sometimes limited by too much physical help from staff.

Commentary

40. A very good curriculum has been developed which gives the children the chance to experience all the areas of learning within a carefully planned daily routine. Structured teaching approaches have been established to meet the needs of ASD children and enable them to participate in activities and co-operate with adults. These developments have been very well led and the school places a high priority on training for all staff to ensure that the strategies are consistently implemented.
41. Pupils entering the school are progressing towards the early learning goals but all have particular difficulties in the area of communication and social interaction. They make good progress as they quickly learn to separate from their carers and to focus on their work box tasks with adult support. Initially many pupils find it difficult to tolerate others but they are beginning to learn to play alongside their peers and most are beginning to take turns briefly in highly structured circle time activities. The development of communication, language and literacy is a priority. Children are taught to exchange a picture in order to request a snack or activity. They learn to follow simple instructions and move from one activity to another through the use of visual clues, pictures, photographs and signs but sometimes their progress is limited by adults giving physical assistance before waiting for a response. A few pupils make babbling sounds, repeat familiar songs in play and imitate single words on request. They learn to match pictures and enjoy looking at a book with an adult. Work box tasks include signing and matching the letters of their name.
42. In circle time and play children join in number rhymes such as "10 sizzling sausages". A few can match number symbols and other shapes and are learning to count objects. Very good multi-sensory resources are used to support these sessions and to engage the interest of the children. Children are encouraged to explore the world around them by playing with sand, water and other materials in a sensory way. They are introduced to switch toys which show cause and effect. A few are able to demonstrate symbolic play in their use of bricks and cars and enjoy dressing up in a game with adults. Physical play is a favourite for most children and some have a higher level of skill in this area, coping easily with running up and down steps, although stopping and controlled movements can be a problem. They learn to crawl through tunnels, throw large balls and climb the steps of a ladder. Children enjoy trips to the swimming pool, learning to enter the water independently and kick their legs. Fine motor skills such as building blocks, threading and putting together puzzles are practised as part of work box tasks.

43. Music is used widely in daily routines and children respond very well to this. They also explore instruments and sounds with interest. Guided activities are used to encourage the children to mix colours and make marks on paper. In this way they enjoy tasks such as making masks and model vehicles in this way. Some children show the beginnings of imaginative play through spontaneous rehearsal of daily routine and songs in imitation of the teacher.
44. Very good arrangements are in place to ensure that staff have all the information that they need to help children settle into the school happily. Children make visits to the school with a known carer so that they can become familiar with the classroom and parents and professionals meet together. Thorough assessment procedures are in place to monitor the progress of children towards the early learning goals. Their response to individual work box sessions are recorded daily which allows activities to be continuously modified so that interest is sustained. This information is regularly shared with parents and a home school liaison officer is used to support communication with those families for whom English is an additional language. Links with parents are very effective and they are pleased with the progress that their children make.
45. The physical accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is poor. This has a significant impact on teaching and learning for these young children. Although staff have done their very best with the space available to them the classroom is cramped and unsuitable. The only other space is a small concrete outside area which the children have to move across to access the toilets where facilities for toilet training and nappy changing are very limited. The area also includes short flights of concrete steps, thus compromising independence and creating a safety hazard. This situation need to be rectified as a matter of urgency and it is hoped that the current building work will be completed as quickly as possible.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH and a MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE (French)

Twelve English lessons were observed. Pupils' work was analysed and discussions held with key staff. Although part of one French lesson was observed, there was insufficient opportunity to gather evidence to judge the quality of provision for French.

French

46. The course pupils follow from Year 7 to Year 11 gives them the opportunity to learn vocabulary that covers many aspects of French life. The course meets National Curriculum requirements and has been carefully adapted by the teacher to meet the special educational needs of the pupils. A scrutiny of the planning for the teaching of French shows that the subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of cultural differences.
47. In the good lesson that was observed, Year 10 pupils showed that they have the confidence to speak in French and can recognise and interpret spoken French. The teacher uses her own skills in the language well and challenges pupils to try to speak new words. Pupils' success in doing this is reflected in their achievements in Entry Level examinations. For a number of years, many pupils have achieved success in these examinations. For example, last year, 17 out of the 18 pupils in Year 11 passed the examination, seven achieving the highest grade.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The extensive training programme and very good collaboration between therapy and school staff has led to the consistent use of specialist communication strategies for ASD pupils.
- Very good multi-sensory resources engage the attention of pupils and enable them to participate well in lessons.
- Real-life situations are used well to help older pupils develop their reading, writing and communication skills.
- Older pupils make very good progress in learning to collaborate in groups and complete work independently.
- The school does not have a clear overview of what it can do to improve the achievements of all its pupils.

