

# INSPECTION REPORT

## ROYAL SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF DERBY

Derby

LEA area: Derby City

Unique reference number: 113044

Headteacher: Mr Tim Silvester

Lead inspector: Mike Kell

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268623

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils:	3 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	96
School address:	Ashbourne Road Derby
Postcode:	DE22 3BH
Telephone number:	01332 362512
Fax number:	01332 299708
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Susan Gregory
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> July 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is larger than average for its type and age range, and has a broadly average socio-economic mix in keeping with its intake from a very wide geographical area. Approximately 35 local education authorities (LEAs) have pupils placed at the school. All the pupils are hearing-impaired and have a Statement of Special Educational Need or are undergoing statutory assessment. Because of the delay in pupils' language acquisition caused by their deafness, their attainment on entry to the school is below that of others of a similar age. About half of the pupils are resident Monday to Thursday, and approximately two thirds of all pupils are boys. The vast majority of pupils have a white British background.

There are three departments, although pupils are not distributed evenly between them. The primary department has four part-time children of nursery age, one in Reception and 22 pupils in Years 1 to 6. There are 56 pupils in Years 7 to 11, and 13 post-16 students. Post-16 students were not included in the last inspection. They were taught separately in Derby College for Deaf People, which was on the same site and part of the same charitable group as the school. The college closed in 2004, and the school extended its approved age range so that pupils could remain on roll beyond the age of 16 years.

The school considers that two thirds of its pupils do not have English as their first language; their first language is British Sign Language (BSL). This is reflected in the school's philosophy and practice. It describes itself as a signing and speaking community where the languages and cultures of both deaf and hearing people are valued and pupils' skills in BSL and English are taught and assessed formally. The school aims to promote a positive

sense of identity for all pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in both deaf and hearing communities.

The school has achieved a number of awards. It was recognised as a health promoting school in 2001, received a School Achievement Award and Activemark Gold in 2003 and, last year, it received a Sportsmark Gold Award and retained the Investor in People standard.

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

<b>Members of the inspection team</b>			<b>Subject responsibilities</b>
13101	Mike Kell	Lead inspector	Deaf studies and British Sign Language Religious education
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector	Residential provision
8810	Sue Aldridge	Team inspector	Science Geography Personal, social and health education and citizenship Work-related learning
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	English Art and design Music Special educational needs
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics History English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International  
Upperton House  
The Avenue  
Eastbourne  
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE, KEY STAGES 1 – 4 AND POST-16</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>37</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Royal School for the Deaf is a very effective school.** The headteacher and other key staff provide very good leadership. Very good management systems are evident throughout the school. Very good teaching promotes pupils' learning very well, and they make very good progress. The very positive ethos means that pupils achieve very well in their personal development. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- It is very successful in meeting its aim of promoting a positive sense of identity for all pupils and preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in both deaf and hearing communities.
- Very good teamwork at all levels enhances pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- Exceptionally strong relationships are evident throughout the school.
- Teachers stimulate in pupils an excellent desire to learn; they achieve very well.
- There is excellent support for learning outside the school day and outstanding opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities.
- The school's very positive ethos extends to all areas of its work and encourages pupils' communication skills, confidence, self-esteem and awareness of others.
- There are breaches of statutory curriculum requirements; a modern foreign language is not taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9, and post-16 students do not study religious education.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, which has been driven by the very well improved leadership and management. As result, the three key issues from that time have been addressed very well. Senior managers' survey of classroom practice has resulted in a consistent approach to communication strategies. Their monitoring of teaching, learning and teachers' use of assessment procedures, has had a very positive impact on raising pupils' achievements, and there is now a consistent approach to curriculum planning. There have been improvements in other areas too. New science accommodation has been built; pupils have more opportunities to have responsibility, such as through the school council; the targets in well constructed individual education plans are acknowledged in lesson planning.

### 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	Very good	Very good
Year 9	Very good	Very good
Year 11	Very good	Very good
Year 13	Very good	Very good

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

Because of the delay in pupils' language acquisition caused by their deafness, their attainment on entry to the school is below the level expected of pupils of similar ages. Overall, pupils **achieve very well**. Boys and girls, pupils with additional learning needs and those whose first language is not English all make similarly very good progress. Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage. Pupils achieve very well in English, information

and communication technology (ICT), art and design, physical education and deaf studies. Achievements are good in mathematics, science, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, and religious education. It was not possible to judge achievement in design and technology, geography and history.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.**

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very good quality education** for its pupils. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Teachers and very capable education assistants are very skilled users of British Sign Language (BSL) and form very effective teams. The use of specialist subject teachers in all year groups aids pupils' learning. Very knowledgeable teachers teach lessons that have been very well planned and prepared. As a result, they have appropriate resources to hand, provide activities that have been carefully chosen to extend learning, and use very effective teaching methods. Teachers use information obtained from good assessment procedures very well to plan future work. Residential care staff support pupils' learning well in the residential houses.

Overall, the school's curriculum is good; it is very good at the Foundation Stage, while provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and in post-16 is satisfactory. However, there are breaches of statutory requirements; a modern foreign language is not taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9, and post-16 students do not study religious education. The curriculum is very well enriched; there is excellent support for learning outside the school day and outstanding opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities. The school has good accommodation, staffing and learning resources.

There are very good procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance, and they are encouraged very well to contribute to the school's development.

The school has a good partnership with parents, who hold the school in very high regard and are very supportive of its work. Good links have been forged with the local community, and there are good links with other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good. They have very high aspirations and have been very effective in developing strong teams at all levels; there is a very strong commitment to meeting the needs of the individual. Senior staff have shown a clear vision in helping to manage the closure of the college, and working with governors to incorporate post-16 students into the school and to prepare the school for the next stage of its development. The governance of the school is good; governors have good first hand knowledge of the work of the school, although two statutory requirements of the curriculum are not in place.

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

Parents' views of the school are very positive. They fully support the school's aims and are very appreciative of the way in which the school challenges pupils and very pleased with

the progress their children make. Pupils are very satisfied and enjoy everything the school has to offer.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The school has no important things it needs to do to improve. However, to meet statutory requirements the school needs to:

- Provide religious education for post-16 students and a modern foreign language for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Overall, pupils in all year groups achieve very well. Boys and girls and pupils with additional learning needs achieve equally well. Pupils whose first language is not English also make very good progress.

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

- Adults' communication expertise contributes greatly to pupils' achievements.
- Pupils and students achieve very well in the good range of accredited courses that are available to them in Years 10 and 11 and at post-16.
- Specialists teach their subject, in either the primary or secondary department, and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements.
- Many students' achievements are extended well through the school's very good links with local colleges.
- Residential care staff make a good contribution to supporting pupils' achievements.

#### **Commentary**

1. The most significant contributor to pupils' very good achievements is the quality of teachers' and education assistants' communication skills. Apart from English, all subjects are taught using BSL and almost all staff are fluent in its use. Therefore, pupils in all lessons and in all year groups are provided with a consistency of approach in language use and acquisition.

2. Children's very good achievements in the Foundation Stage result from very good teaching and very effective input from education assistants when they work with groups of children, or with individuals who have additional special educational needs. Children follow a stimulating and appropriate curriculum, and their achievements and progress are assessed very well. Staff use this information very productively in deciding what needs to be taught next, and at what level.

3. The flexible and creative way in which the primary co-ordinator manages the department and deploys staff, influences pupils' very good achievements. For instance, a small group of pupils with more challenging needs is taught separately each day for literacy and numeracy. High levels of adult support enhance their progress, while their classmates who remain in their class bases are able to learn at a fast pace with minimum disruption. Class teachers use their subject specialist knowledge very well; they teach their specialist subjects to all the classes in the primary department.

4. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 benefit greatly from the arrangement that enables them to be taught, generally, as ability groups for most subjects. Specialist teachers use good resources and accommodation to extend all pupils' learning very well. The effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils in these year groups is evident in its value added performance scores for 2004. These figures indicate how well the school has improved pupils' achievements. The figures compare pupils' actual performance in the end of Year 11 examinations with what those same pupils were expected to achieve based on their scores in the standardised tests at the end of Years 6 and 9. Both comparisons, from Year

6 to Year 11 and from Year 9 to Year 11, show that Royal School for the Deaf is in the top five per cent of schools.

5. Post-16 students follow individual timetables that combine courses taught on the school site with those that students follow in local colleges. Students are very well taught and follow clearly identified, well-managed and individual curricula. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

6. Pupils of all ages achieve very well in developing communication skills. All English lessons have a very good focus on promoting pupils' speaking, listening, watching and signing skills, in addition to developing their reading competence and writing skills. Pupils achieve very well because teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject and their pupils, and planning is based on the careful monitoring of individual pupils' achievements. As a result, lessons are challenging, and pupils respond to teachers' high expectations with enthusiasm and hard work. The impressive teamwork between adults also makes a significant contribution to pupils' very good achievements; teachers, education assistants, speech and language therapists and the educational audiologist work very well together to provide a planned and co-ordinated approach.

7. Good teaching, which is based on clear planning and the thorough preparation of lessons, accounts for pupils' good achievements in mathematics. The principles of the national strategies have been adopted and, therefore, pupils benefit from following a broad curriculum and lessons that follow the three-part format of an introduction, a main teaching session and a final plenary. Staff have good subject knowledge and understand their pupils' needs and difficulties, and they are very ably supported by education assistants, who may be responsible for teaching groups of pupils.

8. Pupils achieve well in science, and this is linked to the provision of a broad and balanced range of learning experiences and good teaching and learning. Pupils in both the primary and secondary departments benefit from being taught by a specialist teacher. Teachers use a good range of stimulating and appealing resources to help pupils understand and acquire facts. Pupils are well supported because staffing levels are good, and this was a feature of all lessons. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, which they make clear to pupils. Pupils' achievements in ICT are very good; the standard of many pupils' work in Years 7 to 11 is broadly in line with national expectations. They develop a good range of basic skills because of very good teaching that builds well on their previous learning. Pupils of all ages are very highly motivated and show great enthusiasm, and these factors contribute greatly to pupils' very good achievements.

