

INSPECTION REPORT

ROWAN PARK SCHOOL

Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104983

Headteacher: Mrs J A Kelly

Lead inspector: Mr D Smith

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th June 2005

Inspection number: 268622

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community special
Age range of pupils: 3-19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 100

School address: Sterrix Lane
Litherland
Bootle
Merseyside
Postcode: L21 0DB

Telephone number: 0151 2224894
Fax number: 0151 2882020

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr D Lindsay
governors:

Date of previous 14th June 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rowan Park School is a Community Special School located in Litherland, Liverpool and is maintained by Sefton Local Education Authority. There are 63 full-time and one part-time boy and 36 full-time and one part-time girl aged two to 19 on roll in this mixed day school approved for 110 places. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Forty-nine pupils have severe learning difficulties, 25 pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and twenty-seven pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. No pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English. Two pupils are in public care and 37 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school gained an Investors in People Award in 2003. The school is located in an Education Action Zone and is involved in Excellence in Cities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--|
| 1732 3 | Mr D Smith | Lead inspector | Science |
| | | | Geography |
| | | | History |
| | | | English as an additional language |
| 1348 2 | Mrs R Mothersdale | Lay inspector | |
| 1076 0 | Mrs P Clark | Team inspector | Art and design |
| | | | Citizenship |
| | | | Religious education. |
| 2270 8 | Mr K Boyle | Team inspector | Design and technology |
| | | | Music |
| | | | Physical education |
| 1078 1 | Mr R Thompson | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| | | | Information and communication technology |
| | | | Post-16 provision |
| | | | Special educational needs |
| 2354 9 | Mrs H Eadington | Team inspector | English |
| | | | Modern foreign language |
| | | | Foundation Stage |

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse Education (UK) Limited
 14 Enterprise House
 Kingsway
 Team Valley
 Gateshead
 NE11 0SR

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school which provides good value for money. Pupils' achievement is good, as a result of good teaching. The governance of the school is good and leadership and management are good. The very good ethos in the school is a major aid to pupils' achievement but staff absences have been a potential barrier to pupils' achievement. However, this has been effectively managed by the headteacher.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good, and has led to the development of a very good ethos.
- The provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is very good.
- In a significant proportion of the lessons teachers have very high expectations.
- The provision in music is very good.
- Very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.
- The provision of a good curriculum with very good links and enrichment opportunities for pupils.
- Subject co-ordinators do not plan effectively for the future development of their subject or monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- Weaknesses in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT).

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The move to a new purpose-built site has been a major boost to the school's development. The headteacher provides a strong lead and, although leadership and management of other key staff are good, there are still areas for development. The school improvement plan provides a clear direction for the future development of the school and financial management is now good. The development of assessment systems has been given a high priority, they are now good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. There has been good progress, overall, in the development of the curriculum but weaknesses remain in the provision for ICT.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Pupils' achievement at the end of: | in relation to individual targets in: | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Subjects of the curriculum | personal and social education |
| Year 2 | Very good | Very good |
| Year 6 | Good | Very good |
| Year 9 | Good | Very good |
| Year 11 | Good | Very good |
| Year 13 | Good | Very good |

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

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well, as do pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils in public care achieve as well as their peers in the school. Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is good. They achieve very well in personal, social, health education and music. Pupils' achievement is good in religious education and physical education. Their achievement in ICT is satisfactory. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards or achievement in any other subjects.

The provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is very good, spiritual and social development are good, making **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very good, overall**. Consequently, pupils' personal qualities including their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good. They are very good for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and in the discrete provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Teaching and learning in personal, social and health education and music are very good throughout the school. Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science, religious education, ICT and physical education. The staff team ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and in a significant number of lessons pupils are very effectively challenged. Assessment systems are good and they are used effectively to establish targets for pupils' achievement and personal development. The curriculum provision is good and the opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that enrich their curriculum are very good. The special educational needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are met very well. The school's accommodation and resources are good. Pupils are very well cared for and provided with good support and guidance. The school has established very good systems to take pupils' views into account. Very good links have been developed with parents, other schools, colleges and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good providing a very clear vision for the continual improvement of the school and promoting a very good ethos. Members of staff have a very strong commitment to providing pupils with inclusive opportunities with their peers in mainstream schools. The leadership of other key staff is good overall, although following a period of absence the deputy headteacher has not fully established his contribution to the senior management team. The contribution of the governing body is good. The governors support and challenge the school leaders well and have a very good range of skills that assist the school, for example, in financial management and the development of the curriculum. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and, in general, make an effective contribution to the school's good provision. They have a vision for the future development of their subjects but do not formally plan in sufficient detail for continual improvement in their subject or monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This leads to good rather than very good provision in most subjects. However, provision in ICT is satisfactory and, as a result, their achievement is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school and consider that they are kept well-informed. In their view, pupils are expected to work hard and, as a result, achieve well. They are confident that pupils enjoy attending the school. Parents are aware that some of the pupils have challenging behaviour whilst others are vulnerable. In their view this is a difficult situation that, in general, the school manages well. Parents consider that a good range of activities is provided. Most of the parents have confidence in the care and guidance that is provided by the school. They are supportive of the leadership of the school and are clear that, when issues are reported, the headteacher ensures that the correct procedures are followed. Pupils are very positive about the school and, consequently, make a valuable contribution to the school's very positive ethos.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure the effective planning by subject co-ordinators for continual improvements in subjects and improve their monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- The leadership and management of ICT to boost continual improvement in the quality of the provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders achieve very well. Pupils in public care achieve as well as their peers in the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in music and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils achieve well in relation to their individual targets.
- There are weaknesses in pupils' achievement in ICT.

Commentary

1 Parents and carers are pleased with their children's achievement and are clear that this has a positive impact in many aspects of their lives. In music pupils enjoy the opportunity to make very good gains in their ability to listen to, appraise, compose and perform music. Their very good achievement is extended into a knowledge of many different styles of music that encompass a wealth of different cultures. Their learning is very effectively enriched by a range of stimulating visitors and visits and this helps to boost pupils' very good achievement. In particular pupils and students develop the skills and confidence to perform to a range of audiences and this is a very good reflection of their personal development. Children in the Foundation Stage respond well to an exciting range of musical activities and achieve well. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is central to all aspects of the school's work. There are clear targets for pupils' personal development and they make very good gains in their respect for others and their ability to distinguish right from wrong. Also pupils make very good gains in their understanding of their own and other cultures. Although pupils' make good progress towards their targets for social development opportunities are lost, especially during breaks, to further extend pupils' achievement in this aspect of their development.

2 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well in English, mathematics and religious education. This is in addition to their very good achievement in music and personal, social and health education alongside their peers in the rest of the school. Pupils achieve very well as they work towards their individual targets in literacy. In a lesson observed a very good range of strategies and aids ensured that all pupils made very good gains in their ability to recognise and match pictures to characters. In another lesson, the pupils were very effectively challenged to make very good gains in their writing skills and achieved very well. Very good relationships helped engage pupils in a mathematics lesson. Consequently, pupils made very good gains in their ability to find missing objects, sort and match shapes and the higher attaining pupils discussed colours and shapes with growing confidence and accuracy. In a religious education lesson pupils very carefully carried out the basic care of a doll and the higher attaining pupils were able to arrange the basic sequence of a story about a baby and, as a result, achieved very well. The very consistent and calm approach adopted by the staff working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders helps to create a very positive ethos and, as a result, they achieve very well.