Commentary

48. Teaching and the overall progress pupils make in English is good. Communication is given the highest priority as demonstrated by the very good leadership and management of the extensive training programme to equip all staff in using the structured approach and visual strategies required to enable pupils with ASD to make progress in this area. The Picture Exchange Communication system is used to move the pupils from single requests for visible rewards at snack time to the use of basic visual sentences to ask for what they want. Most learn to use the symbols as prompts to their spoken requests. Simple instructions are reinforced effectively with pictures or symbols and visual information is used alongside speech to explain expectations in all classes for pupils with ASD. By the end of Year 2 a few pupils are able to respond to questions with simple sentences across subjects of the curriculum. Vocabulary is developed through these visual means as pupils learn concepts such as long, short and heavy in science when, for example, they are planting seeds and learning about what these need to grow. While a few pupils continue at the earliest stages of communication, many by the end of Year 6 go on to be able to follow instruction for activities, take turns in speaking and initiate conversation. These pupils consolidate their skills in Years 7, 8 and 9 and learning includes understanding common idioms or instructions. The very good level of collaboration between school staff and the speech and language therapist allows consistent communication goals and strategies to be identified for each pupil. Shared working in classes supports this consistency and provides on-going training and development of staff skills.
49. The National Literacy Strategy has been adapted well to structure the teaching of reading and writing in the school. Pupils recognise themselves and others in photographs and learn to match pictures and the letters in their name at an early stage. They take pleasure in sharing books and making marks on paper. Teaching is based on shared texts in the “big book” format followed by individual work box tasks which allow pupils to make good progress at their own rate. The very good multi-sensory resources developed to support teaching and learning in this area are used effectively so that all pupils sustain their interest and participate. While a few pupils remain at early levels by the end of Year 6 most can identify letter sounds, say what comes next in a story and sound out simple words. Higher achieving pupils know the order of the alphabet, express opinions about characters and are just beginning to write words independently. A similar approach to the teaching of English is continued for pupils with ASD in Years 7, 8 and 9. While a few continue to work with pictures and symbols others learn to order story sequences and add written captions. They can produce lists and short accounts with some punctuation and are beginning to use cursive writing.
50. Older pupils are provided with a very good curriculum, which includes studying and writing poetry, looking at the stories of Shakespearean plays and guided reading of texts such as ‘Of Mice and Men’. Resources are very good and much attention has been given to ensuring the availability of texts with accessible reading levels that are of interest to young people. A strength of the teaching at this stage is the emphasis placed on reading, writing and

communication that is relevant to real-life situations. Pupils are self-motivated to work very effectively on projects and collaborate in small groups. Some show a good level of independent skill in using the internet to research information. They write for a purpose in composing letters and are challenged to write answers to comprehension exercises in full sentences instead of single words. Most of these pupils make good progress to gain accreditation at 16 through the Entry Level Certificates.

51. The leadership and management responsibilities in the subject across the school as a whole are unclear and data over time is not collected in a format that can be analysed to demonstrate whether the progress of individuals and groups could be improved. The school is aware of the need to improve moderation procedures so that this can be monitored more securely. Progress since the last inspection has been good but delays to the building work mean that a library has not yet been established.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. The development of language and literacy is very good because all staff are very competent at promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills. There is a strong emphasis on displaying and using key words in the primary classrooms. Signing and the use of symbols are used very well to support pupils in lessons. High quality displays, and pupils' workbooks show that they have many opportunities to develop their writing skills for different purposes. Older secondary pupils are encouraged to read out their work and read relevant text books in all subject areas.

MATHEMATICS

Ten lessons were observed. In addition pupils' work was analysed and discussions were held with key staff.

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Accreditation for pupils at the end of Year 11 is very good with many pupils achieving better results than predicted.
- The emphasis on 'practical' maths motivates pupils of all ages and has a positive impact on their learning and the progress they make.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use a wide range of strategies to engage all pupils in challenging activities.
- Good developmental targets for mathematics include a subject audit and the extension of current systems to monitor pupils' progress over time.