9. In other subjects, pupils achieve very well in art and design, physical education and deaf studies. Achievements are good in PSHE and citizenship, and those pupils who study religious education also achieve well. Pupils and students in Years 10 and 11 also achieve well in work-related learning (WRL). It was not possible to judge achievement in design and technology, geography and history.

10. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students achieve very well in the very good range of externally accredited courses that are available to them. There are nine General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses offered, and most of these subjects are also available at Certificate of Educational Achievement (Entry Level) for lower attaining pupils. In addition, ICT is accredited through a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). In 2004, some pupils achieved grade C in some subjects, such as in art and design and food technology, and all were successful in the ICT course. Overall, 70 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to G.

11. Post-16 students follow courses that are appropriate to their capability. Less capable students follow a range of courses provided by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Key Skills awards such as 'problem solving' and 'working with others', and basic vocational courses such as Initial Pathways. The more capable students have access to very many higher-level courses at local colleges, including a number of GNVQ subjects. They achieve very well on these courses. All pupils in Years 3 to 9 follow courses leading to accreditation in BSL. Depending on their skill, pupils can be accredited through the Open College Network, the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP), and, for the most talented, through a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 qualification; the Certificate in Deaf Community and Culture.

12. Residential care staff make a good contribution to supporting pupils' achievements. They do this through listening to pupils read, supporting them with homework and liaising with education assistants and teachers.

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

Pupils have very good attitudes to work and school life and they also behave very well. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between pupils are excellent.
- The school is extremely effective at developing in pupils a desire to learn.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted very well, and this gives them very good confidence and self-esteem.
- The school sets very high standards of conduct.

### **Commentary**

13. Only about half of pupils attend the school on a daily basis, but the school has good procedures to ensure attendance and parents are keen for their children to attend. Consequently, there is very little unauthorised absence compared with similar schools.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	2.2
National data (residential schools for hearing-impaired pupils)	0.4	National data	5.6

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

14. Punctuality at the start of the school day is generally good, and, almost without exception, pupils get to classrooms on time and so lessons start promptly. This is because pupils enjoy school life, and this is evident in their attitudes and behaviour. Teachers make learning enjoyable and, therefore, pupils are highly motivated in lessons. They are equally enthusiastic when attending after-school clubs, and when off-site, such as when attending a local college. The pupils are proud of their school; there is very little litter and no evidence

of graffiti or vandalism. Pupils are very polite; they open doors ahead of adults and many are keen to sign “Good morning, how are you?”

15. The school has high expectations of pupils’ behaviour, and they respond to this very well. Behaviour is very good in lessons, at lunchtimes and breaks, after school and in the residences; pupils abide by rules extremely well. On those few occasions when pupils do misbehave, they are dealt with very effectively. As a result, pupils live and work in an environment that is free of bullying and other forms of harassment. There have been a relatively large number of fixed period exclusions during the past year, but these have been applied appropriately and effectively. The application of these exclusions reflects the school’s determination to maintain high standards and to deal firmly with all forms of unacceptable behaviour. The effectiveness of the policy is evident in the fact that none of the excluded pupils have been excluded on more than one occasion. A particular strength of the provision is the pupil support unit that caters for a few pupils with particular behavioural or short-term emotional difficulties. This unit enables pupils to carry on with their work in a separate room when they find it difficult to maintain good behaviour in class. Staff can refer them or they can self-refer, and the unit meets their needs well.

**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	76	11	0
White – Irish	1	1	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	2	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	2	0	0

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

16. Pupils’ personal development is encouraged from an early age. They are encouraged to communicate, to work with others, and sometimes independently, and to develop self-help skills. As pupils move through the school, they develop a very positive self-image, based on confidence and high self-esteem. A particularly striking feature of the school is the quality of relationships between pupils; they co-operate harmoniously and are very appreciative of each other’s efforts. This was evident in lessons, such as when more proficient signers helped others with instructions they might have missed, and on occasions such as assemblies. A small group of secondary age pupils performed a short play about bullying, linked to The Good Samaritan, and all those watching warmly applauded them.

17. Pupils’ spiritual development is very good. A particularly important dimension of this is the school’s aim to give pupils a positive sense of identity and understanding of the languages and cultures of both deaf and hearing people. This has a very positive effect on pupils’ confidence and self-esteem. Pupils and students also have very good opportunities to reflect upon events outside of the school, such as the recent debate on the Asian

Tsunami disaster and whether God was right in allowing this to happen, and should people continue to believe in Him.

18. Pupils have a very good understanding of the differences between right and wrong. The citizenship curriculum focuses on teaching specific topics, like rules in society, and this enables pupils to contribute to developing class and residential rules. Older pupils consider other moral issues too. For example, a group of pupils recently debated whether it is acceptable to steal to fund what you believe in, following the huge bank robbery in Northern Ireland.

19. Pupils work and live together harmoniously. Within the whole school community, and in the different residential houses, pupils get along very well and respect each other's views. They also recognise that people have to make a contribution to the community in which they live. Therefore, some take responsibility by acting as year representatives on the school council, others are prefects and some Year 11 pupils help at lunchtimes by sitting at the tables with younger pupils.

20. Pupils and students develop very good understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions. Clearly, there is a very strong emphasis on the culture of deaf people, but attention is also given to their national culture and some multi-cultural traditions. Subjects such as English, art and design, religious education and music all make a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils follow a good curriculum, with very good opportunities for enrichment. Pupils' learning is supported by good links with parents, other schools and the community. The school looks after its pupils very well.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are very good across the school. There are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' achievements and progress.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and education assistants are very skilled users of BSL.
- The quality of teamwork between teachers and very effective education assistants make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- The use of specialist subject teachers in all year groups aids pupils' learning.
- Lessons are very well planned and prepared; introductory sessions are particularly effective.
- The information obtained from good assessment procedures is used very well to plan future work.
- Pupils with additional special educational needs learn very well.

### Commentary

21. There has been a very significant improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and learning. At that time, only 18 per cent of lessons had teaching that was very good or better, teaching was good or better in 59 per cent of lessons, and six per cent of teaching was considered unsatisfactory. Consequently, teaching and learning were judged to be satisfactory overall but were unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Senior managers have worked hard and successfully to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with a particular focus on the quality of lesson planning and assessment. They have done this through a planned programme of lesson observations, performance management, and by developing the role of subject co-ordinators.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 69 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	37 (54%)	25 (36%)	6 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.*

22. Teaching is very good across all year groups because lessons in all departments have certain common features. Most teachers are skilled users of BSL and so there is consistent practice across the school. In the few lessons where this not the case, such as when newly appointed teachers are still learning BSL or when temporary staff have had to be employed to cover long-term absence, there is a noticeable impact on the pace of lessons. A consistent communication approach is maintained because education assistants translate the teachers' spoken comments into BSL, but the pace of teaching and learning inevitably slows.

23. Very capable education assistants support teachers in all lessons. Notwithstanding the specific role they may have in interpreting in some lessons, they are extremely effective in other ways in all lessons. As highly competent signers they are able to maintain a communication approach that is consistent with that being used by teachers. Secondly, they are very adept at supporting individuals or small groups and are skilled at balancing support with expectations of independent work. The needs of pupils with additional learning needs are met particularly well. Every pupil with additional needs has an education assistant identified as a keyworker, who is responsible, for example, for ensuring that simple resources that are needed are available in all lessons. These may be worksheets with enlarged writing printed on yellow paper for pupils with visual impairment, or a portable desk slope to enable pupils with physical difficulties to write more easily.

24. Pupils benefit greatly from the range and number of subject specialists on the staff, in both the primary and secondary departments. Consequently, teachers' subject knowledge enables them to prepare lessons very well. They have appropriate resources to hand; they provide activities that have been carefully chosen to extend learning; and they use very effective teaching methods for the subject, such as an emphasis on investigative science and an awareness of design in all art activities. A striking feature of all lessons is the quality of introductory sessions. Teachers are very good at using these short sessions to evaluate what pupils have remembered. They are snappy, well-timed sessions during which teachers focus pupils on the subject, challenge them to recall their prior learning, and set out the aims of the forthcoming lesson. Teachers are able to maintain this good pace for the duration of lessons because of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and motivation. Pupils' application to work is excellent; they are enthusiastic and very willing to work independently or collaboratively, in pairs or small groups.

25. Assessment procedures are consistently good across all subject areas. Lessons are very well planned, with a consistent format in place across the school. Education assistants are involved in planning and, therefore, they know both the overall aims of each lesson and their exact roles in supporting learning. Because planning identifies clearly what it is anticipated different groups of pupils will learn, teachers and education assistants are able to monitor and assess how well pupils are acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. They do this through well-chosen questions, written exercises and, in many cases, appropriate homework activities. As a result, teachers are able to use this information to respond to individual pupils' needs when planning future lessons. The pupils are kept well informed about their progress. Teachers' marking is detailed and comprehensive and gives pupils detailed information about what they need to do in order to improve.

## **The curriculum**

Overall, the school's curriculum is good; it is very well enriched. The school has good accommodation, staffing and learning resources.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum for children at the Foundation Stage is very good.
- There is excellent support for learning outside the school day and outstanding opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities.
- The school is particularly successful in meeting pupils' individual needs.
- There is a very good number of well-qualified support staff, and a good number of well-qualified teachers.

- There are breaches of statutory requirements; a modern foreign language is not taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9, and post-16 students do not study religious education.