3 The staff carefully analyse the available data on pupils' performance. Consequently, where individual or groups do not make the expected progress staff amend factors such as teaching strategies and use of resources. The local education authority

targets are, as required, reported to the governing body and they help to ensure that the targets are challenging yet realistic. Pupils made good gains in their learning during the ICT lessons observed during the inspection, but due to weaknesses in leadership and management their achievement over-time is only satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is very good, spiritual and social development are good, making spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very good, overall. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' attendance and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A willingness amongst pupils to have a go at activities because of the encouragement they receive from staff.
- Very high expectations of behaviour and a consistent response to any behavioural issues.
- Imaginative approaches to raising spiritual awareness in the school.
- There are too few structured social activities for pupils.

Commentary

4 Staff know pupils very well and use this knowledge to encourage pupils to make a very good effort at activities and tasks in lessons. As a result, those who may show some reluctance at first, or who doubt their own capabilities develop very good attitudes to learning. For example, a Year 10 pupil making his first attempt at batting in a Kwik Cricket lesson, nearly gave up after two failed attempts to connect with the ball. Once he had hit it, it took all of the teachers' persuasive powers to get him away from the stumps. In a lesson where Year 3 and 4 pupils were taking part in a mainstream junior school's sports afternoon, a Year 3 pupil, who again was initially reluctant to take part because of the throng of children around her, constantly signed that she wanted to run again in a race, throw a ball or take part in the standing jump competition. Year 9 pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, demonstrated very good attitudes when playing a steel drum, plucking guitar strings and exploring the sounds made by drums. Through the school council, pupils take on responsibility and show imagination and responsibility in the areas of fundraising and helping each other. For example, knowing that a new pupil was about to join the school, they made arrangements to look after him, to bring him to a meeting of the school council and to make sure he had a friend around the school. Also, a school bank, run by the school council, enables pupils to take charge of the funds they raise for social events and pupil resources.

5 The school has very high expectations of how pupils should behave and these are consistently emphasised through the school's aims and mission statement and individual class rules. A few pupils do have challenging behaviour because of their special needs, and the school tries very hard to address each of these situations with individual behaviour management plans. Clear behaviour management guidelines that are regularly reinforced with staff training sessions, meetings and professional consultations support a relaxed and very happy ethos in the school, where pupils generally behave very well and are considerate to each other.

6 A team spirit is fostered in the school through musical productions, the workings of the school council, raising funds for charitable events such as Red Nose and participating with the neighbouring school in the Kielder Challenge. However, pupils' opportunities for the development of pupils' social skills over the lunch period vary. On occasions, for example, in the Foundation Stage playground, play is stimulating and welfare staff are actively involved with pupils in one-to-one activities. At other times, in other areas of the school, welfare assistants are more passive, and as a result, pupils are not encouraged to take full advantage of opportunities to develop their social skills.

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 | 106 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 1 | 0 | 0 |

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

7 Recognition of the lack of a variety of multi-faith spiritual centres in the community has led the school to build very close links to the local church of St Philips. However, through religious education pupils are taught the key principles that support some of the major world faiths, and displays around the school reflect the influence of the Muslim faith. Pupils enjoy assemblies, but those held in the school hall hamper any efforts for intimacy and reflection because of the acoustics of the building. However, the consistent use of candles, quiet music and even bubbles at the start of religious education lessons and the calming effect this has on the start of lessons, makes a very good contribution to pupils spiritual development.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (87.8 %)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-------|----------------------|------|
| School data | 12.2% | School data | 0.0% |
| National data | 11.0% | National data | 0.7% |

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

8 Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and during the current year, and is now satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils are absent because of medical issues. Most pupils are brought to school by organised transport or with their parents, and only one pupil makes their way independently. Punctuality is generally satisfactory, although there are no clear procedures to monitor this area such as a late book or clearly defined time for closure of registers.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education, with strengths in the enrichment of the curriculum, the care provided for pupils and the arrangements for settling pupils into the school. The school meets the special educational needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders very well. Provision is enhanced by the opportunities provided by the strong links the school has with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, and the use of assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high expectations for pupils' achievement and personal development in many lessons.
- Assessment procedures are good and information is used well to set targets and plan lessons.

- The good support of teaching assistants in most lessons but, at times, opportunities are lost to develop pupils' independent learning.

Commentary

9 The quality of teaching and learning is very good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and in the discrete provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Teaching and learning are also very good through out the school in music and personal, social and health education where expectations are very high. There were are also other lessons observed during the inspection, for example, in English and mathematics where the quality of teaching and learning was very good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection and the school has worked hard to promote equal access to learning for all of the pupils.

10 Parents are confident that their children are taught well and are expected to work hard. In the best lessons, planning is very detailed and provides a very clear structure to promote pupils' learning. The introductions are lively, build on pupils' previous learning and capture their interest from the start. Challenging activities are very effectively planned to meet the full range of pupils' special educational needs and all of the available time is used as a very positive work ethic is developed. The end of the lessons is used very effectively to assess and consolidate pupils' learning and, as a result, they are made aware of how to improve their work. Very good teaching and learning for pupils in Years 1 and 2 was observed, for example, in English, mathematics, music and religious education lessons. In music, teaching is very enthusiastic and very well-informed by the talented music co-ordinator. Pupils are very effectively challenged and motivated by the very exciting range of activities and thoroughly enjoy their lessons and, as a result, they achieve very well.

11 The teaching of personal, social and health education is an integral aspect of school life. Pupils make very good progress towards their personal targets and, for example, in lessons they are provided with many opportunities to work together in groups. For example, in a science lesson Year 8 pupils worked very well together in small groups and achieved very well. They shared equipment, helped each other and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to extend their understanding of the functions of the lungs. Very high staffing levels make a very significant contribution to very good teaching. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders respond very well to the very good relationships and very consistent behaviour management provided by the staff and, as a result, achieve very well. On a few occasions the very large number of staff in a lesson provide too much assistance to the pupils with their tasks and, as a result, the gains in their learning in these lessons are satisfactory rather than good.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 63 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 22 (35%) | 38 (60%) | 3 (5%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

12 The school has effectively focussed on the development of assessment systems and they are now good. The procedures are, in general, used well and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Members of staff ensure that the challenging targets in pupils' individual education plans focus on meeting pupils' special educational needs. This is particularly evident in the development of pupils' communication skills where, a result of thorough assessment procedures a wide range of strategies and aids are used to promote good gains in their learning. In the Foundation Stage the careful assessment of pupils' special educational needs ensures that the work of the staff and other professionals is clearly focussed and, as a result, pupils achieve well.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and enrichment opportunities are very good. Accommodation and resources are good, overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well-planned and ensures that all pupils have good opportunities to be involved in everything that the school offers.
- Provision in the special classes, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, is very good.
- Personal, social, health and citizenship education is very well-developed.
- Pupils and students are well prepared for life after school.
- A very good range of visits, visitors and enhancement activities enriches learning and motivates pupils.
- The range of nationally recognised qualifications is too narrow.