Commentary

53. Irrespective of their special educational needs pupils achieve very well in mathematics. The youngest pupils have good access to play and musical activities involving sand and water and this helps them develop concepts about number, size, weight and shape, for example, using soft blocks to count to 2. They develop skills in counting, ordering and matching numbers and by Year 2 pupils identify numbers up to 5 and 10 as a single unit. During Year 7 pupils with ASD work on individual projects which include time, shape and number and this work is well supported by teaching assistants. Pupils are able to recognise several numbers which are colour coded and use playdough to model geometric shapes.
54. For older pupils there is an appropriate emphasis on investigative work and number and pupils show confidence in calculating, estimating and probability. They are able to develop these concepts both individually and as part of a group. The very good progress made throughout the school is reflected by examination results at the end of Year 11. Pupils access a wide range of accreditation including GCSE and Entry Level examinations and most are very successful.

55. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lesson planning is appropriate and teaching strategies are used that successfully cater for all pupils. Pupils have a strong sense of enjoyment in their mathematics work. This is because many lessons are lively, engaging and well paced; and as a consequence pupils respond well to teachers who they perceive as enjoying the lessons themselves. This has a very good impact on pupil participation and progress. Pupils have opportunities to use speaking, listening, watching and group work to engage in learning and teachers use a range of interesting resources, including sensory. Work is frequently well structured to include the learning needs of all pupils and there are good challenges for higher attaining pupils especially in using mental calculation.
56. Leadership of mathematics across the school is very good because of the clear vision and direction that is very successfully steering the subject through a period of change. Management of mathematics throughout the school is good and key staff have identified the need for further developments in terms of assessment and the moderation of these. This will enable reliable judgements to be made about the progress of individual pupils, year on year.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. A major factor in the quality of provision in mathematics is the way in which pupils are taught skills through practical, 'real-life' contexts. This enables them to understand how mathematics and number are of use to them in their lives. Interesting examples include linking mathematics with English when using a class shop. In all aspects of design and technology numeracy skills are reinforced through weighing, measuring and estimating. For the youngest pupils circle time is used well to reinforce and extend numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

Eight lessons or part lessons were observed. Pupils' written work and assessments were analysed and discussions held with the two co-ordinators. Subject documents, planning files, assessments, accommodation and resources were all reviewed.

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school adopts a wide range of strategies to ensure that all pupils can make a similar rate of progress.
- The teaching of ASD pupils in the primary years is imaginative and very effective.
- The curriculum is very well planned with very good use of resources, but aspects of assessment require further development.
- There are good opportunities for pupils' achievements to be recognised through external accreditation.

Commentary

58. All pupils achieve very well in science. For example, the youngest ASD pupils with very complex learning difficulties learn to express their preferences for six different kinds of fruits. These pupils and other primary pupils whose home language is not English achieve very well because of the very good support they receive from the specialist language teacher. All these pupils enjoy the sensory experiences of feeling and smelling the materials needed to plant seeds. In the secondary phase, Year 11 MLD pupils achieve very well in Entry Level science and the most able reach GCSE single science standard. They plan investigations, about chemical reactions, for example, and can analyse their results. They experience some difficulty, however, in evaluating how they could improve their methods. SLD pupils in the secondary years make very good progress learning about science as part of the Youth Award ASDAN Transition Challenge. For example, they can recognise changes in food when making a milk shake with fruit, and when making cheese on toast and baking cakes.

59. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In both the primary and secondary years there is very creative use of resources giving all pupils very good access to science learning. The use of sensory materials and the many practical activities contribute significantly to pupils' evident enjoyment of science. The special methods that enable ASD pupils to communicate are deployed very well in primary science teaching. There is, for example, very good use of PECs, (the picture exchange system). This enables more able ASD primary pupils to construct a sentence, for example, 'I like to eat apple' by independently selecting from a range of pictures and symbols, then putting them in the right order. In contrast, the less able primary ASD pupils achieve very well by selecting their preference for fruit from a choice of two pictures. Excellent use of a vertical symbol timetable enables the primary ASD pupils to know very clearly when each part of the science lesson has finished. The transition to the next activity is therefore seamless and highly effective. In the secondary years staff use well established teaching strategies for MLD and SLD pupils. These involve giving clear instructions and encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible. These older pupils achieve very well in environmental education because of the very good lead taken in developing environmental projects, using the school grounds and the excellent use of the greenhouse.
60. The subject is very well led and management is good. Leadership has established very appropriate accreditation routes for older MLD and SLD pupils. The curriculum is very well planned. Many very good opportunities are taken in the primary years to use science activities to support learning across the curriculum. Although assessment procedures are good overall, the monitoring of pupils' progress from year to year, the moderation of teachers' assessments, and the use of annotation of pupils' work and photographs, all require further development. Improvement, though, since the last inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is being led very successfully through a period of major development.
- A very well planned secondary curriculum helps pupils with a range of different learning difficulties to build their skills progressively.
- The planning of what pupils will learn in the primary department is less well developed.
- Pupils are helped to learn effectively by staff, many of whom themselves have very good ICT skills.
- ICT is used well to help pupils achieve in other subjects.