## **Commentary**

26. Curricular provision for children in the Nursery and in Reception helps them to get a very good start to their education; it has improved greatly since the last inspection. Teaching staff are suitably qualified in teaching this age group. The generous level of support staffing means that pupils are very well supported by skilled adults. The accommodation is spacious and enables staff to provide a very wide range of learning experiences across all the areas of learning. There is a particularly good range of learning resources well suited to children in the Foundation Stage.

27. In Years 1 to 6, learning builds well on the experiences that children have had at the Foundation Stage. All National Curriculum subjects are taught as required, as well as deaf studies in Years 3 to 6, PSHE and religious education. For subjects such as science, history and geography teachers have planned a structured programme of topics so that pupils do not miss out or repeat units of work. This programme is based on there being up to two different year groups in a class. However, for the first time this year, there is one class where there are pupils from Years 3 to 6. While teachers do monitor carefully what pupils have learned to ensure that there is no repetition or work missed, their planning could be simplified by revising the programme so that it allows for up to four year groups in one class.

28. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is good. Pupils are taught in year groups based on ability, and most often by subject specialists. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a deaf studies and BSL curriculum, for which they receive accreditation, along with all the required National Curriculum subjects except a modern foreign language. This is provided for the very few pupils whose parents request it, through a link with a local mainstream school. While the school makes this clear to both parents and LEAs that send pupils to the school, it does not formally disapply pupils or recommend an amendment to their Statements of Special Educational Need at Annual Review. This is a breach of statutory requirements.

29. Generally, pupils with additional needs are catered for well. For instance, those with mental health problems have access to counselling and the multi-disciplinary Telemental Health Project; social stories and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) are used for pupils with autism. For pupils who require it, there is mobility and independence training.

30. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of subjects, well matched to pupils' capabilities, which enable pupils to gain external accreditation through GCSE, Entry Level and GNVQ courses. The range of courses is supplemented well by a college link that allows pupils to sample vocational courses such as construction and health and beauty. In addition to these accredited courses, the curriculum is enhanced well by WRL and the PSHE and citizenship programme.

31. The curriculum provision for post-16 students is supported very well by the school's link with a local college of further education. This enables the school to provide suitable academic, vocational and key skills courses for pupils with wide ranging abilities and interests. Pupils have individual timetables, and almost everything that they study leads to external accreditation. Governors took advice about the provision of religious education for the post-16 department, and were not advised correctly. As a result, the curriculum does

not meet the requirement to teach religious education. However, it does prepare pupils adequately for the next step, which in most cases is further education.

32. The school's outstanding range of sports activities is recognised by their achievement of the Sportsmark Gold Award. Very good physical education provision across the school is well supplemented by a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs, including judo, badminton, football, volleyball, cricket, swimming, gymnastics and cross country running. Older pupils have an opportunity to achieve the Sports Leadership Award and, as part of this, they take lunchtime clubs for primary age pupils. The school has access to very good accommodation for physical activities including their own sports hall.

33. There is excellent support for learning outside the school day, particularly for day and residential secondary age pupils. Homework is set regularly and in accordance with class timetables; tasks are relevant and challenging, and pupils are fully involved in assessing how well they have done. The school provides homework clubs too. These include opportunities for small numbers of pupils to follow additional examination courses, such as GCSE textiles. There is a weekly homework club at Derby County Football Club, where pupils boost their literacy and numeracy skills alongside others from mainstream schools. Staff in the residences provide good support with homework and to pupils who are completing coursework. Residential pupils have access to a wide range of activities in the afternoons and evenings that make a good contribution to their personal development; for pupils over 14 years these include trips into town. Extra curricular activities include residential school journeys, such as those challenges that pupils complete as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

34. There is a good number of teachers, most of whom are very skilled in using BSL and in teaching deaf pupils. A very good number of other skilled adults support pupils' learning, care and welfare. These include an educational audiologist, two speech and language therapists, education assistants (many of whom are deaf), technicians for science and ICT, community social workers and residential care workers. Good accommodation includes suitable specialist areas for secondary pupils, a very well-equipped communication and audiology suite, and lighting that is suitable for visually impaired pupils. The school building is generally accessible to pupils in wheelchairs, although not all of the post-16 accommodation can be accessed in this way.

35. There has been good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection. The school has built a good quality science laboratory, well designed for deaf pupils, and this has helped to raise standards by providing many more opportunities for investigative work. Teachers plan using a common format, and documentation for careers is now of good quality.

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

There are very good procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance, and they are encouraged very well to contribute to the school's development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good and trusting relationships between staff and pupils.
- There are very good induction arrangements for pupils and students.

- Pupils with particular and specific special educational needs, such as mental health problems, are supported very well.
- A variety of professionals work very well together to support and guide pupils.

## **Commentary**

36. The school is very vigilant in carrying out its responsibility of care. Effective arrangements for child protection are in place, and the school's child protection officer ensures that all staff are regularly updated in relevant procedures, and that new staff receive training as part of their induction. The school uses the professional expertise of governors in this respect, and one deaf member of staff is also trained to deal with child protection matters.

37. The school has very good health and safety procedures. The named health and safety officer and site maintenance manager ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out, and that all fire fighting, electrical and fixed physical education equipment is checked routinely. Fire evacuation exercises are carried out each term in both the school and residential houses, and escape routes are accessible and well marked.

38. Staff show very high levels of care and concern and ensure that day-to-day activities are carried out safely. In lessons and at break times, appropriate supervision is always provided so pupils can work and play safely. The residential houses are appropriately staffed, so pupils are supervised effectively in out-of-school time too. For the few wheelchair pupils who need moving and lifting, there are appropriate procedures in place to ensure their safety and to preserve their dignity. Pupils' medical needs are catered for well. The school has its own medical centre and qualified nurse, and there are several trained first aiders. Medicines are stored and administered safely, and accidents are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

39. The very good support and guidance provided by staff enhances pupils' academic and personal development. There are good systems in place to assess and record pupils' academic achievements. Pupils' work is marked constructively, and so pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve. Individual education plans have been further developed since the last inspection; they are well constructed, with specific targets, and show what the pupil needs to do as well as what parents / carers can do to help.

40. There are very good interactions between adults and pupils. These relationships are based on mutual respect and, as a result, all pupils have access to adults they know and trust. Staff's very detailed knowledge of pupils' needs begins as soon as the child enters the school. Very good induction arrangements include close liaison with parents and agencies associated with the family, such as a number of different LEAs, social services departments and hospital departments, such as audiology. In addition, the school carries out a number of assessments. Therefore, from the beginning, staff are in a very good position to offer pupils well-informed guidance and support. This continues throughout pupils' time in school because there are effective procedures for monitoring their personal progress, identifying additional needs that may occur, involving other professionals as appropriate and co-ordinating the support package. For instance, very effective behaviour management plans are drawn up for those pupils who require them, and these are shared with all day and residential staff. The recently established pupil support unit has been shown to be an effective short-term resource that has helped pupils to overcome, for example, emotional problems before re-integrating into the normal class timetable.

41. Many of the school's own staff liaise very closely together for the benefit of pupils. Speech and language therapists work directly with pupils and with teachers in classrooms, and the educational audiologist ensures that pupils are appropriately aided at all times. This involves not only monitoring and regularly testing pupils in the school's very well equipped clinic, but also liaising with audiology departments in children's home areas and, in many cases, with regional cochlear implant centres. However, the school is equally keen to involve professionals from outside the school for the benefit of its pupils. In particular, it has become involved in a national initiative for deaf children with mental health problems, and there is a base at the school for this project. This is a fairly recent initiative, involving a small group of psychiatric and psychological professionals called the 'Telemental Health Team', and involves video links with centres in other parts of the country.

42. Pupils and students are encouraged to put forward their views, either through the school council or directly. The school council is well established; it meets once a month and its members are democratically elected. Pupils have been well guided in terms of what to look for in their representative, and the council has secured some significant changes within the school. At an individual level, a senior boy, who hoped to be chosen for a touring cricket team, approached the school to see if it would buy a bowling machine. It could not afford to do this, but staff supported the pupil to write to a local firm asking for financial assistance. As a result, he received a donation.

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

The school has a good partnership with its parents and with the local community. There are good links with other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents hold the school in very high regard and are very supportive of its work.
- Parents are provided with very good information about the school.
- The school tries hard to involve parents in its work, but the distance that many live from the school makes it difficult for them to become closer involved with their children's learning.
- There are very good links with local further education colleges.

### **Commentary**

43. Parents have very positive views of the school. Parents' questionnaires, and the views expressed at the parents' meeting, showed that parents are generally very supportive of the school and the work that it does. In particular, they are impressed with the school's ethos and the way their children are given a 'deaf identity' through the use of BSL and the presence of deaf role models. The view of those at the parents' meeting was that the presence of so many deaf role models is 'the very heart of the school'. Although a significant minority of parents felt that the school did not provide their children with sufficient or appropriate homework, the inspection team cannot support this view. Inspectors saw homework given during the inspection week and examples of previous homework in exercise books.

44. The school works hard and successfully to provide parents with information and in a format that they prefer; all documentation that the school produces is also available in a BSL format on video. The prospectus and joining booklet given to the parents of prospective pupils are detailed and informative, and regular newsletters and the governors' annual report, which meets statutory requirements, keep them up to date with

developments. They receive good information about their children's progress through open days, educational evenings and annual reports. The reports include all subjects of the curriculum plus personal development, are easy to understand, say what pupils can do and give realistic targets. There is also good communication at an informal level, which is particularly important for the parents of the many residential pupils. In addition to home / school books, routine contact is maintained through adapted landline telephones that send and receive text and fax machines in the residential areas.