Commentary

13 The curriculum is well-planned to provide the required subjects, religious education and collective worship. The broad range of worthwhile activities meets pupils' needs well. The school is vigilant to ensure that pupils of all abilities are included in everything that is offered. The curriculum is well-organised and monitored effectively by reference to teachers' planning. It has improved well since the previous inspection.

14 The arrangements for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to learn in the special classes are very good. The methods used such as the Picture Exchange Communication System, visual predictable timetables and limited distraction contribute significantly to the very good progress made by these pupils. The hydrotherapy pool, light and dark rooms and a well-equipped sensory base are used effectively to support pupils with profound and multiple and complex needs. Pupils with challenging behaviour are managed consistently and calmly.

15 The school provides a very good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education. The programme for younger pupils has a relevant emphasis on personal development, while secondary-aged pupils have increasing opportunities to develop their independence and social skills. They learn about rules and rights and about taking responsibility, for example, through the school council. Lively debate and well-informed decision making, are encouraged in the constructive meetings and the council makes a valuable contribution to the running of the school. When they are ready, pupils are taught sensitively about drugs, sex and relationships and how to keep themselves safe.

16 Pupils and students are effectively prepared for the next stage of their lives. In Years 10 to 14 there is an effective programme to teach pupils about the world of work, supported by well-established links with the Connexions Service. Work experience is well-organised and placements are carefully matched to individual learning needs. Pupils and students have opportunities of gaining nationally recognised qualifications through the ASDAN scheme. However, the school is aware that a wider range of accreditation opportunities would give better recognition to the achievements of pupils of all abilities, including higher attaining pupils in academic and work-related subjects, as well as in life and independence skills. Consequently, pupils' achievement is good, rather than the very good achievement that the school aspires to.

17 A wide range of events, in and out of school, enhances pupils' learning and personal development. Although there is a limited programme of lunchtime activities, pupils attend after school clubs and take part in musical productions such as 'Grease' with a local high school. Many participate in local and regional sporting events covering activities such as judo, football, swimming and Boccia. Visitors include poets, storytellers and musicians.

They come to the school to talk and work with pupils and, in addition to supporting learning in subjects these contacts are valuable in promoting pupils' social and communication skills. The school has very good links with the community that benefit pupils when they visit, for instance, museums, theatres, a riding school and historical sites. Opportunities for residential trips promote pupils' personal development and independence very effectively.

18 The school is well-staffed. Many teachers and teaching assistants have undertaken additional training courses in order to meet the needs of their pupils. This is particularly apparent in the high level of expertise of the teachers in the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Resources are of good quality, are well-organised and are used effectively to support pupils' learning. Overall, the accommodation is good. It is bright, colourful and spotlessly clean. It has improved very well since the previous inspection. Very good features such as the soft play area, the sensory rooms, the hydrotherapy pool, the Foundation Stage accommodation and the specialist rooms for food technology and music enhance pupils' learning and personal development. However, the hall is acoustically poor and this restricts its suitability for activities such as assemblies or musical events. The school grounds have well-equipped play facilities and grassed area, but these are insufficiently used, particularly at lunchtimes, to promote pupils' social development and play skills.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care and welfare, health and safety of pupils is very good. Good support, advice and guidance are provided for the pupils and the school involves them and listens to their views very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school looks after pupils very well and makes very good arrangements for their physical, emotional and behavioural needs.
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are very good.
- The school listens carefully to pupils' views and takes them into account.

Commentary

19 Staff know and care for pupils very well and the opportunities for pupils to communicate with an adult they trust, for example, at the start or end of the school day, at lunch or break, or even when they are receiving personal care, are very good. Physiotherapists and speech and language therapists work closely with staff, pupils and parents and are in school on a regular basis. Medical arrangements are co-ordinated with the resident nursing staff. Welfare assistants have dedicated arrangements for feeding pupils who require specialised programmes or one-to-one care at mealtimes. Child protection procedures follow area child protection guidelines and all staff are regularly updated and trained in respect of new requirements. The needs of looked after children and those who have links to the children's services team are correctly addressed and they are fully included in the life of the school. The governor with responsibility for child protection was very impressed with the high level of dignity and privacy accorded to pupils. Most staff have received training in positive physical intervention techniques and the moving and handling of pupils, and they are sensitive to the emotional and behavioural response of pupils. Specialist teachers, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, and for those with visual and multi sensory impairments, offer very good guidance to staff on care issues for pupils. The school's focus on constantly improving its health and safety procedures maintains very good standards of care. For example, when an issue concerning pupils' safety on arriving and leaving the school was raised during the inspection, the matter was dealt with very swiftly, and with the appropriate authorities. In another area, when procedural issues were queried, these too were rectified by the following day, although specific risk assessments on educational visits still require completion. As a result of these very well-organised

procedures and close links to health and therapeutic professionals, parents are confident that the school looks after their children well.

20 Arrangements for settling pupils into the school when they first arrive are very carefully worked out. A "Welcome booklet", frequently specific to a child, is made and pre-admission visits encouraged. The admission is usually part-time at first, increasing to full time when the pupil is comfortable with the school or has reached five years of age. For nursery children, a visit is usually made to the family home. For pupils who are already at another school, if possible, a visit is made to the school where a pupil has a specific learning, behavioural or physical need and the school is effective in providing the necessary support. Because of this, parents are pleased with how the school settled their children in.

21 The school council meets every fortnight and represents the views of pupils across the school very well. Pupils are aware of the responsibility placed on them by their election and have had a significant impact on every day school events. These include, a Tsunami fund raising event, the end of term disco and a school leaver's prom that involves booking a hotel, limousine and group. Through the reporting of class events and class issues, the council very accurately brings the voice of the pupils to the school's notice. During the construction of the school, the architect met with pupils and asked them for their views. Pupils are consulted annually through a questionnaire and where possible attend their annual review meetings. Pupils' views are respected, but they are also taught to understand that they are responsible for the choices that they make, especially when it comes to their transition to college or residential provision.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are very good. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has built up a wide diversity of opportunities for pupils to work alongside and mix with pupils in mainstream schools and colleges.
- Great use is made of opportunities and skills that exist in the community to enrich pupils' learning.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and there is regular consultation with them.

Commentary

22 The school works hard to build up its range of integration arrangements and partnerships with local primary and secondary schools and is involved in a variety of collaborative activities. Many of these are supported by Education Action Zone funding. This impacts well on pupils' achievements and personal development, for example, when Year 5 and 6 pupils work alongside a visiting poet in a local primary school or participate in art activities through the Inspire programme. Sports amenities are accessed within local schools such as the shared use of adjoining tennis courts. Pupils participate alongside other schools in the Sports Merseyside Youth Games. The school is very aware of the benefits of inclusion and, for example, a social link has been created for a pupil to attend sessions at the same school as her mainstream sibling. Stunning artwork in the school entrance is the result of collaboration between the school and a local junior school. The school hosts work experience and training opportunities for pupils and college students. Plans are still in hand to extend college links and opportunities for post-16 students, but, overall, partnerships that currently exist have improved social and leisure occasions for pupils. Parents appreciate the outward looking nature of the school's leadership in supporting these opportunities for their children.