Commentary

61. There has been very good improvement in ICT since the last inspection. Very strong leadership and very detailed planning has enabled the subject to keep up with rapidly changing technology. Changes to the nature of the school's pupil population have also been very successfully embraced and the pupils' levels of achievement have increased. The very clearly expressed aim for pupils to develop ICT skills that they can use to improve their learning in other subjects is being realised well. Hardware and software resources are very good and timely replacement of out of date computer equipment is underway. Pupils have safe access to information from the internet and from the school's internal network.
62. The achievement of primary pupils is good. They learn the basic skills of using computers, and then use these successfully to carry out tasks in many subjects. Younger ASD pupils learn how to focus on the computer screen and make things happen by touching the screen or moving the mouse. By the end of Year 6 more able pupils use computers to help with their writing, and can find information on the internet. Pupils also successfully learn about the use of ICT, to control

various devices such as model cars and items in their local community like traffic lights and shopping tills. Pupils who have particular difficulty with communication make good use of simple switching devices that enable them to respond to questions or to make their needs known. Staff in the primary department are still developing their ICT skills and therefore in a few classes pupils' progress is not as effective as others.

63. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 11, their achievements in ICT are very good. The achievements of a few pupils with MLD are within the range achieved by pupils of their age, nationally. The progress they are making is clearly seen in lessons. Year 9 pupils, for example, were introduced to new actions to help them use spreadsheets. They found these very challenging, but mastered them by the end of the lesson. Pupils with similar learning needs in Year 11 use spreadsheets independently and with confidence.
64. Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching by staff, many of whom are very confident in their own use of ICT. This confidence is gained through very good training opportunities and also by the model set by the school of using ICT on a daily basis to support its management and organisation. Teachers and support staff are therefore able to give very clear instructions to pupils and can provide precise help and support as they carry out tasks. The specialist ICT teaching in the secondary department is very well planned, provides very clear demonstrations and explanations and presents the right degree of challenge to the pupils. Pupils' work and records indicate that teaching in the primary department, which is carried out mostly by class teachers, is of good quality, with tasks showing a good match to the individual needs of the pupils.
65. The curriculum for ICT is very good. It is very carefully planned so that lessons enable the pupils to build progressively upon their skills. The learning activities provided take into account the different learning needs of the pupils very successfully. ICT is made relevant to pupils with ASD who have difficulty making connections between different subjects, by integrating the learning of necessary skills into the planning of topics in other subject areas, for example, the use of sentence building and word processing programmes in English. Very good curriculum arrangements for pupils with SLD enable their learning to progress in very small steps. Pupils with SLD and MLD and some older pupils with ASD are also provided with a very well planned set of ICT topics leading to a nationally recognised qualification. The curriculum is well organised so that pupils in the primary department can learn their ICT skills alongside other subjects, while pupils in the secondary department have additional lessons specifically designated to ICT.

ICT across the curriculum.

66. Pupils and staff make good use of ICT to aid learning in other subjects. The interactive 'smartboards' are used well to provide visual presentations, for introducing and sharing ideas and enabling pupils to make contributions to group sessions. The school's very clear plans to extend this provision in the near future will make a major contribution to pupils' achievement and are particularly important in accommodating the visual learning styles of pupils with ASD. Pupils also make good use of the internet for researching information, use word-processors to produce high quality written work, and use spreadsheets and charts to collect and display data from investigations in mathematics and science. Pupils who have severe language difficulties are able to take part in lessons through good use of simple communication devices.