45. The school welcomes parents' views, and to this end the school provides them with regular questionnaires. Consequently, parents' views have influenced the timing of the school day, and particularly the finishing time on Fridays, and homework provision. Parents have much less input on a regular basis and in a practical way because so many of them live such a long way from the school. However, some local parents have acted as volunteers to listen to readers and others have helped on school trips.

46. The school makes good use of local resources and facilities to enrich pupils' learning. Local shops provide opportunities for pupils to interact with hearing people and use money in real-life situations, and a number of local businesses provide placements for pupils on work experience. Some local businesses also support sport in the school, such as an insurance firm that is currently sponsoring a five-a-side football tournament. Pupils also visit local museums and have attended a number of signed performances at the theatre, such as *Tom's Midnight Garden*. Visitors into school also make a good contribution to extending pupils' experiences. For instance, a Muslim woman has recently been in to talk about her faith, and a local chaplain for deaf people goes in regularly to lead assemblies. The school makes some of its facilities available to the local community too. Local people are able to attend BSL classes whenever the school runs courses, and members of the local deaf club use the school's sports facilities.

47. Links with other schools are satisfactory. On the very few occasions when it is appropriate, a pupil may attend a local secondary school for subjects not offered by Royal School for the Deaf. Children in the Foundation Stage integrate with children in a local nursery on one morning each month, and this is particularly useful for their personal development. There are very good links with colleges of further education, and nearly forty pupils and students attend for part of each week. During Years 10 and 11, pupils spend nearly half a day at week at college, when they sample vocational courses such as construction and health and beauty. Post-16 students' attendance at college ranges from half a day to three days a week and they follow a very good range of vocational courses, such as GNVQ, in subjects like art and design, leisure and tourism, Routes to Sport and ICT. Royal School for the Deaf students are fully integrated; they use all college facilities and mix socially with hearing students. Staff at the college are very supportive and keen to see deaf students included in the life and work of the college.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are very good. The governance of the school is good, although two statutory requirements of the curriculum are not in place.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's senior staff have demonstrated a clear vision in helping to manage the closure of the college, and working with governors to incorporate post-16 students into the school and to prepare the school for the next stage of its development.
- Governors have good first hand knowledge of the work of the school.
- Key staff have extremely high aspirations and have been very effective in developing strong teams at all levels.
- There is a very strong commitment to inclusion, and meeting the needs of the individual.
- The school is working hard to evaluate the effectiveness of its spending on its different areas of work.
- Many features of management are very good; induction procedures, performance management and staff training opportunities all contribute to improving the school's effectiveness.

## **Commentary**

48. There has been very good improvement in the effectiveness of leadership and management of the school since the last inspection, and governors have also become more effective. These two factors have been instrumental in driving forward the changes that have occurred since that time.

49. Governors have been faced with some difficult decisions in recent years. In particular, when trustees of the main charity and governors of the college took the decision to close it with effect from September 2004, the school governors had to manage the deployment of staff, the introduction of students and the rationalisation of teaching and residential accommodation. In addition, they are currently managing a staffing restructure and undertaking a feasibility study on the use of the site. Notwithstanding these changes, governors have remained vigilant in maintaining an overview of the school's work. They do this through a very effective committee structure and focused visits into the school and residential houses. Therefore, they have a very good understanding of the direction in which the school is moving and a developing appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are failing to ensure that an appropriate statutory curriculum is in place for some year groups although, in both cases, governors thought that they had taken the correct action. They took advice about the provision of religious education for post-16 students, but were not advised correctly. As a result, the curriculum does not meet the requirement to teach religious education. Although the school makes it very clear to parents and local education authorities that send pupils to the school that it does not offer a modern foreign language to pupils in Years 7 to 9, it does not formally disapply pupils or recommend an amendment to their Statements of Special Educational Needs at Annual Reviews.

50. In a quiet and understated way, the headteacher and deputy have implemented a number of changes since the last inspection. They have managed to establish a culture of challenge and high expectation, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning. They have also engineered a coherent and consistent approach towards delivering the school's aim of promoting a positive sense of identity for all pupils and preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in both deaf and hearing communities. This has been a two-stage process. An effective strategic plan was constructed with a clear focus on the main areas requiring development. On the basis of that, annual school development plans have been formulated with clear links between priority planning and budgets. Therefore, initially, the quality of strategic planning set the tone for the school's evolution. The second stage involved the monitoring and evaluation of

all aspects of the school's work, especially classroom practice. There was a particular focus on lesson planning and the measured use of different communication systems, such as BSL and Sign Supported English (SSE).

51. Importantly, the headteacher and deputy used the information from their monitoring to bring about change. Very good performance management systems have been used to develop individual teachers, and a very strong commitment to staff training has enabled professional development sessions to be used to extend staff skills and bring about improvement. Senior staff's commitment to having a highly skilled workforce that follows consistent practice is evident from the beginning; a very good comprehensive induction package for new staff establishes expectations early and supports staff as they become accustomed to the pupils and the school's practice.

52. There are very effective senior staff in all areas of the school. These include education departments, such as primary, secondary and post-16, the residential facility, therapies, medical care and audiology. These staff are particularly effective in creating and managing teams, whose members work together with an agreed sense of purpose. For instance, the primary department has been organised to allow teachers to use their subject knowledge in all classes; specialist secondary education assistants remain in particular subject areas, such as ICT and science, to work with all classes that use that facility. Speech and language therapists and the educational audiologist work closely together, supporting teachers and education assistants, and the head of care has developed an effective team of residential care workers who work very well with day staff to provide consistent support and guidance to pupils. The effectiveness of teamwork is particularly influential in ensuring that all pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, have access to the range of learning opportunities that are available. The school is firmly committed to equality of opportunity; every pupil with additional special needs has a keyworker in classes, who is responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources are available. Individual coaching sessions are arranged for any pupil not making the expected progress, for example in BSL.

53. Since the last inspection, senior staff have become increasingly effective at routinely examining the school's performance, and responding appropriately. For instance, the curriculum has benefited from such leadership. The deaf studies programme has become more structured and effectively planned; pupils in the secondary department are generally taught as ability groups, and this has proved successful in raising pupils' achievements; additional GCSE courses, such as textiles and statistics, have been introduced. Senior managers also recognised that, although whole school assessment data was being collected, it was not being analysed as effectively as it could have been to compare the relative performances of different groups of pupils. They have now addressed this through the increasing use of an electronic assessment system, although additional work can be done in comparing, for example, the relative achievements of day and residential pupils.

**Financial information for the year September 2003 to August 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2521865
Total expenditure	2428654
Expenditure per pupil	25836

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	137826
Balance carried forward to the next year	231037

54. The school has a very good approach to day-to-day financial management. Budgets are set carefully, and contingency funds are established with a specific purpose in mind. Senior staff are also developing systems to analyse more closely the link between budgets, resources and outcomes in terms of pupils' achievements. This also includes a detailed examination of the relative income: expenditure ratios for pupils of different ages, day and residential pupils and pupils with identified additional special educational needs. This is a particularly good development in ensuring the school achieves the best possible value for money.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education is well developed.
- Work-related learning is enhanced by good community partnerships.
- There is scope for further development of work experience and vocational courses.

#### Commentary

55. Pupils are well prepared for discrete careers lessons by the time they reach Year 7, because they have already acquired an understanding of the world of work through the school's PSHE programme. For instance, primary pupils consider people who help them in school; during the inspection they were seen being introduced to the nurse, her room and the equipment she uses. From Year 7 onwards, pupils follow a well-planned careers programme designed to develop their self-awareness, ability to make decisions, set goals and plan to achieve them. They find out how to apply for jobs, and what options are open to them on leaving school.

56. One careers lesson was seen, and in this the teaching and learning were good. Year 10 pupils worked in teams to design and build a model oil platform, using a brick, bendy plastic straws and pins. Their design had to be within a budget, and each straw represented a cost of £200, and pins were £500 each. The task was timed, and this focused their minds very effectively. Pupils worked well to find a solution to this work-related problem, and one group was successful. Each team was marked on the success of their design as well as the cost of materials, and pupils were set the task of evaluating their performance as homework.

57. There is good accommodation for careers education, including a careers room, which houses a library and ICT facilities. Careers library funding has been well spent on resources, including software.

58. The school works in a productive partnership with a number of agencies to provide WRL. The Connexions officer gives good support by meeting pupils individually, attending Transition Reviews of pupils' Statement of Special Educational Need, and assisting in evaluating the school's provision. Links with a good range of employers enable the school to give pupils work experience placements that they have chosen. However, the school currently provides only one week of work experience, in Year 11, and recognises in its development plan that it needs to develop this further, particularly into post-16. Links with local employers, such as Toyota, enable pupils to visit workplaces and the school is working with a local bank to develop an accredited mini-enterprise project. A strong link with a local college enables pupils to follow vocational courses, but in Years 10 and 11, there are only two options. Once again, the school has identified that this is an area for further development.

59. Leadership and management of WRL are good; careful planning has ensured that requirements are met and the co-ordinator knows exactly what needs to be done to improve

the provision. It is not possible to evaluate improvement since the last inspection, as WRL was not reported at that time.

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

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

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

Children join the Nursery and Reception class with a low level of attainment compared with other children of a similar age, but they make very good progress during their time there. Children's introduction to the school is very well organised, with a lot of liaison with parents and other agencies that may be involved with the children. All children attend during the mornings, and the Reception age children stay for the afternoons as well, when they join a small class of slightly older children. Their experience of working in this class each afternoon means that the move to full-time placement there is managed smoothly and without fuss.

All teaching is good or better, and overall it is very good. This includes the teaching by very capable education assistants who work very effectively with groups of children, or with individuals who have additional special educational needs. This ensures that all children are supported very effectively and achieve very well. Consequently, by the time they are old enough to enter Year 1, some children are attaining at nationally expected levels in some of the areas of learning, such as personal, social and emotional development. Staff focus mainly on children's personal and social development, and their acquisition of language and communication skills. These vital areas are the ones in which children make the best progress. All activities are very well planned to include many opportunities for children to practise and extend their social and communication skills. Children's achievements and progress are assessed very well, and staff use this information very productively in deciding what needs to be taught next, and at what level.