23 The school is committed to providing first hand experiences of work in the community for its pupils, as it values the consolidation of learning that can take place in a practical and specific task. Local businesses generously fund and support projects that the school has identified. For example, supporting the school's fundraising for another minibus and providing access to a sailing boat for a post-16 pupil. The school works very hard to offer pupils a wide range of education activities. For example, through links with a local prison where pupils can trampoline, play skittles, basketball and badminton with expert tuition from the prison sports instructors. Community initiatives such as the Right to Read scheme, has brought in volunteers to promote literacy in the school. Where Education Action Zone funding supports the cost of, for example, a trip to Chester Zoo, or the cinema, the school is careful to link the activity to a planned curriculum task, and in this way pupils access an academic benefit from the outing as well as a social one. Visits to the Liverpool Philharmonic, theatres, art galleries and leisure centres broaden pupils' awareness of community resources and, consequently, pupils have the chance to know the area they live in and the opportunities that are open to them when they are not in school.

24 The school places a very high priority on keeping parents informed. Home/school books are a keystone of a regular dialogue with parents and are much appreciated for the detail they give of day-to-day life in the school. This is backed up by open access to staff, either by telephone or visits to the school. A very attractive parent's room is available for workshops and informal open mornings. The home/school committee has initiated a range of successful fund raising events such as the summer and Christmas Fayres. Parent helpers are encouraged to come into school and their number is increasing as the school completes the necessary checks. Parents are involved in the school's Healthy School initiative and are working, alongside staff, to raise the standard of awareness of health issues and to send out a newsletter to parents about them. Information to parents through annual written reports that accompany the annual review process is personal, revealing and targeted at improving educational standards and pupils' personal and social development. The school regularly asks parents for their views and acts on their suggestions. Accordingly, parents are very pleased with the information they receive from the school on their child's progress and generally feel that their enquires and areas of concern are dealt with very effectively.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good, overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the leadership of other key staff and management are good. The governance of the school is good. The school provides good value for money. The school effectively manages aids and barriers to learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the headteacher that very effectively promotes an equality of opportunity.
- The good contribution of the governing body.
- Weaknesses in subject improvement planning and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by subject co-ordinators.

Commentary

25 The leadership of the headteacher is very good and provides a very clear vision for continual improvement. Her promotion of a very good ethos is a major aid to pupils' achievement and parents have full confidence in her leadership. The headteacher's very

effective leadership has enabled the school to overcome the barriers to pupils' achievement, which have arisen from staff absences and a challenging twelve months at the school. The effective school improvement plan has been developed following extensive consultation and provides a clear direction for the future development of the school. The monitoring and evaluation of the plan are particularly thorough and this has helped to promote continual development. There has been a shared drive, supported by a core of dedicated teachers working well as a team, to successfully develop curriculum and assessment. The staff team, under the expert leadership of the headteacher have also developed very good provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and, as a result, these pupils achieve very well. The school has benefited from its involvement in a range of initiatives, for example, funding from the Education Action Zone, has provided a boost to the arts' curriculum in the school.

26 The school leaders very actively promote equality and inclusion ensuring that pupils' wide range of special educational needs are met and there is a shared ambition for the achievement of all pupils. The leadership of other key staff is good overall, but the deputy headteacher has returned from a long-term absence and does not, as yet, carry the full responsibilities of his role. For example, although performance management systems are well-established, the headteacher has too heavy a work load and recognises the need for team leaders to share this responsibility. The impact of this is that although the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, too few opportunities are provided to further extend the significant amount of very good practice in the school and, consequently achievement is good overall.

27 The governors have a good working relationship with the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have a clear sense of the priorities for its further development. The governors support and challenge the school leaders well and have a very good range of skills that assist the continual improvement of the school. Their expertise has helped to develop the school's good financial management. Also, the governors have made a major contribution to improvements in the curriculum. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met including the promotion of racial equality in the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Total income | £1,642,596 | Balance from previous year | £109,785 |
| Total expenditure | £1,669,413 | Balance carried forward to the next | £82,968 |
| Expenditure per pupil | £15,899 | | |

28 There are many strengths in the management of the school, for example, self-evaluation systems are used effectively to inform continual improvement. Also there is a strong focus on developing close working links with local schools. Policies for the management of behaviour and use of assessment are reflected across the work of the school. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning but recognises the need to extend this practice to other key staff. Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and, in general, make an effective contribution to the school's good provision. They have a vision for the future development of their subjects but do not formally plan in sufficient detail for continual improvement in their subject or monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This leads to good rather than very good provision in most subjects. However provision in ICT is satisfactory and, as a result, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teamwork between school staff and the Connexions adviser is good.
- Work-related learning enhances students' personal development and learning in key skills well.
- The contribution of work-related visits, visitors to school and work experience are co-ordinated well.

Commentary

29 Work-related learning was not evaluated at the last inspection. However in comparison with judgements made at the time on work experience and links with local colleges, provision has improved. Students confirm that they value very highly the opportunities they have in developing their vocational and key skills. Because of the good teaching and learning, students achieve well in the key skills of communication, number handling, and problem solving, working with others and improving their own performance. A major part of this is because of the good links between staff and the pupils' personal adviser from Connexions. Students participate in planning their own preferred programmes, whilst reviews of progress are attended by a range of adults including parents, staff and the Connexions adviser, and where necessary, medical staff, therapists and social workers. This is good practice.

30 There is good leadership and management of work-related learning that ensures students experience a wide range of opportunities. For example, the school invites ex-students to return to school to talk about their experiences of the world of work, and students take part in supported work experience both in and out of school. This works well and builds up their confidence and self-esteem. Mini-business enterprises throughout the year extend students' literacy and numeracy skills. Statutory requirements are met. An outstanding example of preparation for working life is the way in which the pupils and students borrowed money from the school to start a 'disco' business. They quickly repaid the loan and now the profit they make from discos is put into other projects within the school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's personal development and communication skills are well promoted throughout the day.
- Good links with parents support children's achievement.
- Relationships between children and adults are very good.
- Assessment is well used to inform planning.
- Resources are used very effectively.

Commentary

31 The class for the youngest children in the school includes two children who are below the age of five, and six who are in the Reception Year. The class includes children with severe learning difficulties and with profound and complex learning difficulties and others with autistic spectrum disorders. Taking into account the children's special educational needs and following discussion with parents, all these children are taught the Foundation Stage curriculum. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when the provision was satisfactory, overall. There are strong links with parents who are encouraged to be partners in the development of their children. This is one of the reasons why achievement and progress are good. Lessons are very well-planned as children's needs are carefully assessed and work is effectively modified to meet their varying levels of ability. The teacher and teaching assistants work closely together to ensure that resources are used effectively to support learning. The curriculum is being further developed to ensure that the children do as well as they are able in all areas of their learning.