HUMANITIES

No lessons were seen in history or geography, as these subjects were not a focus for the inspection. One religious education lesson was observed. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers and pupils

History and Geography

67. A scrutiny of teachers' plans shows that there is a very good curriculum for the humanities. A very good programme of topics enables pupils to gain an increasing understanding of history and geography as they move through the school. Topics that begin in Years 1 and 2 are within the daily experience of pupils and are developed further as they move through the school into studies of events in history and geographical features of the world. In both subjects there is a very good emphasis on active learning through drama, role play, educational visits, visual presentations and the use of ICT.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a very good understanding of the beliefs of different religions.
- The subject is brought to life through a range of very good activities and experiences.
- Teaching and learning is supported by a very good range of resources.
- The very good curriculum is enhanced by assemblies and celebrations of different religions.

Commentary

68. The subject has continued to develop very well since the last inspection. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they achieve very well. The very good standard of presentation of their work indicates the very high regard they have for the subject. Very good use is made of the rich multi-faith backgrounds of pupils, many of whom are able to explain and illustrate their religious traditions and practices to their classmates. Throughout the school pupils are helped to achieve a clear understanding of world religions through a very good programme of visits, for example to various places of worship, or by inviting representatives of different faith groups into the school to explain their customs and display artefacts.

69. This very high achievement of pupils stems from very good teaching, which very successfully addresses complex and abstract ideas, particularly by illustrating them well with visual material and genuine artefacts. Lessons are very well adapted to the learning needs of pupils with ASD. A 'thematic' approach enables pupils to link ideas together because they find learning them in isolation difficult. Circle time in each class provides very good opportunities for sharing and reflecting upon experiences, ideas and feelings. Topics are very well planned to be relevant to the needs of pupils of each age group, and enable pupils to build their knowledge and understanding progressively as they move through the school. Pupils with MLD and SLD in Key Stages 3 and 4 are provided with very good opportunities in specialist lessons to build upon their knowledge of world religions then use this to help them address examples of moral issues that arise at school, at home and in the world generally.

70. Leadership and management are very good because it ensures the subject is given a high profile in the school. The curriculum for religious education is very comprehensive. It covers the customs and traditions of all major faiths and provides pupils with very good opportunities to discuss a wide range of moral and social issues and reflect upon the richness and variety of the world in which they live. Religious education lessons are complemented very well by school assemblies, through the celebration of major festivals. Very good use is made of music and sensory activities to help pupils with ASD to engage in and reflect upon activities that demonstrate the richness and variety of the world they live in.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Although parts of two physical education lessons were observed, there was insufficient opportunity to gain sufficient information to make a judgement on the provision for physical education. No lessons were seen and insufficient information was gained on design and technology to enable a judgement on provision to be made. Three art and design lessons were observed and a scrutiny of pupils' work folders and displays, as well as discussions with individual and groups of pupils, enables an overall judgment to be given.

Physical Education

71. Records and subject planning show that pupils experience a good range of activities in physical education. These include all the required aspects of the recommended National Curriculum and in addition activities such as rock climbing and dance as part of the extended curriculum. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in sporting matches against other schools. Pupils have achieved well in GCSE examinations and discussions with them shows their enthusiasm for the subject. Of particular note is their developing their ability to evaluate their own performances in a number of activities.
72. A key feature of teaching is the very good subject knowledge of the teacher. He uses this well to coach pupils in specific techniques, such as shooting and passing in basketball. This is also reflected in the advice and support he is able to give to Year 11 pupils as they study for their GCSE examinations. Lessons observed were characterised by good warm up activities as well as the insistence on pupils stretching and warming down at the end of their lessons. However, because of the poor accommodation it is unsatisfactory that there are no opportunities for pupils to change for physical education or to have a shower at the end of lessons.

Design and Technology

73. Design and technology is taught throughout the school. Skills and competences to be taught are well mapped out by the co-ordinator and in food technology pupils have the opportunity to take the Entry Level examinations. Work in food technology includes entertaining and hospitality skills and making aprons and other items to sell at the summer fete. Design and technology skills are also taught through art lessons when pupils work with a variety of tools and media. Much of the Year 11 art work is three dimensional and relies on pupils' construction skills. Pupils also make items such as picture frames in conjunction with art projects and use ICT for transfer printing to create images on T-shirts.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Displays and examination successes show the very significant achievements of pupils.
- Pupils develop their skills in working in a variety of media and in using different processes.
- Very good opportunities for pupils to study the work of other artists and designers support pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Very good leadership of the curriculum demonstrates a commitment for effectiveness and an enthusiasm for innovation.