During the last inspection, some features of the Foundation Stage were judged as unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard and successfully to improve the situation by identifying aspects that needed to be changed, and ways of making the changes required. There has been great improvement since then; the provision is now led and managed very well. The overall staffing level is very good, and staff work together very well as a team organising planning, resources and determining their individual responsibilities in each session. The curriculum is very well balanced between the different areas of learning. The accommodation is good and spacious, with very good resources for staff to use in providing an exciting and stimulating learning environment.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

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

- High priority is given to this area of learning.
- Detailed planning is an extremely good basis for the very good teaching.

#### **Commentary**

60. Staff have very warm and positive relationships with children, and this contributes greatly to the very good progress that children make. They learn to behave very well, pay

attention and take turns. They play very happily together, and play and work independently at other times.

61. This aspect of children's learning is planned very thoroughly and taught very well. As a result, children are on course to reach the levels expected by the end of Reception. There is a particular focus on this area of learning and so some lessons are planned specifically to develop children's understanding of aspects such as their feelings and emotions. Other skills are learned through all other activities throughout each day. For instance, children learn to be polite to each other, wash their hands and face before a snack, and to hang up their coats and art aprons.

62. Staff are very good at encouraging children to be sociable at all times, such as when they have a biscuit and drink together, and to think about how their actions affect their friends and members of their family. Children very quickly learn what it means to be part of a group, and how they should behave. This is a sound foundation for their later learning in school. Towards the end of their time in the class, children are becoming independent as well as cooperative, such as when they take turns to take the register to the office each day.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff plan many very good activities dedicated to developing children's communication skills.
- Staff maximise all additional opportunities that present themselves during the day to get children to practise these skills.

### **Commentary**

63. Children make very good progress with their communication skills because of very good teaching and a whole learning environment that is geared towards promoting language and literacy skills. At times, this is done by using BSL and on other occasions through English.

64. Communication activities focus most particularly on developing children's language through developing their BSL skills, both in their understanding of what is being signed to them and on their own ability to sign in response. Staff are very successful in raising children's skills quickly to a level at which they readily understand what the staff are signing. They also learn to understand their friends and classmates, and to communicate with each other very readily. By the time they move into Year 1, many children sign fluently enough to clearly express their opinions, ideas and wants.

65. Activities include group sessions with a 'big book', such as *Goldilocks* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Children read through these books together, following the teacher's signs, words and actions. These sessions are often supported by toys and other resources, and children get many opportunities to act out parts of the story. Reading activities are generally associated with the topic being studied, such as 'minibeasts', and so they help children to extend their learning about other aspects of the world around them.

66. Children are encouraged very well to make meaningful marks with crayons and felt tip pens, and then to begin to write their names and other familiar words. For example, they copy important words from the books they have been looking at. The most capable children write simple sentences, independently, about what they have been doing. They also know that the letters and words in books have meaning, and so they begin to understand that books convey information. The most competent children read very capably, and enjoy their newfound skills. All staff are very skilled at encouraging children in all aspects of their communication, and they give this encouragement very warmly, and at every opportunity.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children make good progress through a wide range of well-planned practical activities.
- Learning is reinforced well in activities in many other areas of learning.

## **Commentary**

67. Children are taught well; staff are good at planning and leading a wide range of activities to help develop children's mathematical skills. These are mostly practical activities that are aimed at developing an awareness of numbers, shapes, and ideas such as 'full' and 'empty', 'big' and 'small', 'inside' and 'on top'. These may take place at the sand tray, the water trough, or outside with all the large equipment available for physical activities. Often, songs and rhymes are used very well to reinforce children's number and counting skills. Staff are enthusiastic in these sessions, giving every encouragement to children to try their best.

68. Staff use other times of the school day well to reinforce children's mathematical understanding. For instance, when children are painting, playing games, making models, or acting out parts of a storybook, staff frequently engage them in counting and measuring tasks at the same time. By the time they leave Reception, many children count to 20 or 40, add and subtract one, double or halve small numbers, and recognise basic shapes and colours. Many are close to attaining at the nationally expected level in this area of learning.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are well taught; staff are very imaginative in the ways they create opportunities for children to learn about the world around them.
- Activities are very well planned to include children's learning of social and communication skills.

## **Commentary**

69. Children do not reach the nationally expected level in this area of learning, but they make good progress in learning about the world around them. This is because staff present them with many different activities, including activity corners that are changed frequently. Sometimes, these are the focus of a session with all the children together learning about, for instance, small creatures or the differences between old and new toys. While participating in these activities, children also learn to take turns, pay attention to each other, share things, and sign to each other and to adults. They learn that people, and things, get older and change over time, they understand that people work in different places doing different jobs around the school, and they know the different stages in a butterfly's life. Children's ICT skills are also developed well as they use computers to look at pictures and play educational games, as well as to make their own pictures and patterns, such as writing their names using large and different fonts.

70. Children enjoy their topics very much, and try their best. They are very well motivated to take part in the wide range of activities with which they are provided. These range from filling containers in the sand, water and pasta trays, to taking part in the Halloween party and the Christmas nativity play and role-play about doctors and nurses.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff use a good range of large and small equipment to help develop children's physical skills.
- The curriculum is organised to ensure children get regular sessions to support physical development each day.

## Commentary

71. This area of learning is well taught. Consequently, although children do not attain nationally expected levels they achieve well in this area of learning because they are encouraged to be active and to develop their physical skills through a good range of activities. Some items of large equipment are set up permanently in the enclosed playground, and children have many opportunities to use a giant “*Connect 4*” game, a set of steps, a swing bridge, and a slide. In other sessions and at playtimes, children learn to play hopscotch, and to ride trikes and large plastic vehicles, as well as throwing and rolling balls, quoits and hoops. They play independently and, at other times, with a partner in chasing games, rolling a ball to a classmate or with a set of skittles.

72. Indoors, children are guided very well in many activities. They learn to grip and manipulate a variety of small equipment such as scissors, glue spreaders, pencils and paint brushes. At all times, staff give very good encouragement to children to play together, to pay attention and follow instructions. Teachers’ planning shows that their aim to develop children’s communication skills in wider situations and physical activities is evident in the way they carefully build such opportunities into the lessons. As a result, children extend their understanding and use of signing well.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very effective in sessions dedicated to developing children’s creative skills.
- Children have many very good opportunities to extend their social, communication and other skills.

## Commentary

73. Children develop their creative skills very well, and many are close to attaining at nationally expected levels by the time they leave Reception. The teaching is very lively, with enthusiastic staff helping individual children in their activities. Lessons are very well planned to develop children’s imagination as well as their skills in painting, and making patterns, collages and models. Children learn to use different materials such as card, tissue paper, shiny paper, textiles, glue, string and paint. In these sessions, children develop their fine physical skills in handling the equipment and materials. Many activities are closely linked with other areas of learning, such as making butterfly pictures, linked with the ‘minibeasts’ topic. Children practise their signing and speech reading skills, learning new words and signs all the time. They work sociably next to each other, sharing paint pots and brushes, and happily enjoy each other’s finished models. Often, mathematical skills are also extended, such as when learning the names of different colours, shapes, and sizes. Counting is promoted very well in music activities, when children also learn the names of instruments such as tambourines, drums and xylophones and also learn to play them, keeping time, and starting and ending at the right time. They know how to sign along with songs that are often linked to the literacy themes, and participate in singing number rhymes.

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 – 4 AND POST-16**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- High expectations, very good teaching methods, and careful monitoring of individual progress lead to very good achievement for pupils of all ages.
- Pupils gain significant benefit from the very good teamwork involving teachers, education assistants, residential staff, the educational audiologist and speech and language therapists.
- The very good management of the subject ensures a consistent approach to the curriculum, teaching and assessment.
- Drama is used well to enrich the curriculum.

#### **Commentary**

74. Provision in this subject has to be viewed against the school's philosophy about language acquisition and its approach towards teaching English. It believes that severely and profoundly deaf pupils learn language most effectively through BSL and this is the medium through which most subjects of the curriculum are taught. However, in recognition of the fact that English is a language and as such it cannot be taught through another language, that has completely different characteristics, English is taught through the planned and consistent use of SSE. This form of communication uses signs and finger spelling simultaneously with the spoken form so that there is a common syntax.

75. Lessons are challenging, and pupils respond to teachers' high expectations with enthusiasm and hard work. Teachers have very good knowledge of individual achievements and, therefore, they are able to plan activities that match individual needs. Pupils of all ages achieve very well in developing communication skills. In addition to developing pupils' reading competence and writing skills, all lessons have a very good focus on promoting their speaking, listening, watching and signing skills.

76. Pupils learn very well because teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject and their pupils, and planning is based on the careful monitoring of individual pupils' achievements. As a result, all pupils are included in activities because work is both interesting and challenging. Consequently, they have very good attitudes to their learning, being highly motivated and keen to learn. Teachers provide pupils with excellent support and encouragement, including marking of their work, which is routine, comprehensive and includes positive comments and suggestions for improvement. The quality of teamwork is impressive. Education assistants' contribution in lessons, in the form of signing and support for individual pupils, is significant and they are fully involved in the planning of lessons. A variety of adults work very well together to provide a planned and co-ordinated approach to enhancing pupils' learning. Speech and language therapists contribute to assessment, give advice and participate in lessons; the educational audiologist ensures that pupils' hearing aids are effective in providing them with auditory input; residential care staff listen to pupils read and encourage reading for pleasure.