32 Activities in lessons are planned to help children to develop their **personal, social and emotional skills**. 'Hello' sessions and snack times are well-used to encourage sharing and turn taking. Relationships between children and adults are very positive and staff are consistently patient, calm and clear about how the children are expected to behave. As a result, children understand the classroom routines and follow them as well as they are able. They are encouraged to make choices and take responsibility whenever possible, for instance, taking the class register to the office. Members of staff work very hard to maintain a climate in which children can feel secure and happy and are able to learn.

33 The teacher, teaching assistants and speech and language therapists create many opportunities for children to express themselves through speech, signing and with a picture exchange system. Because staff frequently draw attention to the timetable, children begin to recognise the pictures and symbols which tell them about the routines and structure of the day. During **communication, language and literacy** sessions they begin to develop early reading skills so that, for example, they learn to associate objects and pictures with the stories they hear and enjoy. Phonic awareness is well promoted by the emphasis the teacher places on rhyming activities. Higher attaining children recognise their own names and those of others and begin to build up a bank of common words which they recognise on sight. Children have many opportunities to improve their fine motor skills and consequently begin to develop the control needed in order to progress towards writing.

34 Numeracy skills and basic **mathematical** concepts and language are effectively taught through a wide range of classroom activities, including number rhymes, songs and structured play. Counting activities and the language of colour, shape, size and position are frequently used by staff as part of the daily routines. As a result, higher attaining children count to eight and begin to recognise some number shapes. Those with more complex needs benefit from opportunities to explore colours, texture and shapes and show pleasure when they are helped to place bricks on top of one another.

35 Children begin to understand about the passing of time when they discuss birthdays and become increasingly aware of classroom routines. They explore the world around them through activities that use all their senses as, for instance, when they roll, squeeze and stretch dough to make bread. They extend their **knowledge and understanding of the world** by moving about the school to use different facilities, and go into the local community to visit, for example, shops, the park and a garden centre. During the inspection they were intrigued to see and touch butterflies hatched in the classroom from chrysalises and released outside. Children benefit from regular sessions in the sensory rooms where they learn that they can control their environment with the use of switches.

36 Children are encouraged to experiment and be **creative** with colours and textures when painting with fingers or brushes. They enjoy making collages and printing with their hands or pieces of string and they mould and shape marzipan to create 'Incy Wincy Spider'. The opportunities children are given for role play and dressing up also help them to develop their ideas and imaginations. Children benefit from weekly music lessons taken by a specialist teacher. They enjoy clapping, singing and signing songs and rhymes and discover, with surprise and delight, that they can make different sounds with percussion instruments.

37 There is a good partnership with therapists to promote children's **physical development** within class lessons and through individual programmes. Their soft play sessions and the attractive, well-equipped outdoor play area both make significant contributions to the children's crawling, climbing, balancing and jumping skills and their spatial awareness. They enjoy the hydrotherapy sessions in the school pool. Since they have individual help they demonstrate growing confidence in the water and consequently relax to experiment or follow instructions. Children frequently use and play with construction toys, tracking games, and writing and colouring materials, all of which help to increase their control of small pieces of equipment. The staff take every opportunity to encourage the children's independence in eating and dressing.

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

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

38 In **French**, insufficient work was seen to form reliable judgements about provision or standards. No lessons were observed, but, the teacher's records indicate that pupils in Years 7 to 11 currently learn about the culture of France and other countries, such as Spain, through the programmes for personal, social and health education, geography, music and literacy. Pupils enjoy an annual week of activities linked to a particular country. The 'French' week included a French café, dress, music, art, a boules tournament, a 'referendum' and simple vocabulary linked to these areas. The governing body has agreed a policy and scheme of work for French for pupils in Years 7 to 11. This involves partnership with a local language college and will come into operation in September 2005.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment procedures are very good and the information gained is used effectively in planning lessons to meet pupils' special educational needs.
- Teachers use a good range of strategies to reinforce and clarify spoken language.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour.
- Subject leadership is very good.
- The good use of resources to support pupils' learning.
- The subject co-ordinator has insufficient opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in classrooms.

Commentary

39 The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall and, as a result, pupils achieve well. However, in Years 1 and 2 and in the discrete classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement are very good. Teachers are skilled at providing many opportunities for pupils to take part in lessons and at breaking down tasks into small steps. They repeat and rephrase questions and prompts so that everyone understands what is required. There are very good assessment procedures and the information gained is used well to inform lesson planning. This is particularly evident in lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and, as result, they achieve very well. Teachers know their pupils well, have high expectations for their work and behaviour and challenge them to achieve well. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' progress by helping individuals and groups to be fully involved in lessons. The very good relationships between adults and pupils ensure that pupils are well-motivated and usually try to do their best.

40 Pupils across the school achieve at least well, and frequently very well, in developing their speaking and listening skills. This is because the school places a strong emphasis on promoting communication skills in all areas of the curriculum. Because teachers and teaching assistants use signing and symbols well, pupils develop their confidence to contribute to discussion in whatever way they are able. Big Macks are used in lessons to enable pupils with limited oral skills to take part in discussion. A significant number of pupils, including many with autistic spectrum disorders, benefit from using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). New vocabulary is explained clearly and repeated in context, so that pupils learn to understand and use it correctly. During

Years 1 to 6 they become increasingly attentive for longer periods of time, and by the time they are in Year 6 many pupils answer and ask questions, though others need prompts and encouragement to do so. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders show increasing understanding and control in many situations, through improved listening and expression. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties derive meaning from looking at pictures, feeling and touching objects, using switched equipment and listening to adults reading aloud. As they move up through the school pupils learn to listen more carefully and to appreciate the idea of taking turns in a conversation. During the inspection, pupils' good progress in discussing ideas and expressing opinions was clearly demonstrated at a meeting of the school council. Speech and language therapists provide very effective support for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. They work closely with teachers over assessments, target setting and programmes of work for individuals and groups of pupils. Their support is highly valued by the school and by parents.

41 Pupils' reading and writing skills develop well. Daily opportunities are provided for them to practise their reading skills, with the result that they make good progress. Teachers make good use of pupils' individual targets to ensure that tasks are well-matched to their needs. Teachers vary the tasks well, using a variety of interesting and stimulating resources such as objects of reference, games, pictures and 'big books'. Older pupils have opportunities to read and experience a wide range of literature, such as fiction and non-fiction texts, plays and poetry, including works by Roald Dahl, A K Rowling, Anne Frank and Shakespeare. In most English lessons pupils are required to record their work. By Year 6 many pupils overwrite or copy-write single letters and words, and higher attaining pupils write their own names and copy simple sentences. As they move up through the school pupils write for a range of purposes including letters, stories, reports and poetry. Most make good progress in improving the legibility of their handwriting and they use their word processing skills to draft and redraft their work.

42 The leadership of English is very good and the subject is well-managed. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and sets a good example to other staff by the high quality of her teaching. The good quality resources are very well organised and are used effectively to motivate pupils and promote their learning. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to use the library. However, the co-ordinator has insufficient opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning by planned observations and feedback. This restricts the identification of areas for development and pupils' achievement is good rather than very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

43 Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise and apply the skills and knowledge they learn in English lessons. For instance, in mathematics, science, religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship education planning frequently includes target vocabulary which teachers use and repeat, so that pupils begin to use it in discussion. Older pupils speak purposefully about a range of topics and many use appropriate language in a variety of contexts, including their conversations with visitors and their lessons in college.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan the lessons well to meet pupils' special educational needs.