Commentary

74. The quality of pupils' work is very good. Artwork on display celebrates the achievements of pupils of all ages and is of a very high standard; it demonstrates the wide range of activities pupils are involved in, from architecture to imaginative painting. Differentiated planning for ASD pupils enables them to participate in whole class and 1:1 work,, for example on a 'face' project. This project is also used with other groups to explore art and design in different times and

cultures, such as using African and Indian masks as sources of inspiration. Achievement in GCSE and Entry level examinations demonstrates pupils' very good achievements. Pupils are confident in using different media together in abstract ways and older pupils are able to discuss their ideas. Pupils have opportunities to produce drawings, paintings and prints as well as sculpture and models. Their work is well presented. There are many opportunities for group work, which extends pupils' social skills and they are able to discuss and evaluate each other's work with maturity. Pupils can also describe the work of other artists and they have had good opportunities to see this work first-hand through trips to London galleries, such as the National Portrait Gallery. They can discuss abstract concepts with confidence, such as that of Robert Rauschenberg and Patrick Heron. They are often able to describe what they have learned.

75. Teaching is very good. Younger pupils are taught skills, such as the use of colour, tone and pattern in order to produce individual responses to ideas set by teachers. Some of this skills teaching is formal and includes colour theory, such as the colour wheel. The youngest pupils are involved in artwork in their class bases and there is strong evidence through display that they are progressing well. The teacher and teaching assistants plan together and this results in clear definition of roles and activities, which means that all pupils are included in the work that is set. Planning for pupils' different abilities has also allowed one particularly skilled pupil to attend local authority gifted and talented workshops. There are many opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to develop hand-eye co-ordination and fine motor skills, such as cutting, joining and assembling various materials and in tracing and copying designs.
76. Very good leadership and management of the subject have brought about improvement to the subject since the previous inspection. The taught curriculum is very good and pupils also have the opportunity to complete and extend their skills during lunchtimes and after school clubs. There is a strong emphasis on drawing throughout the school and in Years 10 and 11 sketchbooks are used to extend learning through homework. Pupils are able to learn to work with a variety of materials including wood, plastic and ceramics and these provide important links to the design and technology curriculum. They have the opportunity to use ICT in art and design and as well as enhancing their work this also enables them to develop mouse control in text and paint programs that they can use in other curriculum areas. Assessment is thorough and is beginning to include photographic evidence of pupils' achievements in art as well as in their personal and social skills.

Music

The provision for music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make excellent progress in singing and in trying to play a number of small instruments.
- Excellent teaching helps contribute to an immense enjoyment of music throughout the school.
- Music is used very effectively by many staff to enable pupils to progress in areas such as literacy, numeracy and social skills.
- Excellent links with other schools have resulted in many exciting joint projects.

Commentary

77. Pupils make excellent progress in music. They learn to control sounds through singing, playing and technology. Lesson objectives focus on self-expression and enjoyment of solo and ensemble music making. Often teaching includes dramatic techniques to create atmosphere and tension, building anticipation. Younger children with wide-ranging complex needs have access to sensory resources, for example, to accompany 'I'm forever blowing bubbles' a teaching assistant blows bubbles into their faces. Pupils use percussion instruments with vocals to create dynamic and creative sound effects. Microphones and recorders are used to enable pupils to become familiar with and evaluate their own contributions. Pupils are confident in participating and performing in public and this is a huge achievement.