77. The school has adapted and implemented the National Literacy Strategy very well to meet the needs of primary age pupils, and they enjoy a range of stories, poems and non-

fiction texts. Well-structured lessons and group speech and language sessions give pupils in Years 1 and 2 the best possible start to developing good communication and effective access to the wider curriculum. Therefore, even at a young age the most capable pupils recognise words and write simple sentences with little support. By the time they leave the primary department, pupils read with confidence, such as from a page of text projected onto a screen to facilitate the use of BSL, and enthusiastically ask and answer questions about the story. They show empathy when discussing characters and feelings; they anticipate events and hypothesise about alternatives; and they show very good recall of what they have read. Written comprehension exercises demonstrate pupils' very good ability to extract information from text. Written work is usually of good length, and shows very good progress in learning about punctuation, the use of paragraphs, adjectives, connectives and story structure. Handwriting is legible and shows good improvement over time. The most capable pupils write in well-sequenced sentences, with good spelling and punctuation.

78. English lessons make a significant contribution to the effective acquisition of communication skills of pupils in Years 7 to 11. In particular, this happens in lessons that the school calls 'Live English'. These are sessions that focus on using communication in practical situations, such as in the wider community. For instance, Year 7 pupils interviewed two volunteers, an educational assistant and the educational audiologist. Having prepared questions in advance, the pupils used a combination of BSL and spoken English to carry out their interviews but they were also very adept at adding unprepared questions and making comments in response to answers they received. Year 10 pupils were preparing for a visit to Derby and discussed how they would communicate with hearing people and deal with unexpected events. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils held lively discussions about a magazine they were planning to produce and the most capable pupil, in the role of editor, demonstrated considerable leadership skills as he delegated tasks and motivated his team. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 also make very good progress in improving their reading and writing skills, and increasing their knowledge of English literature. Sentence structure shows very good improvement, even in the case of less capable pupils, as a result of the consistent use of SSE. The most capable use good vocabulary to write exciting stories, using extended sentences, correct punctuation and spelling and with a good understanding of the use of paragraphs. Written work is often linked to the books pupils are reading, for example a letter to a friend describing *Tom's Midnight Garden*, written as Tom. Pupils also write for different purposes and for different audiences, such as a letter of complaint with very good attention to detail, and an extract from Lady Macbeth's diary, which illustrated good understanding of the character. Teachers' high expectations and very good teaching means pupils achieve well in Entry Level and GCSE examinations, with the most capable pupils sometimes achieving grade D.

79. The promotion of English skills in post-16 is built into the whole curriculum, in addition to discrete English lessons. Those students who study English follow age-appropriate activities as they work towards adult accreditation and ASDAN's Towards Independence. All students have individual learning plans and their progress towards targets is carefully monitored.

80. Leadership and management of the subject are very good because of the collaboration between the primary and secondary co-ordinators. They present a consistent approach to curriculum development and planning so that pupils build on their learning and skills year-on-year from the time they enter the school to when they leave. Their monitoring of other teachers' planning and teaching is carried out regularly. This has been instrumental in producing the very good improvement in provision that has taken place since the last inspection. The co-ordinators have a clear vision for the subject, seek and act on outside advice, participate in research projects, and continually seek ways of improving

their own expertise. Assessment procedures are very good, and teachers make very good use of the assessment data they collect. They use this information to place pupils in the right group for their capability and pass on details to ensure a smooth transition from the primary to the secondary department.

81. Pupils benefit in many ways from participating in, and watching drama performances. Drama and role-play is frequently used in lessons, and pupils put on a Christmas production each year. Secondary department productions have included *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Grease*. The signing in the video of *Grease* has great impact and the whole performance is very moving. Pupils have recently visited the theatre for a signed performance of *Tom's Midnight Garden*, and plan to see *Romeo and Juliet* to support their GCSE studies. Links are also being developed with a local school that has specialist status for music and the performing arts.

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

82. Communication is very well supported across the curriculum. Key vocabulary and subject-specific words are identified in planning, opportunities for discussion are encouraged, and reading and writing activities feature in most lessons. The school is so successful in developing pupils' language and literacy because staff adhere very closely to the school's philosophy of using BSL as the main vehicle for language acquisition, and staff are, generally, competent signers. Consequently, pupils benefit greatly from this consistent approach.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and the principles of the national strategies.
- Resources are used imaginatively, but more use could be made of ICT.
- This subject is well led and managed.
- Very effective assessment procedures are in place.

### **Commentary**

83. The good teaching throughout the school is based on clear planning and thorough preparation of lessons. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. The principles of the national strategies have been adopted and, therefore, pupils are provided with a broad curriculum and lessons that follow the three-part format of an introduction, a main teaching session and a final plenary. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection.

84. Staff have a good knowledge of the subject, and very good knowledge of their pupils' needs and difficulties. Teachers work extremely well with their education assistants, explaining very clearly to pupils, and providing further explanations and demonstrations later in the lesson. When education assistants have responsibility for teaching groups of pupils, they do so very capably. Staff use a good range of equipment in imaginative ways to help pupils' understanding, although more use could be made of the many computers in classrooms. Staff have high expectations and so pupils are provided with activities that are challenging. Lessons proceed at a good pace and staff have very positive and warm relationships with their pupils. Staff sign extremely fluently and clearly, and their high levels of communication expertise are crucial in ensuring all pupils take a full and active part in lessons.

85. Pupils' good progress extends throughout the school. Their basic number skills are well established by the time they reach the end of Year 2, and their understanding develops well as they move through the school. Pupils learn through many practical activities, such as finding out about different shapes and ways of measuring. They use basic numbers, percentages and fractions, for instance, and learn how to display the results of surveys in different kinds of graphs. In addition, many pupils develop good skills in mental mathematics and problem solving.

86. Pupils enjoy their work, and are very well motivated to try hard. As a result, at the end of Year 11 almost all pupils are successful in gaining appropriate certification in nationally recognised courses, including GCSE and Entry Level, with the most capable pupils achieving GCSE grade D. The school's success in the levels of accreditation its pupils achieve has meant that this year it is now also offering a GCSE statistics course for some pupils. In the post-16 department, less capable students continue to learn some basic mathematics skills, but most of their learning in this subject is through activities associated with other forms of accreditation, such as ASDAN. These include shopping expeditions, planning trips, working out the costs of a party, or the ingredients and amounts for a recipe.

87. Leadership and management of the subject are shared by primary and secondary co-ordinators, with post-16 being separate. However, this does not adversely affect the efficiency with which the subject is managed; the various coordinators work together effectively and have organised long-term planning and resources well. However, they are aware of the limited use of ICT in mathematics lessons and have, therefore, been trialling new computer programs for use across the school, in order to encourage greater use of the technology. The co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning throughout the school, and have developed very good systems for checking pupils' progress. The information gained from assessment is used very well when deciding which pupils need additional support in lessons, which aspects of the subject curriculum need a greater focus, and how different teaching methods might be employed to make learning more effective.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

88. Mathematics is reinforced well in other subjects, with a particularly good emphasis in science and ICT lessons. For example, pupils measure temperatures, weights, times and lengths in their science experiments. They learn to enter results into databases, and to draw different kinds of graphs to illustrate their findings. Teachers also take opportunities to consolidate numeracy skills in other subjects too. For instance, Year 4 and 5 pupils in a religious education lesson were encouraged to identify the different shapes on Muslim prayer mats. A group of Year 10 pupils in a careers lesson was engaged in an exercise to build a model oil platform that required them to work within a budget for the cost of materials.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and enjoy their lessons.
- Subject specialists teach pupils in the primary and secondary departments.
- The accommodation for secondary science is very good and staffing is good.
- In Years 3 to 6, ICT requirements are not met.

### **Commentary**

89. Pupils achieve well in science, and this is linked to the provision of a broad and balanced range of learning experiences and good teaching and learning. Whole school targets set for raising achievement in Years 6, 9 and 11 are most often met or exceeded. Teachers plan using nationally published schemes, which they adapt well to suit the

capabilities of pupils. In secondary classes, pupils are grouped by ability, which makes planning easier, and this works well. It means that pupils can follow examination courses that are at a suitably challenging level. There are high expectations of pupils; the most capable in Year 9 follow an Entry Level course, in which they achieve well, and this prepares them well for their GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. All pupils in Year 11 leave school with external accreditation, either Entry Level or Foundation GCSE (Single Award); the most capable pupils achieve grade E in their GCSE course.

90. During the inspection, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. Teaching is best when pupils are taught by staff who are competent in using BSL. Lessons proceed at a good pace when this is the case. When temporary teachers, with few signing skills, teach pupils the pace of the lesson slows because an education assistant needs to translate what is said into BSL. Teachers have good subject expertise, as they are mostly science specialists. Scientific vocabulary is carefully taught, with key words displayed in each lesson. Pupils' understanding of these is checked regularly and word searches are used to help pupils in reading and spelling words.

91. Learning is promoted well by pupils' very positive attitudes. They focus intently on adults who sign, ask and answer questions, and persevere with tasks. They handle resources carefully, and show that they have listened to safety advice given by teachers. They particularly enjoy practical tasks. For instance, in a very good lesson, Year 4 and 5 pupils worked in groups to measure the temperature of hot water that had been poured into containers encased in different materials. They were careful to hold thermometers as they had been shown and shared the work out between them. All predicted which would hold heat best. The most skilled were clear about how the investigation could be made fair, and pupils recorded their results as a graph. The most competent produced a line graph, while others drew a bar graph.

92. Older pupils work well in pairs and independently, and staff give finely judged support, so pupils are self-reliant and try to work things out themselves. For secondary age pupils, teachers use past national test and examination questions to consolidate learning that has taken place in class, and as homework tasks. This prepares pupils well for the challenge of sitting external tests and examinations. The homework that is set is generally completed on time and presented neatly.