- Relationships are very good and pupils are encouraged to work hard.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively to reinforce learning.
- The good emphasis on the development of pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects.

Commentary

44 Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. However, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well. The teaching for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is very well-planned and the use of an extensive range of strategies very effectively motivates pupils. For example, in a lesson seen the very good use of ICT and stimulating resources ensured that the pupils in Years 1 and 2 made very good gains in their ability to match colours. Pupils in public care achieve as well as their peers in the school. Since the last inspection the subject has made good improvement. The National Numeracy Strategy is applied and modified and learning is made enjoyable. The starter activity includes number songs and sensory and tactile activities to suit individual pupils. Assessment is good. The school has detailed records of pupils' achievement over time and can show clearly pupils' progress. Leadership and management of the subject are good, but the role of the co-ordinator needs to be further developed to drive forward continual improvement in the quality of the provision.

45 Throughout lessons, pupils experience a wide range of activities to help them recognise and record number. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills in many ways, including singing and signing and using ICT aids such as switches. For example, the very good use of an electronic whiteboard engaged Year 7 pupils and they experienced a number counting activity and achieved well. There are very good relationships in lessons and pupils enjoy the wide experiences that they have when discovering numbers. They are happy to be challenged and show great pride and pleasure when they succeed. Pupils are very well behaved and respond well to praise and encouragement. For example, in a lesson for Year 11 pupils, they were proud of the gains they made in the recognition of shapes and achieved well. There is good teamwork and all members of staff are very aware of the special educational needs of individual pupils and skilfully adapt tasks to ensure pupils succeed. By using a wide range of interesting and effective teaching strategies staff ensure that all pupils, including those with more complex learning needs are fully included in lessons. Pupils know they are succeeding because staff tell them and celebrate with them when they achieve a particular goal.

Mathematics across the curriculum

46 Teachers use every available opportunity to draw pupils' attention to the purpose and function of mathematics in a wide range of situations. For example, in physical education pupils count the number of movements or jumps. In music, pupils count to the beat and show an understanding language such as "fast" or "slow". This was very clearly illustrated when the 'Inspire' music and drama group held a session in the school hall. The whole school was throbbing as pupils enjoyed their exciting music. Another stimulating session was the 'wheelchair' dancing where mathematics was an integral part of the music.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is enthusiastic and the use of assessment is good.

- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to experience and participate in practical activities.
- Relationships are very good and the staff team are focussed on meeting the full range of pupils' special educational needs.
- The consistent use and reinforcement of appropriate scientific language.
- Weaknesses in planning for the future development of the subject.

Commentary

47 The quality of teaching and learning is good and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Lesson planning is good and is based on the consistent use of good assessment procedures. The teaching assistants are fully aware of the structure and content of the lessons and this helps to promote the good teamwork. Teaching is enthusiastic and focussed on promoting pupils' gains in their learning and, as a result, they achieve well. Challenging learning targets are established for each pupil and gains in their learning are clearly recorded with valuable comments about the levels of support required and photographic evidence to support the teacher assessment.

48 Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in investigative work. Pupils are effectively encouraged to explore, recognise and understand a good range of topics. In a lesson for Year 2 pupils, they responded well when they encountered a reflection of their own image and images of other people. Relationships are very good and this helped to challenge the higher attaining pupils to assemble a four-piece jigsaw of a face. The lower attaining pupils also achieved well and responded positively to familiar objects. In a busy and practical lesson, Year 4 pupils were effectively challenged to show an awareness of different foods and clearly communicated their likes and dislikes. Year 8 pupils thoroughly enjoyed a lively introduction to a lesson that emphasised our need for air to survive. Pupils worked enthusiastically in groups where they carried out a range of experiments that very effectively boosted their understanding of the human respiratory system. The teaching assistants made a particularly valuable contribution to pupils' learning and managed the groups very well. A stimulating video was used to extend Year 10 pupils' understanding of the conditions required for plant growth. The specialist room provided a good learning environment and the practical activities were imaginatively planned to meet the full range of pupils' special educational needs.

49 A clear structure and the consistent management of pupils' behaviour ensure that pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders remain engaged for most of the time. There is a good focus on the development of pupils' language skills. The effective use of a good range of aids and strategies to promote pupils' communication skills ensured that, for example, Year 2 pupils made good gains in their responses to questions about the features of human faces. Very high levels of staffing allow a significant amount of one-to-one work and this generally promotes, for example, the development of pupils' literacy skills. This level of support motivated a high attaining pupil in a Year 5 class to write about the characteristics of different leaves. A good range of symbols was used to encourage Year 9 pupils to indicate their preferences from a variety of fruits. Language development was a strong feature of a lesson for Year 10 pupils and the higher attaining pupils were challenged to clearly express their views about the conditions and time taken for plants to grow.

50 Leadership and management are good and, as a result, there has been good progress in the quality of the provision since the last inspection. The science policy is detailed and advice on what teachers should teach is used rigorously to inform planning. Due to the wide age range of the pupils, the co-ordination of the subject is divided into

primary and secondary phases. This ensures that the subject is taught by specialists across the school, however, the long-term absence of the secondary co-ordinator has resulted in non-specialists teaching pupils in Years 7 to 11. Despite this potential barrier to pupils' achievement, the teachers have responded well to the challenge and the quality of teaching and learning is good. The primary co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has attended relevant courses to extend her knowledge and understanding of the range of pupils' special educational needs and this has had a positive impact on the quality of the provision. Objectives for the continual development of the subject have been established but the subject improvement plan is insufficiently detailed to further develop the good provision and, as a result, pupils' achievement is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Augmentative communication aids are used well to enable pupils with more complex needs to communicate and access the curriculum.
- Light and sound equipment is of high quality and used well.
- There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject.
- The effective use of ICT in other subjects.

Commentary

51 Pupils who require augmentative communication aids to communicate, such as switches, are given equipment that is well-matched to their special educational needs. A major emphasis in ICT lessons is to train pupils to use their switches accurately and quickly. This promotes the pupils' capacity to make choices and increases their independence. Pupils of all ages use touch screen computers well. More able pupils use a mouse efficiently and can click on icons and click and drag images across the screen following verbal instructions from the ICT programme. A good range of switches is used to enable lower attaining pupils to operate lights, music and sounds and at post-16, students make practical use of ICT to operate fans, kitchen equipment and a television by using the remote control. This promotes their learning well.

52 The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed during the inspection was good. Staff know pupils well and relationships are very good and, consequently pupils achieved well during the lessons. However, the long-term staff absence, due to illness, has restricted the development of ICT. In particular limitations in the co-ordination of the subject has restricted the development of assessment systems and, as a result, pupils achievement is satisfactory, overall. There has been good improvement in the resources for ICT since the last inspection. The number and quality of computers has improved and the school has invested in very good equipment such as interactive white boards, and very good equipment for light and sound work in specialist light and dark rooms. Consequently, pupils with additional special educational needs can be effectively stimulated and offered a rich array of sensory experiences. This is good practice and works well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

53 ICT is used effectively across the curriculum. Younger pupils use symbols to represent their times tables. Big Macs and a range of switches are used frequently to help pupils communicate. For example, augmentative communication aids are used well so that all pupils are included in lessons. Older pupils use digital cameras to record their work. This worked particularly well with pupils in Year 6, when in a science lesson they used real

leaves to design a poster. They took pictures of their completed posters to keep as their records of their work. One pupil went out into the school grounds to photograph the trees where they obtained the leaves. In post-16, students use the Internet to research their topics. At lunchtime, pupils enjoy using the Internet to listen to their favourite pop stars.