78. Music plays a key part in the life of the school. Very high quality teaching of music by many staff promotes inclusion and confidence and has been instrumental in establishing an environment where music is a regular feature. Many staff have musical skills and they use these well in lessons. The expertise of the specialist teacher influences and inspires pupils and as a consequence there is often a magical quality to lessons. The use of the 3-part lessons engages pupils in a mix of activities which are extremely well paced. The starter activity often uses a 'brain gym' exercise, which combines elements of listening and yoga to prepare pupils for each lesson. All pupils know this routine and it is highly successful in establishing calm and focus.
79. Music is used to support learning in other subjects extremely well. In circle time pupils, for example, sing 'Hello' songs and others which enable them to engage in clapping and synchronised movement. Older pupils are able to choose the words for their greeting and this opportunity for ownership has a positive impact on behaviour and readiness for work. Music is used to develop links with literacy, for instance pupils being asked to describe long and short sounds and with numeracy through counting. Pupils enjoy playing different instruments, including keyboards, rainsticks and digital drums. Choice also includes 'Optimusic', a session that uses state-of-the-art technology to engage pupils in interactive music-making using ICT. Ongoing, formative assessment is built into all lessons so that pupils receive oral feedback, which motivates them and builds confidence. There is an increasing use of photographic evidence to describe progress.
80. The primary assemblies every week feature music very well and these include pupils singing together. Music is used to celebrate achievement, for example each week there is a 'Good Work' tune during which individual pupils are congratulated. Music is also used to prompt pupils through routine and this enables them to anticipate the order of events within assemblies, which is very important for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Secondary assemblies also include singing on the theme of the week and music at the start and end, covering a wide variety of cultures.
81. Leadership of music is inspirational and charismatic. The excellent links with other schools include Year 11 pupils engaging in a collaborative venture with a neighbouring specialist performing arts school in a production of 'Boliver' – a 21st century, multi-cultural 'Oliver'. Pupils have opportunities to work with the Guildhall School of Music and the City of London Synfonia. Currently there is also a Bengali singing club and a yoga/music project.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Eleven lessons or part lessons were observed covering lessons in personal and social education, careers, therapies and circle time. Pupils' work and assessments were analysed. There were discussions with co-ordinators, senior managers and other staff.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ASD, SLD and MLD pupils make very good progress in the development of their personal, social and independence skills.
- Very good planning and a wide range of activities support citizenship education very effectively.
- There is a very high standard of teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants, professional agencies and volunteers.
- The curriculum area is very well led by a very effective, efficient, and supportive co-ordinator.
- Teachers make very good use of resources to overcome the impact of poor accommodation on learning.

Commentary

82. Through the taught personal and social education programme, and during activities like circle time, the enrichment afternoon, and extra-curricular activities, ASD, SLD and MLD pupils achieve very well. Younger ASD pupils with the most complex learning difficulties learn to take turns, work together at a table, and develop some independence in their learning. Primary ASD and SLD pupils learn to look after the school environment, care for animals like tadpoles and goldfish, and tend growing seedlings. A very good therapy programme is helping ASD pupils to stay calm, relaxed and responsive. For example, in a sensory integration lesson pupils experience intensive one to one interaction, and learn to co-operate and initiate games. In the secondary years, MLD and SLD pupils learn to follow instructions, develop confidence and grow in self-esteem, when learning, for example, to scale and abseil down a climbing wall, and ride a bike or a horse. Independent skills are fostered very well on residential visits, during work experience and on college courses. Older SLD pupils understand the importance of personal hygiene and how to care for their clothes. They learn how to travel independently on public transport.
83. Citizenship education is very well planned, developing secondary pupils' understanding of public services and local and national government. Pupils have many opportunities to join in school and community activities where they learn very well how to take responsibility for themselves and others. They learn, for example, through links with the community police, the fire service, local businesses, work experience, and attendance at college. Pupils held their own elections at the time of the recent general election. Pupils can bring about changes in their lives at school through their work on the School Council. The oldest MLD pupils receive excellent support to develop their roles as directors of a company, confidently making presentations to the rest of the school to gain the support of their peers. They willingly express their opinions, for example, on the fairness of voting procedures, and how to resolve problems in their company.
84. Teaching and learning are very good. Staff understand pupils' learning needs very well and consequently work is very well matched to meet these. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and very effective partnerships between teachers, teaching assistants, therapists, and voluntary mentors, provide pupils with a secure environment in which they can flourish. In addition to very good resources in class, very good use is made of the school grounds, the community, and through residential experiences, to motivate pupils to enjoy their learning. However, planning and use of time in lessons prior to the enrichment afternoon is of inconsistent quality, at best very good, at worst barely satisfactory. Although assessment overall is good, it is difficult to track pupils' progress from year to year using the current assessment records.
85. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and leads developments in this area very well. Management of this curriculum area is good overall. Curriculum planning is very good with citizenship education clearly identified. Resources are very good, the co-ordinator having very good oversight of the organisation and development of these. The accommodation is poor and has a detrimental impact on learning. There are not enough smaller rooms for withdrawal of ASD pupils who find it difficult to stay in class and classrooms are rather congested for therapies like relaxation. There is no common room for the leavers to practise their social and independence skills. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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