93. Teachers use a good range of stimulating and appealing resources to help pupils understand and acquire facts. For example, in a most successful Year 9 lesson, an amusing video was used effectively to give examples of predator / prey relationships and food chains. In a very successful Year 10 lesson, pupils constructed a model turbine and generator to help them see how electricity is produced from coal. Pupils were well supported because staffing levels were good, and this was a feature of all lessons. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, which they make clear to pupils.

94. The school is fortunate to have several science specialists, and so pupils in both the primary and secondary departments benefit from being taught by a specialist. In addition, secondary teachers receive good support from a technician. The accommodation has improved greatly since the last inspection, as the school has been able to build a new laboratory that is well designed for teaching deaf pupils. At one end is an area for whole class teaching, free from the distractions of practical apparatus, and an 'island' at the other end of the room where there is gas and low voltage electricity supply. There is a fume cupboard and blinds that allow for 'light' experiments. This has increased the range of practical activities that can be provided. There are now two laboratories and this means that secondary pupils can be taught in small groups.

95. The subject is well led and managed. Provision has improved well since the last inspection. Marking ensures that spellings are corrected, and good feedback about pupils' work is given through comments and grades. As a result, pupils know what to do to improve. The analysis of assessment data is well established and this assists teachers in framing targets to raise achievement. At the present time, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not get the opportunity to use ICT for data-logging when carrying out measurements but the co-ordinators are aware of this deficiency and have recognised it in the subject development plan.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teaching is very good, particularly in Years 7 to 11.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum, particularly in Years 1 to 6, remains underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

96. Overall, pupils are very well taught. Pupils of all ages are very highly motivated and show great enthusiasm, and these factors contribute greatly to pupils' very good achievements. The standard of many pupils' work, particularly in Years 7 to 11, is broadly in line with national expectations. The level of pupil's understanding and skills, particularly from Year 9 onwards, is extremely good; they are knowledgeable and confident and have very good understanding of the subject's applications, vocabulary and resources. Improvement in provision in ICT lessons since the last inspection has been good, although there has been less improvement in the use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum.

97. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 develop a good range of basic skills because of good teaching that builds well on pupils' previous learning. For example, a group of pupils in Years 3 to 6 explored the use of email. Skilled teaching, high expectations and challenging activities meant that by the end of the session pupils knew not only the practical uses of email, but also its benefits. They discussed the fact that people had previously sent letters and how this compared with email.

98. In discrete ICT lessons from Year 7 onwards, pupils' achievements and the standards of their work are particularly high. For instance, a Year 8 class of less capable pupils were at a very early stage of learning about spreadsheets. Very good teaching explored the main advantages of spreadsheets and so pupils were very quickly able to appreciate these advantages. They studied a spreadsheet from a zoo and soon learnt to identify which animals ate the most food and which were the most expensive to feed. They followed this with their first attempt to create their own spreadsheet; they succeeded very well because of very good teaching and very good support from the highly skilled education assistant.

99. Year 9 pupils use a program to create their own website, have very good understanding of how, for example, online data collection has many advantages including

speed, cheapness and scope/range, and construct questionnaires with a clear understanding of how to store responses on text files and import to a database for analysis.

100. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are particularly well taught by a subject specialist. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to gain accreditation; all pupils achieved a GNVQ or Entry Level pass in the 2004 examinations. They demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding as they discussed software licensing issues, whether printers were Universal Serial Bus/parallel or networked, and the type of software needed for networking. They use appropriate ICT vocabulary and make informed judgements about, for example, which hardware and software to choose for the setting up of an imaginary ICT system. Pupils' very good progress continues into the post-16 department. Less proficient students were seen following a guide sheet, which used words and pictures, to explain the procedures for logging on to the computer and using the Internet. Having identified areas of interest, for example *Coronation Street*, students used a search engine for information about the programme and its characters.

101. There are separate co-ordinators for the primary and secondary departments and this arrangement works effectively. Overall, the subject itself is very well led and managed, and the co-ordinators recognise the one shortcoming in provision, which is the insufficient use of ICT in all subjects of the curriculum.

102. Assessment arrangements are good, particularly in the way that teachers use records of pupils' achievements to respond to pupils' particular needs. Evidence of pupils' work is maintained, such as saved work and printouts, and is included in a portfolio, which remains with the pupils throughout their time in school. Resources and accommodation for the subject are good.

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

103. This remains underdeveloped, but is satisfactory overall, and the school has identified it as a priority area, particularly in Years 1 to 6. Pupils use ICT well in English lessons to support their learning. They use the computer to support their 'big book' work in literacy hour, when they word process their stories, and the video camera and interactive whiteboard are used well to make presentations. There was also evidence of ICT in geography, when Year 10 pupils input data from a recent field trip into a presentation program. In a Year 6 deaf studies lesson, pupils considered why ICT is important to deaf people and why, for example, email is so popular and better than some other forms of communication, such as landline text telephones. However, there is little evidence of its effective use in mathematics, either in lessons or in pupils' work, and in science a lack of resources and staff expertise means that pupils cannot use data logging equipment during investigations.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Deaf studies and BSL**

Provision in deaf studies and BSL is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils follow a well-planned and structured curriculum.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' self-esteem and self-identity.

- The effectiveness of teachers' use of text to support learning is sometimes reduced by spelling errors.

## **Commentary**

104. The presence of this subject in the school curriculum reflects the school's philosophy. The school aims to promote a positive sense of identity for all pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in both deaf and hearing communities. Knowledge and understanding of the language and culture of deaf people are addressed very well through this subject. The subject was at the early stage of development at the time of the last inspection. There has been good improvement since then, particularly in terms of curriculum structure and planning. The subject is well led and managed.

105. Pupils in Years 3 to 9 follow a programme that enables all pupils to receive accreditation by the end of Year 9. The target qualification is a Level 2 certificate awarded by the CACDP. However, the school acknowledges that there are some pupils whose signing skills are more limited, while others are extremely proficient. The less capable pupils are accredited through the Open College Network, while those who the school has identified as being particularly talented are very successful in a NVQ Level 3 qualification; the Certificate in Deaf Community and Culture.

106. The curriculum is very well planned, and structured around a series of topics. These include how deaf people use technology to communicate with other deaf people; how modern technology is used in communications between deaf and hearing people; deaf people and languages; people and their lives and routines. Pupils' ongoing achievements are assessed and recorded accurately by the whole school BSL co-ordinator, who has recently been accredited as an assessor, and external CACDP examiners evaluate their examination work.

107. Pupils achieve very well in this subject because they are very well taught by deaf teachers who are natural users of BSL. These deaf adults have very good relationships with the pupils and provide them with very positive role models. They are supported very well by many education assistants, who are extremely proficient signers and work extremely well with teachers. Teachers are very skilled at ensuring all pupils are involved in lessons and use many opportunities to evaluate pupils' learning. However, there is one feature of some lessons that needs to be addressed. Deaf studies lessons are silent, with all communication being carried out using BSL, but, quite properly, teachers do try to support learning by using text, such as writing on the whiteboard pupils' suggestions of different methods of communicating. Unfortunately, on a few occasions words are not spelt correctly and this problem is further compounded when pupils copy these misspellings into their exercise books.

## **Geography**

108. The subject was not a particular focus for this inspection and too little evidence was gathered for a judgement to be made on overall provision. Two lessons were sampled. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson good resources and an appealing task, made into a game, enabled pupils to make good progress in finding places on a grid using co-ordinates. In a successful Year 10 lesson, pupils followed up tasks from their fieldwork and, although they were well supported, a few found it difficult to transfer their ICT skills to this geographical task.

## **History**

109. It is not possible to arrive at a judgement regarding the quality of provision as only one lesson could be observed, and there were insufficient samples of pupils work available to make judgements about pupils' achievements and progress. In the lesson that was sampled, involving children from Reception to Year 2, they were taught well. It was well planned, and required the pupils to compare the differences between some modern toys and games with those from a long time ago. The pupils were attentive, worked well and enjoyed the activity very much.

110. Discussions and a scrutiny of documents indicate that there is an appropriate curriculum with a good emphasis on practically based history, including looking at a range of sources of historical information.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Visits and visitors into school support pupils' learning very well.
- Teachers' and education assistants' communications skills are very good.
- The school is not meeting its statutory requirement to provide religious education to post-16 students.

## **Commentary**

111. At the time of the last inspection teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils made satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6 but performed poorly in Years 7 to 11, and the curriculum was unsatisfactory. There has been very significant improvement since then. This reflects the good leadership and management provided by the subject co-ordinators. Although the school is failing to provide this subject to post-16 students, it is not entirely the fault of senior staff and governors as they had sought advice and been misinformed.

112. Pupils' achievements are good. They learn well in lessons that are well planned and prepared. Interactions between adults and pupils are very good, based on very good relationships and high quality communication. This enables teachers and education assistants to set high standards of behaviour and challenging work. Pupils respond extremely well to these challenges. They are very interested and enthusiastic learners, who approach activities with a refreshing keenness and willingness to be involved. As a result, time in lessons is used well.

113. The curriculum is based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus and, as such, it considers all the world's major religions; different groups of pupils were seen studying elements of Christianity and Islam during the inspection. Teaching, particularly in classes of younger pupils, is supported well by resources and artefacts and they are instrumental in helping pupils to remember features of the religions they have studied. For instance, before a group of Year 4 and 5 pupils continued with their study of the rituals associated with Muslim prayer, the teacher checked their recollection of previous learning. One pupil knew that as Allah had created the world, "we should look after everything" and others could name the Qur'an and recognise a prayer mat when the teacher introduced them. By the time they are in the secondary department, pupils have moved on from learning through examining and handling resources to considering more complex ideas. This is particularly the case in

Years 10 and 11, as pupils prepare for their Entry Level examination. A lesson on the Ministry of Jesus challenged pupils to think carefully about what could have been the characteristics of some named disciples that attracted them to him. Pupils were keen to consider this, and then one raised the interesting question of why Jesus chose only men.