HUMANITIES

54 In history, insufficient work was seen to form reliable judgements about provision or standards. History is not taught this term as the teaching of the subject alternates with the teaching of geography topics. However, the work was sampled by talking with the pupils and looking at their work.

55 There are many informative displays in the school that illustrate pupils' work in **history**. Pupils have been provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to extend their understanding of home life during World War II. This has included role-play where pupils pretended to be evacuees, carrying their gas masks and wearing labels as they prepared for their move to the countryside. There are examples of their artwork and the design and making of, for example, luncheon bags that demonstrate the practical emphasis of pupils' activities. Pupils take part in visits including, for example, a trip to the Beatles' Museum where they experienced aspects of life and music of the 60's. They have also had the opportunity to sample life during the Victorian Era by dressing up in clothes of that period and they spent time in a Victorian classroom.

56 In geography, insufficient work was seen to form reliable judgements about provision or standards. Geography is taught this term and pupils' work was sampled by talking with them, looking at their work and observing a lesson.

57 Teachers are issued with planning sheets prior to each term to ensure that they have sufficient time to plan and develop their topics. In the **geography** lesson seen, pupils were provided with the opportunity to experience ways of moving model boats on water, for example, by wind propulsion. The locality and beyond are used to help pupils understand how the school is connected to other places, with a particular focus on exploring and comparing the main features of different areas. Pupils are encouraged to take care of the environment, including the school site. Their previous work shows that Year 8 pupils enjoyed dressing as Bedouins as part of their study of how people live in deserts. There are many examples of the use of digital photography to record pupils' achievement and the photographs show that they are very pleased with their work.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has been effectively developed to meet pupils' special educational needs.
- Teaching is informed by clear planning and high expectations.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- Opportunities for links with the local Christian community are good but those with other major religions are limited.

Commentary

58 Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has planned a curriculum that is based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus but which has been carefully adapted to meet the special educational needs of all the pupils. This ensures that what is taught in religious education is made relevant to pupils' own lives and as a result the majority are interested, enjoy the subject, make good progress and achieve well, overall. However, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were very effectively motivated by the stimulating range of activities that extended their understanding of caring for others and, as a result, achieved very well. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 begin to understand the meaning of friendship as it applies to themselves and their classmates. They listen to stories from the Bible and role-play Christian weddings, christenings and take part in the school nativity plays. The older pupils continue to extend their knowledge of Christianity and are introduced to other religions so that in post-16 they are able to apply their learning from religious education in a variety of subjects, working towards ASDAN certificates.

59 Teachers plan their lessons well. They provide interesting sensory and practical activities to keep pupils' attention and the good teamwork makes sure that every pupil takes as full a part as possible. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities provided for role-play and dressing-up which is an effective way for pupils to experience the activities. This effectively helps pupils to come to an understanding of the relevance and meaning behind religious stories. For example, while listening to the Bible story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha, the pupils experienced what it would have been like for Jesus to have his feet washed and were able to taste typical food of the time such as dates and figs and achieved well. As often as possible teachers use practical activities and personal experience which makes the work relevant. For example, in one lesson pupils with multiple difficulties were able to 'experience' a pilgrimage by going into the garden and then returning to the classroom that had been prepared as an altar and where appropriate religious music was playing. Throughout the school, teachers make good use of pupils' own experiences and in many lessons create a calming and relaxing atmosphere by the use of candles, music and subdued lighting that contributes to the development of pupils' spiritual awareness.

60 The co-ordinator has established very good links with the local Christian community. A local Vicar visits the school regularly and pupils have been able to visit a Church in Bootle and the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral but similar links, with people and places of worship from other religions, is proving difficult to arrange.

TECHNOLOGY

61 Only one design and technology lesson was seen during the inspection and therefore it was not possible to make a firm overall judgement on provision or standards in the subject. Evidence was gathered from a discussion with the subject co-ordinator and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and displays around the school.

62 The current focus within **design and technology** is food technology at the expense of resistant materials. This is largely due to the long-term absence of the co-ordinator who has only recently returned to school. In the food technology lesson seen, Year 7 pupils with more complex learning difficulties were well supported and actively involved in preparing lemon sponge cakes, which they later had the opportunity to compare with shop bought cakes. As a result, there were rich sensory opportunities provided for pupils.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

63 In art and design, insufficient work was seen to form reliable judgements about provision or standards in the subject.

64 Attractive displays of pupils' **art and design** work around the school and in the classrooms demonstrate that they are provided with an interesting range of opportunities to use a variety of techniques, media and colour. Pupils look at paintings by famous artists and then work in the same style such as 'sunflowers' by Van Gogh. There are examples of pupils collaborating together to produce collages, which is a very challenging activity for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Art and design skills are used across the school to enhance pupils' work in other subjects, such as, illustrating the music of Debussy with a seascape. Also, drawing the rainbow fish from an aboriginal story and making prayer mats and Islamic patterns in religious education. The school has a specialist art and design room and has established worthwhile links with other schools through the Sefton creative links project 'Inspire'.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic and very well-informed teaching and the promotion of a very good ethos.
- A very good range of activities is provided.
- Assessment is very good but opportunities for pupils to gain external accreditation in the subject are limited.

Commentary

65 Music is a strength of the school. The co-ordinator is an enthusiastic and talented musician who ensures that the special educational needs of all pupils are met. Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result, pupils achieve very well. There are very good relationships and very high expectations for pupils' achievement and personal development. Lessons have a very clear structure and no time is wasted. An example of this was a very good lesson for post-16 students who were introduced to the music of the Caribbean. There was a very good review of previous learning with a song related to the theme. Pupils then worked on Caribbean rhythms that they were able to play along to, with coconut shells. Pupils then had the opportunity to choose from and play along with a large range of tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments. Higher attaining pupils were able to maintain accurate time and rhythm on the instruments whilst lower achieving pupils were encouraged to sing along using a microphone and accompany their singing using the coconut shells. Pupils were well-supported by teaching assistants, this allowed very good group work to

take place, and such teamwork contributes to the overall success of the subject. The teacher also effectively introduces other areas of the curriculum into his teaching of music; for example, the students are made aware of the location of the Caribbean in the world. Whilst, in a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, enthusiastic teaching very effectively challenged pupils and, consequently, they made very good gains in their understanding of terms, such as, “fast” and “slow”.

66 The curriculum provided is broad and very relevant. Pupils are provided with a very good range of opportunities to listen to, appraise, compose and perform music. The very good teaching and trusting relationships develop pupils’ confidence to perform to others, for example, the “Eco Calypso” was performed very well in assembly during the inspection. In addition, pupils take part in public performances both in school and in the local community. The school is provided with good support from visiting musicians who effectively support the development of pupils’ singing as well as teaching some pupils to play instruments.

67 Music teaching is underpinned by the very good advice on what teachers should teach and this draws on many different musical styles from individuals, countries and cultures. Assessment in lessons is very good and pupils achieve very well, but pupils have limited opportunities to have their achievement recognised through formal accreditation. This is an area for development identified by the co-ordinator to further improve the very good provision. The specialist accommodation is very good but the school hall is acoustically poor. Resources to support the subject are very good. The very good leadership and management of the subject has meant that there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good use of local community facilities.
- Pupils and students are, supported and challenged to do their best.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is currently underdeveloped.

Commentary

68 The school has developed a very good range of links within local community sports facilities. During the week of the inspection pupils were observed at Walton Prison, swimming at a local high school and playing Kwik cricket at Bootle Community Centre. The lesson at the prison began with highly structured and crisp warm up activities which were enthusiastically participated in by the pupils. A whole range of team games were then delivered and pupils were encouraged to achieve well. A very good plenary followed where pupils evaluated their performance. These off-site sessions support the teaching of the curriculum, add value and are very good. Careful planning and teamwork ensures that pupils make very good progress in their water skills, being taught swimming either off-site or in the on-site learner swimming/hydrotherapy pool.

69 The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. Planning is clear and highlights learning objectives and pupils are made aware of their individual targets. Teaching assistants are briefed and make a significant contribution to pupils’ and students’ learning and this teamwork supports effective practice. A good example of this occurred when it was recognised that a particular programme was too easy for a group of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and the teacher then increased the level of difficulty to provide greater challenge. Pupils and students, with more complex learning difficulties, are taught using a multi-sensory approach that enables them to participate, for example, when practicing simple throwing and catching. The good relationships and encouragement given to these pupils by staff ensure that they concentrate well and are effectively challenged.

Physical education also supports pupils' leisure activities, for example, the school has a wide range of bicycles and actively encourages all pupils to learn to ride them. All activities also have a positive impact on pupils' personal development and, in particular, provide an increased understanding of the importance of exercise within healthy living.

70 The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. He is an active member of a local sports consortium and the school has recently taken part in a full audit of provision both in the school and locally. Within this process he has identified that the formal monitoring of teaching and learning is currently under-developed. He sees this as a priority in supporting improvements in teaching and learning. The accommodation is good other than the school hall that is multi-purpose and acoustically poor. Resources to support the teaching of the subject are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

71 No citizenship lessons were seen during the inspection and therefore it was not possible to make an overall judgement on provision or standards in the subject.

Through discussion with staff and pupils' previous work it is clear the school places a high priority on teaching the full **citizenship** curriculum. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is helped by the schools' involvement with a variety of national charities and world-wide links such as a recently established contact with a school in Ghana.

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school council plays a significant role in developing pupils' confidence and maturity.
- Good planning and very good relationships.
- Limited opportunities to develop social play in unstructured situations and to maximise independence in post-16.

Commentary

72 Since the last inspection, the school has established a very successful and effective school council and introduced a school bank, both of which develop a sense of personal responsibility and builds self-esteem and confidence. The school council makes pupils feel that they have a voice around the school because their views are respected, valued and, whenever possible, acted upon. The school council provides opportunity for pupils to think of others by organising fund-raising activities, to think of the environment by organising events such as the local 'litter' campaign and to show very impressive enterprise in carrying through major projects.

73 Teaching and learning are good, overall, and sometimes very good because of the very good relationships and the way staff work together as a team to ensure that all the pupils are fully included in all the activities. This in itself is a good example to the pupils of working together. Lessons are well-planned with a good range of activities to keep pupils interested and attention is given to every pupil's individual targets for personal and social development.

74 Leadership of the subject is very good and management is good. The curriculum is well-planned and includes a wide range of topics that meet the special educational needs of the pupils. These include personal hygiene, independence, relationships and friendships.

Good attention is given to sex and drugs education that are taught at a level all the pupils can understand. Teachers are sensitive to the particular needs and anxieties of the pupils, as was evident in a Year 5 group of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, developing their awareness and acceptance of being touched in an appropriate way. In a lesson for post-16 students, the teacher handled the difficult issues of sex and relationships with care and sensitivity which resulted in sensible and mature discussion and understanding. In less-structured situations, such as the playground, opportunities are limited for pupils to develop their skills in social interaction with each other, although their relationships with most adults is very good. For the post-16 students, opportunities for independence are limited both within school, because of the school's particular security system, but also in the wider community outside school. There are plans to introduce a 'transport mobility' course for independent travel that could help to resolve some of the problem.

POST-16

Provision in post-16 is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are offered a broad curriculum but timetabling is too informal.
- The development of very good relationships.
- Links with local colleges are good.
- Lesson planning is good.

Commentary

75 The post-16 department is well-established in school and has made good improvement since the last inspection. This year they admitted four students from another school into the post-16 department. This has established two main classes of mixed ability students, with a wide range of special educational needs. Staff arrange the timetable to ensure all students receive a broad and relevant curriculum to meet their educational needs but the organisation of the teaching time is too informal and consequently makes it difficult to track the balance of subjects taught. The good teamwork enhances the progress students make. All staff have updated their child protection knowledge and one teaching assistant is a qualified nurse and current first-aider. Staff have completed their moving and handling courses, which is very important in physical education lessons and hydro-therapy lessons where students with profound and complex learning difficulties are moved and handled in a most professional manner.

76 Because relationships are very good and members of staff know students so well, students respond to staff's high expectations by working hard and behaving well. Support for personal care and guidance is very good. Students who require therapies, such as physiotherapy, hydro-therapy or speech and language therapy receive these in school. Any students who require medicine in school are attended to by the school nurse and medicines are locked away securely, administered carefully, recorded and signed for. Connexions staff link with students in Year 10 for their transition annual review and a transition plan is formulated. This continues through the students' career in the post-16 department and student's link with a personal adviser during their time in the department. Pupils and parents appreciate this practice and the information they receive. Where appropriate, students are invited to attend reviews for at least part of the meeting and this enables them to put forward their views where possible and shows that they are valued. Four students are members of the very effective school council. The post-16 department links with local colleges, local high schools and a primary school as well as a respite house locally. These links support the students' education programme as well as their personal, social and health

education. They have a range of opportunities to mix with the public and students from other schools and colleges. A local high school runs a 'youth club' at lunchtime with Rowan Park students. One week this takes place in Rowan Park and the alternative week in the high school. This is good practice and works very well.

77 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is because staff are well-prepared and know the students very well. Lessons are well-planned and, as a result, activities and tasks effectively meet pupils' special educational needs. An example of very good teaching was seen when a group of students with complex learning difficulties were taught in the hydro-pool. This was high quality teaching and resulted in very good achievement by the students. This also contributed towards their ASDAN award for Water Skills. All students have opportunities to achieve nationally recognised accreditation before they leave school. This includes literacy and numeracy skills as well as a range of ASDAN awards. Staff are at present considering the introduction of an accreditation system that would more effectively challenge the higher attaining students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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