114. Community facilities are used very well to enrich learning. Pupils have visited different places of worship and a number of visitors are received into school. A Muslim visitor had recently spoken to Year 11 pupils about aspects of her faith, and the local chaplain for deaf people spoke to a class of Year 8 pupils during the inspection. This was a particularly good use of the community because, although a hearing person, the vicar had learned BSL and was a proficient signer. He talked about his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, supported by a video that included a commentary supplied by a signing person. Pupils were totally captivated by this session.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Enthusiastic, experienced and knowledgeable teachers inspire pupils to achieve very well.
- The development of design skills plays an important part in the teaching of art, even with the youngest pupils.
- The curriculum is very broad and balanced and leads to good accreditation opportunities in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Commentary**

115. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good because teachers make art lessons exciting. They use a variety of materials and methods to teach a range of skills, and make very good use of the work of well-known artists to stimulate ideas and initiate discussion. Pupils enjoy imitating these different styles as, for instance, the pupils in Years 1 and 2 who were inspired by the work of Michael Brennand and Ruth Spaak in a weaving exercise.

116. As they move through the secondary department, pupils develop very good understanding of many styles and techniques. For example, pupils produce portraits using pencil sketches, painting, pastels, repeating patterns and collage. They examine the work of Andy Warhol, Leon Spilliaert, Judith Barry and Gustav Klimt, and there were some very good examples of pupils creating their own work in similar styles. For instance, a class of Year 7 pupils manipulated images of themselves to recreate the style of Picasso, and Year 10 pupils were influenced by Barbara Hepworth's work when they designed and made mobiles. In Years 10 and 11, and at post-16, pupils and students achieve particularly well as a result of a steadily accumulating skills, keen observation, and encouraging and inspiring teaching.

117. Lessons have many very good features. In particular, pupils are encouraged to look critically at their own work, and that of classmates, and to make suggestions for improvement. The element of design is incorporated into lessons in all year groups. For

instance, the weaving designs made by pupils in Year 2 were followed very carefully in the practical exercise. Pupils' use of sketchbooks throughout the school is exemplary, so that ideas can be tracked from the first thoughts about a design to final composition. Teachers are able to challenge pupils very well because of the very good relationships that are evident in all lessons and the high levels of support, praise and encouragement that teachers and very effective education assistants provide. The quality of adults' communications skills, most notably in BSL, is a significant contributory factor in pupils' very good progress; adults are able to explain complex ideas very effectively.

118. There has been very good improvement in provision since the last inspection. The subject is very well led and managed. As a result, all pupils follow a very good curriculum and there are very good accreditation opportunities for the oldest pupils, with all of them following a GCSE or Entry Level course in art and design, with the most competent achieving grade C in their GCSE. However, the infectious enthusiasm and commitment of the secondary school subject co-ordinator has led to six pupils taking an additional GCSE, in textiles, through an after school art club.

## **Design and technology**

119. It is not possible to make judgements about overall provision, the quality of teaching and learning and improvement since the last inspection. This is because it was only possible to sample two lessons. In addition, there is only a temporary secondary teacher of resistant materials

120. The teaching and learning in the lessons that were sampled were of good quality. In a lesson with pupils from Years 3 to 6, good teaching linked the activity with pupil's English work; they made moving pictures of characters with which they were familiar from reading books. They made good progress in understanding how control mechanisms work, addressing such issues as movement and rotation. Good teaching enabled Year 9 pupils to make a range of very attractive flavoured breads in food technology. They understood the process of bread making and described the wide variety of different bread available.

121. Resources and accommodation are good, but the absence of a specialist resistant materials teacher means that best use is not currently being made of them. Subject documentation and teachers' planning show that the subject is well developed and pupils have good opportunities to address a wide range of activities.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Music**

122. Too few lessons were seen to make a judgement on provision in music. However, in the two lessons that were sampled teaching and learning were very good. Year 9 pupils were engaged in a composition exercise using a drum kit. Pupils were very excited about this, but their self-discipline and attention to instructions impressive. Pupils learn to feel and create rhythm through percussion and through dance, and the brief observation of a group of Year 8 pupils signing '*Somewhere over the Rainbow*', with good rhythm and timing, indicated very good achievement.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good use is made of links with other schools and community facilities.
- The subject promotes pupils' personal development very well.
- Pupils have access to a very good range of sports and physical activities.
- Accommodation and facilities are very good.

### **Commentary**

123. Physical education is a strength of the school's provision. Pupils achieve very well because of good facilities, very good teaching, strong subject leadership and wide ranging curriculum opportunities. Consequently, they achieve well in the GCSE and Entry Level examinations they take at the end of Year 11. The quality of the school's provision was recognised in 2004 by its receipt of a Sportsmark Gold Award. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

124. All lessons start with well-organised and effective warm up sessions and involve all pupils, including those in wheelchairs. A good emphasis is placed on health-related fitness, and both pupils and staff dress appropriately for the subject. Teachers demonstrate technique particularly well to focus pupils on what is required. For instance, in a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, the teacher showed ways of how to produce a sequence of balance and travel activities. Confident, well-motivated pupils received high levels of support and encouragement so they were able to produce good levels of performance, which they were willing and able to demonstrate to their peers. Even the least athletic pupils succeeded in developing simple sequences.

125. A class of Year 8 pupils, containing some with challenging behaviour and others in wheelchairs, were motivated and fully engaged in a game of table cricket. Even though many of them had additional learning needs, they worked together well and generally overcame their poor co-ordination and attention skills in order to play a proper game. The high communication skills of a very knowledgeable teacher and very effective education assistants enabled the adults to maintain a very good balance between challenging pupils and supporting the least capable. As a result, all pupils learned well so that by the end of the session they understood how runs are scored and how fielders can be avoided.

126. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Many activities encourage pupils to collaborate, and team games show them how to play by the rules and to accept defeat. The Sports Education Programme that is available in the secondary department is specifically designed to develop leadership in young people. A Year 9 pupil was seen managing a lesson on volleyball very effectively; he gave instructions and demonstrations about techniques and tactics, gaining the full attention and co-operation of the rest of the group, before ending with a short game. The whole session was conducted using BSL and was a remarkable achievement for a relatively young pupil.

127. The curriculum is extremely broad, balanced and relevant and very well organised by the subject co-ordinator. The range of activities includes most competitive indoor and outdoor team games, gymnastics and athletics, including cross-country. Standards in swimming are high across the school; by the end of Year 6 all pupils have achieved basic competency in swimming. Minor sports are not ignored; for example, pupils have the opportunity to learn jujitsu as a lunchtime club. Pupils also benefit from links with other

schools and local facilities, such as the swimming pool at a local comprehensive school. Access to resources such as this is further enhanced through the contacts the subject co-ordinator makes in her role as a sport co-ordinator for the local LEA. Pupils also participate in many national competitions for deaf pupils, such as swimming, many of which are organised by the school.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

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

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

- The School Council enables the pupils to have a strong stake in aspects of school life.
- Two enthusiastic co-ordinators work well together to secure good provision.

#### **Commentary**

128. Citizenship in Years 7 to 11 is taught through a combination of discrete lessons, the PSHE programme and participation in the election and running of the student council. The student council is well established; it meets once a month and its members are democratically elected. Pupils have been well guided in terms of what to look for in their representative, and the council has secured some significant changes within the school. For example, pupils now have lockers and there is an achievement day at the end of each term, which the council is responsible for planning. During the council meeting that was observed during the inspection, representatives had a buffet lunch and spent their lunch break examining suggestions from classes, making decisions about a forthcoming achievement day and then sharing out tasks. For instance, one undertook to approach the school bursar for funding, and another agreed to write to parents about the arrangements for the day. Pupils were very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, who ensured that they realised the practical and financial implications of suggestions.

129. Teaching, learning and assessment in PSHE are good. Consequently, pupils achieve well. Teachers cover a suitable range of topics, and sex and relationships education, and drug use and misuse are well represented. Well-developed planning enables pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding each year. Younger pupils learn about being responsible when they develop a set of group rules. They find out about people who help them, such as the school nurse, and about basic hygiene. In a most successful lesson, Year 2 and 3 pupils were seen finding out about the role of the school nurse. The session began in the class, where pupils enjoyed role-play using good resources such as a plastic stethoscope, that were appropriate for the activity and pupils' ages. They then went on to meet the nurse in her room, and were able to look at and explore real medical equipment. This generated a great deal of interest and participation, even from a previously distracted pupil who offered his arm for bandaging. Younger pupils also learn about the dangers present in the home, such as fires and electrical appliances.

130. In a particularly good lesson on contraception, Year 9 pupils achieved very well because the teacher had planned and prepared the lesson very effectively. At the start, pupils showed good recall of the content of the previous lesson, and this served as a good reminder for all. A good video was used well to introduce the topic of sterilisation, and a follow up activity provided good consolidation, because worksheets were well designed to

cater for pupils' different literacy levels. There was a brisk pace to the lesson and so pupils achieved a great deal in the available time. Homework provided further reinforcement and catered well for pupils' different abilities. Older pupils learn about crime and its impact on victims. Careers guidance and work related learning is woven into the programme for these pupils.

131. As the subjects were not reported at the last inspection, it is not possible to evaluate improvement. The two co-ordinators do ensure that the many teachers of PSHE and citizenship are well supported. For instance, all staff have been informed of the assessment arrangements for both PSHE and citizenship, and procedures have been devised for identifying achievements using published descriptors. Monitoring of teaching has been carried out and some changes are being made to ensure that the best use is made of teachers' expertise. The curriculum is shortly to be evaluated to ensure that the programme plans are realistic. Leadership and management of the subjects are good.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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

